



Image: Bailup Road, Wooroloo (22 April, 2021)

Wooroloo Bushfire **RECOVERY PLAN**

Endorsed 10 August 2021

Funded under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

Disclaimer: Although funding for the program referenced in this Plan has been provided by both the Australian and Western Australian Governments, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views of either Government.

Document Control

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1.0 Introduction

The Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery Plan (the Plan) has been prepared by the Shire of Mundaring (the Shire) on behalf of the Wooroloo Bushfire Local Recovery Coordinating Committee (the Committee) and the fire affected community of Wooroloo. This Plan sits alongside, and supports, the Wooroloo Bushfire State Level Recovery Plan.

The Plan identifies community initiatives that aim to build capacity, sustainability and resilience within the community. Strengthening capacity, sustainability and resilience (community preparedness) is essential to community recovery and to ensure that the community has the ability to face future challenges.

The principles of 'community-led recovery' have guided the approach taken to develop the Plan. Community members and stakeholders have been involved in the development of the Plan through the Shire of Mundaring Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery Community and Environment Sub-committee and the initiatives contained within the Wooroloo Bushfire Community and Environment Recovery Action Plan, (the Action Plan).

Preparation has taken a whole-of-community approach to recovery (rather than a focus on directly fire-impacted residents) to ensure that lessons learned have a positive impact on community preparedness and resilience across the Shire.

The Plan is a living document to support ongoing community conversations and to enable the ability to be flexible as needs require.

Strengthening community preparedness and resilience is not only essential to community recovery, but also to the ability of the community to face future challenges. It requires long term commitment from all stakeholders including Shire of Mundaring.

It is noted that at the time of drafting the Plan a number of short term initiatives had been commenced and/or completed.

2.0 Background

The Wooroloo Bushfire began at 12:02pm on Monday 1 February 2021 and burned across an area of approximately 10,000 hectares, over a period of seven days.

Driven by easterly winds the fast-moving, erratic grass and scrub fire spread rapidly to the west and north-west. In addition to the immediate impact on the community of Wooroloo, a number of localities within the City of Swan were significantly impacted – Gidgegannup, Swan Valley, Bullsbrook, Ellenbrook, Aveley and The Vines.

Woorloo Bushfire Overview

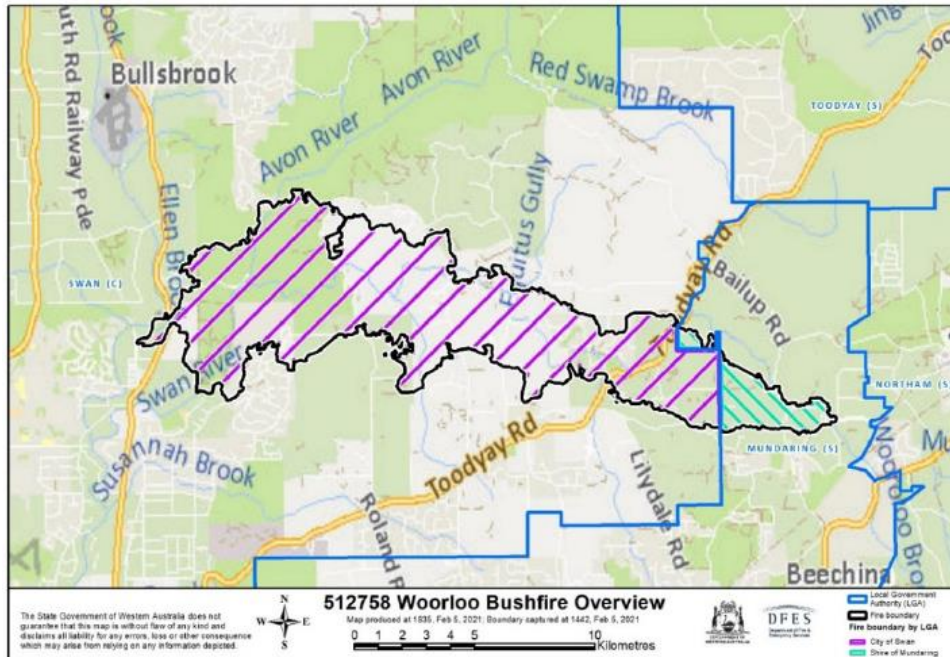


Figure 1: Woorloo Bushfire Overview – 10,900 hectares

Power, water, radio and telecommunication services were interrupted for various periods of time, multiple extended road and rail closures were in place.

Across the two Local Government Areas the Level 3 bushfire destroyed 86 residential structures, caused the loss of ≈66 animal lives and injured many more. Additionally, ≈240 properties were directly impacted by the fire with hundreds more properties included within the evacuation area.

1,128 people registered as evacuees with Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) and Department of Communities (Communities), with approximately 900 people attending the three evacuation centres.

3.0 Impacts

Impacts have been summarised in relation to the goals outlined in the Shire of Mundaring Strategic Community Plan 2020-2023.

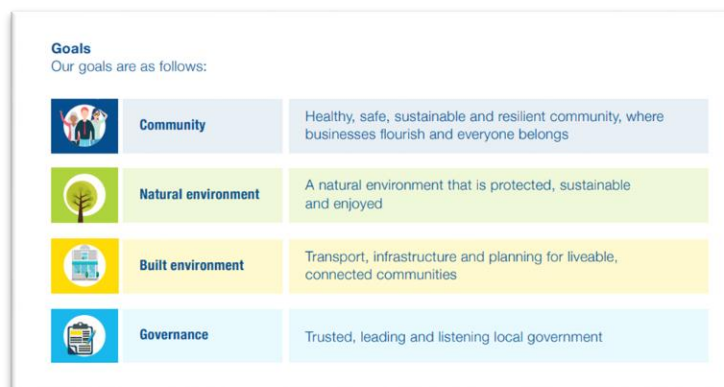


Figure 2: Our Goals, Shire of Mundaring, Strategic Community Plan 2020-2030

Community – Social and Economic

The directly affected area within the Shire of Mundaring has a population of approximately 773 people (ABS 2016), and all 329 private occupied dwellings (plus the two prison facilities) were placed under an Emergency Warning or Watch and Act Advice. Some residents within the area evacuated whilst others elected to stay and defend their properties.

No community injuries were reported.

The Shire of Mundaring activated its Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA), including the following sub-plans:

- Evacuation
- Welfare (Midland District)
- Recovery
- Animal Emergency Welfare Plan

Other activities included;

- The initial Incident Control point being set up at the Wooroloo Hall on 1 February 2021.
- The Department of Emergency Services establishing the Incident Control Centre at the Mundaring Arena on 2 February 2021.
- DPIRD activating the State Support Plan Animal Welfare in Emergencies on 2 February 2021, supported by the Shire of Mundaring through the provision of human and logistical resources.
- The Shire of Mundaring supporting the Department of Communities in the management of evacuees, including the establishment of an evacuation centre at Brown Park, in conjunction with the two evacuation centres established within the City of Swan.

On Monday 8 February Percy Cullen Pavilion was activated by the City of Swan to be used as a Community Bushfire Recovery Centre. This centre became a hub for more than twenty five support agencies including not-for-profit agencies, insurance and banking companies alongside other local, State and Federal government agencies.

Natural Environment

Whilst the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) reported no significant impacts on native wildlife considering the scale and size of the fire, there is growing local concern in relation to the impact on the local environment.

The fire impacted native animals directly, with a number being euthanised, and also through the loss of habitat. Vegetation along creek lines was completely incinerated in places, leaving the banks vulnerable to erosion. Many mature trees were lost, including some with hollows that are important for the breeding of threatened black cockatoo species.

A section of the Shire managed Werribee Road Reserve was burned, along with many kilometres of vegetated road reserves.

Built Environment

There was damage and destruction to the built environment throughout the incident area. Damage included residential buildings, sheds and stables along with innumerable kilometres of fencing.

It is estimated that 6 principal residences, 6 secondary residences, 28 sheds (varying sizes) and 1 stable were destroyed within Wooroloo.

Due to the age of residences within the impacted area it was ascertained that a small percentage would contain asbestos and copper chrome arsenic (CCA) treated timber.

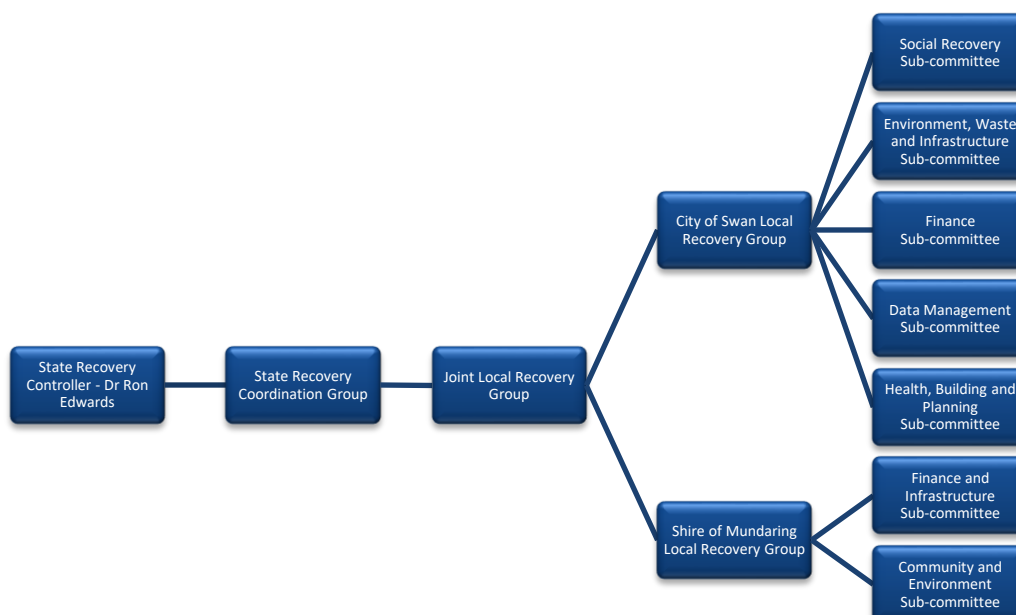
Significant damage was caused to power infrastructure. The resultant loss of power impacted on radio and telephone communications, National Broadband Network (NBN) and water supply infrastructure.

Shared radio communications sites impacted through the loss of power caused substantial communications challenges. The requirement to establish mobile repeaters for communications was undertaken in partnership by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and DBCA. This provided some alternative communications channels.

Governance

While the bushfire was being brought under control, the Shire appointed a Local Recovery Coordinator and formed a Local Recovery Coordinating Committee. As recovery efforts progressed a joint recovery group was established with the City of Swan, along with Shire of Mundaring two sub-committees focused on key local recovery issues. Refer to Point 4, Recovery Structure, for details of the full recovery structure including the connection to the State Recovery Coordination Group.

4.0 Recovery Structure



Shire of Mundaring Local Recovery Coordinating Committee

The Committee was formed to ensure that community needs, as a result of this disaster, were understood and addressed. The group has steered, and will continue to guide, the restoration and strengthening of the community.

The Committee comprises a range of key stakeholders.

- Elected Member, (Chair), Shire of Mundaring
- Australian Red Cross (two representatives)
- Department of Communities (two representatives)
- Department of Fire and Emergency Services (five representatives)
- WA Police, Mundaring District Officer in Charge / Local Emergency Coordinator
- Shire of Mundaring
 - Councillors (two representatives)
 - Chief Executive Officer
 - Director Corporate Services
 - Director Infrastructure Services
 - Director Statutory Services
 - Director Strategic & Community Services
 - Manager Building Assets
 - Manager Community Safety & Emergency Management / Local Recovery Coordinator
 - Senior Environmental Health Officer

The Committee held its first meeting on 10 February 2021, continuing weekly until mid-March when the frequency was altered to fortnightly. The Committee currently (July 2021) meets monthly. The Committee operates in accordance with the relevant sections of the LEMA Recovery Plan.

The following two sub-committees were formed.

1) Infrastructure and Finance Sub-committee

This Sub-committee comprises a range of key stakeholders.

- Elected Member, Chair, Shire of Mundaring
- Shire of Mundaring
 - Director Infrastructure Services
 - Director Corporate Services
 - Manager Finance and Governance

The primary purpose of the Finance and Infrastructure Sub-committee is to provide advice and guidance on the criteria for and distribution of emergency relief payments from various agencies, the claiming of funds from the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFAWA) and the reinstatement of damaged shire owned infrastructure.

The Sub-committee met on a weekly basis for a period of three weeks (8, 15 and 23 February 2021). Essentially the Sub-committee discussed and focused on:

- The plan and progress of repairs to Shire infrastructure damaged or destroyed by the fire.

- The application and review process for individuals to access the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund; and
- The progress of applications for residents applying for, and receiving emergency relief payments from the State Government.

2) Community and Environment Sub-committee

This Sub-committee comprises a range of key stakeholders and community members.

- Elected Member (Chair), Shire of Mundaring
- Australian Red Cross
- Department of Communities Bushfire Recovery
- DFES District Emergency Management Advisor
- Environmental Biologist (local resident)
- Mundaring Christian College Principal
- Mundaring Community Bendigo Bank
- Parky Care
- Rotary Club of Mundaring
- Wooroloo community members (two representatives)
- Shire of Mundaring Environmental Advisory Committee representative
- Shire of Mundaring
 - Manager Community Safety and Emergency Management / Local Recovery Coordinator
 - Manager Libraries & Community Engagement
 - Coordinator Community Engagement
 - Coordinator Environment and Sustainability
 - Project Officer – Community Recovery (19 April 2021)

The primary purpose of the Community and Environment Sub-committee is to provide advice and guidance on community and environmental recovery initiatives and mechanisms during the Shire of Mundaring response to the Wooroloo Bushfire. A key function of this committee is to provide advice to assist the affected community towards re-establishing social, environmental, emotional and physical well-being.

Disaster Relief Funding Arrangements (DRFA)

A joint Commonwealth and State Government-funded 'Category C Community Recovery Fund' worth \$18.1 million was approved on 25 February 2021 to support impacted individuals and communities in the recovery from the Wooroloo Bushfire.

The Community Recovery Fund aims to deliver three programs (refer to Section 8 "Recovery Programs and Initiatives" of the State Level Recovery Plan):

1. the Coordinated Residential Clean-up Program
2. the Community Recovery and Outreach Program
3. the Community Recreational Asset Restoration Program

The provision of Category C funding to Shire of Mundaring, City of Swan, Department of Communities and Australian Red Cross through the Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Recovery Arrangement was facilitated by DFES.

The Shire of Mundaring's request for funding to support community recovery through a Recovery and Outreach Program was informed by the Wooroloo Fire Community and Environment Recovery Sub-committee and the Shire's previous experience in bushfire recovery, most recently the 2014 Stoneville, Parkerville, Mount Helena fire.

The funding has enabled the Shire of Mundaring to employ a project officer for a two year period to lead community engagement and recovery initiatives.

Key priorities of the project officer will be to:

- Actively engage with and assist the local community to identify needs and plan and prioritise initiatives, considering social, economic, environmental and physical needs.
- Provide a central point of coordination for local community recovery efforts and resources.
- Facilitate effective communication between all local community groups, businesses and residents involved in community recovery activities.
- Access local networks to share information with the wider community.
- Evaluate the success of community recovery initiatives.
- Facilitate a series of community driven recovery projects and events.
- Create communication materials (print and digital) to support psychosocial recovery and community resilience.
- Facilitate the delivery of community based workshops.

The Shire approach will be community driven, and community led, with support provided by the dedicated project officer. A strengths based community development model will be utilised whilst incorporating the National Disaster Recovery Principles.

The aim is to build a community that is resilient, has the capacity to support itself, with a sustainable vibrant region fostered. Whilst our focus in undertaking this work will be on the directly impacted community of Wooroloo our approach will be broader than this town site. There are wider community impacts with this most recent disaster having been a triggering event for communities across the Shire, who have lived experience of bushfire. With this in mind psychosocial messaging and supports will be available across the district.

5.0 Community-led Recovery Approach

What is recovery?

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience's (AIDR) Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook #2 "Community Recovery" (the Handbook) (2018, p4) refers to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

The restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems, activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and 'build back better', to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.

UNDRR 2017

Further definitions provided are;

- **Recovery:** the process of coming to terms with the impacts of a disaster, managing the disruptions and changes caused – which can, for some people, lead to a new way of living.
- **Recovered:** being able to lead a life that individual and communities value living, even if it is different to the life they were leading before the disaster event.

What is resilience?

The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

UNDRR 2017

A Community-led Approach

Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engages with the community and supports them to move forward.

Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook #2
“Community Recovery” (2018, p30)

The Handbook recommends that community-led recovery should:

- Assist and enable individuals, families and the community to actively participate in their own recovery;
- Recognise that individuals and the community may need different levels of support at various times;
- Be guided by the communities’ priorities;
- Channel effort through pre-identified and existing community assets, including local knowledge, existing community strengths and resilience build collaborative partnerships between the community and those involved in the recovery process;
- Recognise that new community leaders often emerge during and after a disaster, who may not hold formal positions of authority; and
- Recognise that different communities may choose different paths to recovery.

The development of the Plan has been guided by these principles.

6.0 Objectives and Outcomes

The main objective, and subsequent outcome, is in line with the philosophy of the Australian Government’s “A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs, 2018” (the Framework).

The overarching **objective** is to assist the community to become sustainable and resilient. A sustainable community can manage its own recovery, a resilient community is better able to withstand a future disaster.

The desired **outcome** is that there are positive changes in the knowledge, behaviour, skills, status and level of functioning of the community.

Community and Environment

Area One: Community		
Ref:	Objective	Outcome
1.1	Access to all required services post-disaster, including the option to return to the community (adequate housing available as required).	The community is not experiencing excessive stress and hardship arising from the disaster.
1.2	Access to appropriate health services (including mental health).	Community members have the knowledge, skills and resources for dealing with health issues related to the disaster experience.
1.3	Access to psychosocial support, for the fire-affected and wider community.	Community members have social networks to support each other (to respond to their own needs and to support other members of the community).
1.4	Community capacity building and resilience.	The community has opportunities for creative expression that help the community recover from disaster.
1.5	Community-led approach, with flexibility for changing recovery needs.	A community-centred, responsive, flexible, engaging and supportive recovery process is more likely to be successful.
1.6	Continuous improvement for agencies.	An opportunity to review and refine systems and processes to improve future preparedness.
Area Two: Communications		
Ref:	Objective	Outcome
2.1	Community capacity building and sustainability.	The community is aware of disaster recovery processes and the progress in relation to this disaster.
2.2	Community capacity building and resilience.	Community members are aware of the risk of future disasters, along with ways to prepare themselves and their properties.
2.3	Continuous improvement for agencies.	An opportunity to review and refine systems and processes to improve future preparedness.

Area Three: Volunteers and Donations		
Ref:	Objective	Outcome
3.1	Opportunity for members of the wider community to provide support to affected community.	A channelled outlet for acts of kindness, which make the wider community feel that they are part of something larger for which they gain emotional reward.
3.2	Appreciate those who assisted with response, relief and recovery.	Volunteering connects the community, recognition of volunteer efforts builds their confidence and promotes opportunities to other community members.
Area Four: Environmental		
Ref:	Objective	Outcome
4.1	Environmental sustainability through a return to pre-disaster state (or a state that is acceptable to the community).	Exposure to environmental / public health risks are minimised, a return to a healthy ecosystem is encouraged and important community assets are restored.
Area Five: Future		
Ref:	Objective	Outcome
5.1	Community capacity, resilience and sustainability building, and continuous improvement for agencies.	All stakeholders are better equipped to respond to, and recover from, any future incidents.

7.0 Phases and Timeframes

Response

February to March 2021

Assistance and intervention during or immediately after an emergency, with a focus on saving lives and protecting community assets (buildings, roads, animals, stock, crops and infrastructure). Usually measured in hours, days or weeks.

At the time of drafting the Plan the response phase is complete.

Recovery

April 2021 to April 2023

The coordinated process of supporting emergency-affected communities in the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing. Usually measured in months or years.

The preparation of the Plan is a key aspect of the recovery phase, which will encompass the resilience and review phases.

Resilience

September 2021, ongoing

Community resilience will be strengthened through support in relation to prevention (mitigation actions) and preparedness, making arrangements, creating and testing plans, training, educating and sharing information to prepare communities should an

emergency eventuate. The community will be encouraged to put measures in place to follow in the event of an emergency, such as volunteer distribution and access to resources.

Initiatives that support the building of community capacity and increased resilience are detailed within the Action Plan.

Review

February 2023

The Shire will review all activities and actions taken during the Wooroloo Bushfire in order that there be better preparation for future emergencies.

A review will identify opportunities for various stakeholders to be better prepared and to identify measures to mitigate the impacts of future emergencies on all stakeholders.

Return

April 2023

The Shire will continue to deliver on the goals and objectives of our 10 year Strategic Community Plan with a strong focus on a community-based approach, which embraces leadership, collaboration, and inclusivity. Individuals and community will be empowered to take ownership of the ongoing recovery process to enable them to lead a life that they value living, even if it is different to the life they were leading before the Bushfire.

The Shire will continue to take a community-wide approach to guide preparedness and recovery from future challenging events.

8.0 Community and Environmental Recovery Initiatives

The recovery initiatives identified by the Community and Environment Subcommittee, community members, stakeholders or the Shire have been, and continue to be, captured in the Action Plan.

Outcomes of these initiatives are being recorded within the Action Plan. A Review document will be prepared utilising the summary template below.

Initiative Summary Template

Title:	
Description:	
Origin:	
Support Level:	
Objective:	
Lead Agency:	
Partners:	
Stakeholders:	
Timeframe:	
Funder:	
Budget:	
Outcomes:	
Key Learnings:	