

SAMPSON FLAT BUSHFIRE RECOVERY



Sampson Flat Community Leaders receiving “Community Champion Awards” at the “Sharing Lessons Learnt and Celebrating Resilience Day”, 18 March 2016

January
2015

Final Report – February 2016

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Local Recovery Coordinator

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Sampson Flat Bushfire Recovery

LOCAL RECOVERY CO-ORDINATOR SIX MONTH REPORT

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the Final Report of the Sampson Flat Bushfire, Local Recovery Coordinator. It includes and builds on the Interim Report (July 2015) provided to the Duty Minister in accordance with the contract of appointment of the Local Recovery Coordinator.

The report incorporates responses from the State Recovery Office to the recommendations in the Interim Report (July 2015).

INTRODUCTION

The Sampson Flat Bushfire started on 2 January 2015 and was declared a major emergency on 3 January 2015. The declaration was rescinded on 7 January 2015. The fire was declared safe on 6 February 2015 after several weeks of outbreaks in previously burnt areas.

The affected communities included: Sampson Flat, Kersbrook, Gumeracha, One Tree Hill, Humbug Scrub, Kenton Valley, Cudlee Creek, Upper and Lower Hermitage, Inglewood, Millbrook, Paracombe and Chain of Ponds

Broad impacts include:

- 12,548 hectares of land burnt out
- 25 houses (24 homes and one National Trust of SA building) destroyed and 44 houses damaged
- 196 outbuildings destroyed
- 214 vehicles destroyed
- 13 small businesses severely impacted and a number of horticultural businesses impacted
- 311 livestock properties impacted, with stock losses totaling 914 (790 sheep, 31 cattle, 93 other), and
- 134 people, mainly firefighters injured



Relief Centre's operated during the emergency and a Recovery Centre was established at the Torrens Valley Community Centre, 45 Albert Street, Gumeracha on Friday, 16 January 2015.

The State Government appointed the Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion, the Hon Zoe Bettison MP as the Duty Minister for the Sampson Flat Bushfire Recovery and the Hon Karlene Maywald as the Local Recovery Coordinator on 9 January 2015.

LOCAL RECOVERY STRUCTURE

Local Recovery Coordinator – Hon Karlene Maywald

Karlene Maywald was appointed Local Recovery Coordinator on January 9, 2015 for a period of 6 months. The position was extended on a part-time basis (0.3FTE basis) from 9 July 2015 – 8 February 2016.

The Local Recovery Coordinator was accountable to the appointed Duty Minister and the role was administered by the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion.

The purpose of the role was to:

- establish the local recovery structures including recovery coordination and Chairing the Local Recovery Committee,
- establish and maintain effective communication processes with the public and with other organisations and services working in the recovery effort,
- lead the development of strategies, plans and actions in the recovery process in a unified, efficient and cost effective way with a common focus and objective,
- establish and maintain effective strategic partnerships with welfare agencies, local councils and government agencies,
- provide regular reporting on progress and issues

Regular reporting on the recovery effort was provided directly to the Duty Minister, to the State Recovery Committee and to the Emergency Management Committee of Cabinet.

The Local Recovery Coordinator was based at the Recovery Centre, Gumeracha for the initial 6 month contract, and then worked part-time from a base in the State Recovery Office.

This report includes and builds on the observations and recommendations made in the Interim Report (July 2015) and provides a summary of activities and observations of the Local Recovery Coordinator during the term of the appointment.

Local Recovery Committee

The Local Recovery Committee (LRC) was established and met for the first time on Friday 9 January 2015. Meetings were initially held weekly and continued on a monthly basis as the recovery progressed.

The purpose of the LRC was to oversee and support the recovery effort, and determine solutions for emerging issues (or escalate where appropriate) and to develop a recovery action plan including short, medium and long term objectives.

The committee members were representatives from:

- The Adelaide Hills Council
- The City of Playford
- The City of Tea Tree Gully

- The State Recovery Office
- The Emergency Relief Functional Service
- The Recovery Centre On-Site Manager (Housing SA)
- The Department of Education and Child Development
- The Adelaide Mt Lofty Natural Resources Staff
- The Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
- The Department of State Development (Small Business)
- The Department of Health
- The State Emergency Relief Fund Committee
- The Department of Transport (Initial meetings until all DPTI roads were declared open and unrestricted)
- The CFS (Initial meetings until fire was declared safe)
- The Australian Red Cross (joined LRC in July 2015)

The Australian Red Cross was invited to join the LRC as a result of their long term commitment to recovery and the interconnectivity of activities occurring. Red Cross appointed Collette Brown as SA Disaster Recovery Coordinator for a period of 18 months.

The minutes of the LRC meetings provide a record of issues and matters addressed and are available through the State Recovery office.

The LRC developed a Recovery Action Plan (attached) which included a record of early activities and achievements and medium and long term recovery goals.

Recovery Centre – Torrens Valley Community Centre, Gumeracha

The Recovery Centre was opened on the 16 January 2015, by the Emergency Relief Functional Service, (Housing SA – DCSI), at the Torrens Valley Community Centre in Gumeracha. It was a place where people affected by the bushfire could find important information, advice and support to help them recover and rebuild. The Centre was initially open for 5½ days per week with recovery staff on call 7 days per week.

When first opened, the Recovery Centre was staffed by rotating Housing SA staff. Following an internal recruitment process, a permanent on-site Centre Manager and 2 staff were appointed on 16 February 2015.

Red Cross volunteers provided a meet and greet service at the Recovery Centre continuing on from their work at the Relief Centre's until mid-April 2015. Red Cross also provided psychological first aid and recovery support resources where appropriate.

Other Government and non-government agencies and organisations also established a presence at the Centre including:

- Centrelink (Daily for the first two weeks)

- Births Deaths and Marriages – Document replacement
- Salvation Army (Daily for 3 weeks)
- St Vincent de Pauls (2 days per week from week 3 to week 7)
- Adelaide Mt Lofty Natural Resources (Daily for 2 months, then weekly until June)
- Adelaide Hills Council (Initially daily for two weeks and then two days for the next month)
- Adelaide Hills Council – Planning Officer – part-time placement in Gumeracha and by appointment
- Summit Health (by appointment one day per week from week 5 to 10 and then by appointment only) and Northern Adelaide Medical Local (2 days per from week 10 for 4 weeks)

Organisations modified their presence at the Centre in response to demand. When demand at the Centre reduced to the level that did not warrant a physical presence, organisations remained engaged on an ‘as needs’ basis through the Recovery Centre staff, the Community Development Officer and the Local Recovery Coordinator.

Feedback from the Recovery Centre Staff, Red Cross outreach, Adelaide Hills Council home visits and the Local Recovery Coordinator identified that there was a need for the establishment of a case management program to better assist affected families and individuals.

The ERFS implemented this program which involved personalised care for up to 150 families. The level of interaction was shaped and scaled to meet the needs of individuals and ranged from regular calls and/or visits to check on well-being to more complex case management involving the development of individual case plans to help people to set goals and achieve outcomes towards the road to recovery. Rural Business Support was engaged to enhance the reach of the program for 6 months.

Given the nature of the distribution of the community in the fire affected region, Recovery Centre outreach posts were established from 18th March at Cudlee Creek, One Tree Hill and Kersbrook for 2 half days per month at each location.

The outreach post at Cudlee Creek operated until July 2015, and the One Tree Hill post until November 2015. At the time of writing this report the post at Kersbrook was still operational for 2 days per month.

The Centre at Gumeracha operated for 5 days per week until November 2015, and then recovery services and staff relocated to Housing SA, Fourth Street, Gawler. At the time of writing this report Case Management of individuals was continuing on an ‘as needs’ basis.

Recovery Hotline

The Recovery Hotline was activated by the State Recovery Office on 4 January and managed by the State Call Centre until the end of January when it was transferred to State Recovery Office (SRO). SRO hotline operators liaised with Recovery Centre Staff, the Local Recovery Coordinator and the Community Development Officer regularly to ensure that advice to callers was consistent with advice given at the Recovery Centre.

The SRO continues to provide this service on an on-going basis.

Community Reference Group

The Local Recovery Coordinator convened a public meeting at the Kersbrook Football Club on 15 January 2015, to establish a Community Reference Group to support a community driven recovery effort and to provide advice to the Local Recovery Coordinator and Local Recovery Committee.

There were 68 attendees at the public meeting including 27 community members affected by the fire and the rest were individuals representing organisations looking to provide support to the recovery effort.

The public meeting was run as a workshop to capture knowledge regarding the immediate issues and to start to quantify and capture the goodwill of the community and service providers looking to give support.

There were two distinct groups amongst the attendee's. Those that may need help and those that wanted to provide help. Those wanting to provide help outweighed those who may need it and it was apparent that the community was struggling to cope with the outpouring of goodwill and offers of assistance.

It was clear that we needed to harness the goodwill and generosity of the broader community so it could be matched with the need of those affected by the fires, as they became ready to accept that help.

To manage this, it was decided to separate the Community Reference Group into two groups. The community members affected by the fire (Community Leaders Group) met first and then were joined by the Service Providers Group for the second part of the meetings.

This enabled a clear opportunity for the community to talk about issues without pressure, whilst keeping the service providers engaged.

The Service Providers Group became very familiar with each other's capability and it wasn't long before informal alliances began to form. This enabled them to maximise the assistance available using a collaborative approach, sharing volunteer effort and resources.

This proved to be a very successful way of coordinating the Service Providers Group capacity with the emerging needs.

The purpose of each group and how they interacted evolved to meet the community's needs and sub groups made up of members from both groups were established to deal with specific matters.

The Community Leaders Group met weekly initially, then fortnightly and monthly as time progressed. In June 2015 it was considered by the CLG no longer necessary to hold separate meetings for Service Providers and the groups were merged into a single Community Reference Group (CRG).

The number of Service Providers attending post July 2015 diminished as their role in recovery concluded.

Community Leaders Group

The Community Leaders Group met weekly from 27 January 2015 and then monthly from 18 February 2015.

Individuals living within the fire-affected community who have strong ties and networks were invited to attend. This included those that expressed an interest at the initial public meeting and people nominated by Councils or other members of the community.

The purpose of the group was to:

1. Guide a community led recovery effort

2. Provide feedback to the Local Recovery Committee from the community regarding issues and concerns as they emerged
3. Advise on development of a communication strategy and monitor its effectiveness
4. Be the conduit for effective engagement and consultation with the community

It was agreed that the membership of the CLG should be as large as it needed to be to represent a good spread of interests across the fire region and to ensure it operated as an inclusive body to maximize community input. A core group of members attended every meeting and others joined the group for short periods when issues arose of interest to them.

Service Providers

The Service Providers Group consists of individuals, groups, organisations and agencies offering support to people affected by the Sampson Flat bushfire.

Meetings were organised by the Local Recovery Coordinator and attended by the Community Development Officer and Recovery Centre Manager.

The purpose of this group was to:

1. provide regular updates on activities and support offered to fire affected communities and individuals
2. connect service providers with emerging needs
3. connect service providers with each other to maximise the support effort
4. raise issues as they arise and offer support for solutions

Service Providers were asked to provide an updated monthly report of activities to share with the Community Leaders Group and each other. This ensured an understanding between members about the nature of effort being undertaken and also resulted in cooperation between providers to maximise the help to fire affected families.

Sub groups emerged to deal with specific issues and alliances formed to enable greater on-ground support.

Initial “Service Provider Group” participants:

- Australian Red Cross
- Disaster & Recovery Ministries
- Natural Resources Adelaide Mt Lofty
- Insurance Council
- Rural Business Support
- Blaze Aid
- Habitat for Humanity
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Summit Health
- North Adelaide Medicare Local
- SAVEM
- Horse SA
- Architects Institute
- Planning Institute
- Toyota Landcruiser Club
- Volunteering SA/NT
- PPSA/Livestock SA
- Youth Justice
- Samaritans Purse
- Telstra

Service Providers continued to participate until they concluded their work with the fire affected community.

Whilst providing support to individuals, members of the Service Providers Group have been able to refer fire-affected people to other help as they were well informed about recovery activities and the support available from other service providers.

Details of Service Provider support is provided later in this report.

Community Development Officer – Ms Anne Ellis

The Community Development Officer position was jointly funded by the State and Federal Governments and the appointment was made through the Adelaide Hills Council for a period of 12 months.

Ms Anne Ellis was appointed to the position on the 10th March 2015. The CDO oversaw the development of community programs and events across the three Councils in the fire affected region.

The CDO was initially co-located with the Recovery Coordinator at the Recovery Centre at Gumeracha and maintained this office for the duration of the appointment. A range of programs and events were developed aimed at reaching all sectors and age groups within the community.

The CDO worked closely with the Community Reference Groups, the Local Recovery Committee, the Local Recovery Coordinator, the Recovery Centre Staff and Red Cross to deliver a vast range of activities.

Programs and events are detailed later in this report.

Australian Red Cross

Outreach

Red Cross conducted field and phone outreach on behalf of the ERFs from January to March 2015.

As a follow-up to this, in consultation with ERFs, Red Cross conducted field outreach in the community as a wellbeing check-up at the 6 month mark and again after the Anniversary for Preparedness in Recovery in February 2016.

Community Recovery Support

Red Cross appointed a Sampson Flat Disaster Recovery Coordinator for a period of 18 months from March 2015. The Disaster Coordinator worked closely with the State Government Recovery Team to support and initiate activities for fire affected communities.

Details of activities are provided later in this report.

LOCAL RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

Community Leaders Group (CLG) - Public Information Meetings/Forums

Service Provider Community Information Meetings

A series of public information evenings were convened by the CLG, supported by the Local Recovery Coordinator. The aim was to provide the community with knowledge about Service Providers and what help they could offer. The format provided for each organisation to present a short spiel regarding their capability. Service provider stations were set up around the hall, and following presentations the community had the opportunity to meet with organisations of interest to discuss their individual needs.

The Rotary Club of Gawler Light provided food and drinks.

Insurance Forums

At the request of the CLG, The Insurance Council led the coordination of a series of information nights where individuals could come along and speak to insurance companies, insurance assessors and the Insurance Council regarding insurance matters.

Re-Building Forums

The CLG identified that many in the community affected by the fire had never previously had the need to engage with the planning and approvals process.

From the Service Providers Group, a sub-group called the Rebuilding Group formed.

With the support of the Local Recovery Coordinator, Community Development Officer and the Recovery Centre Staff the Service Providers “Rebuilding Group” organised a series of public forums where individuals were able to access advice on planning matters. The Architects Institute, the Planning Institute, CFS Development Officers and Council Planners were in attendance to support enquiries.

Newsletter, website and Social Media

The LRC with input from CRG initially coordinated the production of a fortnightly newsletter. Hardcopy was distributed through Councils, local post offices, pubs, shops and community facilities and electronically by email following establishment of a database. Production was shared between the Councils and moved to monthly in June 2015. At the time of writing this report Newsletters were continuing to be produced by the Adelaide Hills Council Monthly. Copies of the Newsletter can be found on the Recovery Website or through SRO.

The Recovery Website was updated regularly by SRO with information regarding recovery activities and linked to support services.

The “SA Bushfire Recovery” and “Sampson Flat Community Events” Facebook pages provided regularly updated information.

The Adelaide Hills Council established a Community Calendar to inform the community regarding the range of events being organised. Community members were encouraged to check the Calendar before organizing an event to avoid clashing with other activities.

Sampson Flat CFS/SAPOL Community Debrief Meetings

A series of CFS/SA Police debriefs were held at Kersbrook, One Tree Hill and Cudlee Creek from the 21 January 2015. Approximately 400 people attended these meetings.

The issue that dominated the meetings related to road closures and the time it took for people to be able to return to home.

A sub-committee of the State Recovery Committee was established to review and develop policies relevant to this issue.

State Recovery Return to Home Sub Committee

Membership included representatives from SRO, LRC, DPTI, CFS, SAPOL, SES, Local Government and 2 members from the fire affected community. The sub-committee met monthly over 10 months to consider the issues and new guidelines to support cordon management have been endorsed and implemented.

It is intended that a comprehensive community consultation will occur to help the community to fully understand the complexities of managing risk associated with road closures and the new guidelines to support return to home policies.

At the time of writing this report this consultation has not occurred.

The new Guidelines were used during the Pinery Fires in November 2015 and were reported to have resulted in a better outcome for the community.

State Recovery Small Business Sub Committee

The Department of State Development established a SRC Small Business sub-committee to provide support to fire affected businesses. Members included DSD – Small Business, Rural Business Support and PIRSA.

One on one engagement occurred with businesses affected by the fires.

Community Development Officer Activities

The Community Development Officer played a leading role in driving a community led recovery. Activities were developed and/or supported through the CLG and Councils.

The CDO coordinated or contributed to the organisation of numerous activities including:

- Crows and Port Power games – bus trips
- Premier and Governor – Volunteer thank you
- Volunteer Coordination - VIBE Kersbrook Fundraiser – 8 February 2015
- Men's/Father and son comedy night
- World Environment Day – Corporate revegetation event
- Family fun day at Woodhouse
- RAMBO's (Retired Aged Men Being Out) – A men's social outing club (on-going) and RAWBO's (Retired A?? Women Being Out) – A women's social outing club (being established at time of writing this report)
- Cudlee Creek Speakers meetings
- Gardening event in spring 2015 as part of a broader Spring Campaign
- School Holiday programs

- Young Girls Make-up and Self Esteem workshops (now evolving into an on-going youth group)
- Ticklish Allsorts kids concert
- Cooking Classes
- Outdoor Education fun day
- Australian Red Cross Pillow Case Project
- Nature Craft
- Place Making projects:
 - Humbug Scrub Bus Shelter
 - Mosaic Chairs at Kersbrook, Cudlee Creek, Gumeracha, Paracombe, Houghton
- Rotary project for Fire Water signs (24 Signs)
- Storm Birds – children’s grief program
- Public forums addressed by Anne Leadbeater, a Community Disaster Management Specialist
- Grape Growers affected by smoke taint - meetings (including Anne Leadbeater presentation)
- Fire Expo at Kersbrook Primary School
- Fire Safe Communities – supported various local gatherings
- Sampson Flat Bushfire Community Resilience Exhibition., Golden Grove Arts Centre (Jan 2016) and Gumeracha Civic Centre (on-going)
- Plant Giveaway scheduled for June 2016
- Forrest of Eden replanting scheduled for June 2016
- Kersbrook Lego Group (ongoing)
- Kersbrook Community Shed (on-going)
- Women’s Mindfulness 6 week program
- Couples Cooking Evening with Rosa Matta
- Roachdale Reserve walking trails rehabilitation - connection to Stirling Market Funding
- First Year Anniversary “Tie a Red Ribbon”
- Houghton Fest - supported January 2016
- Coordinated/Supported various Community Grant applications including:
 - SERF Grants
 - John McMahon Community Fire Safe Group - Walkie Talkies and Farm Firefighting Unit
 - Thomas Wende Community Fire Safe Group Farm Firefighting Unit
 - Jeff Ayres – 8 Bushfire Safety Signs
 - Humbug Scrub Bus Shelter
 - Horse SA
 - Bendigo Bank
 - CRG – 16 additional Bushfire Safety Signs
 - Community Benefits Grant
 - Kersbrook Playground
 - Westpac Grants
 - Roachdale Reserve
 - Kersbrook Primary School
 - Humbug Scrub Bus Shelter
 - Hills Volunteering
- Community Scrap Book – Resilience and Recovery (Community Reflections Book)
- Sharing Lessons Learnt and Celebrating Resilience Conference
 - Community Members and Leaders sharing their stories

- Dinner to Celebrate nominated Community Champions (135 nominees awarded certificates)

The CDO also supported local gatherings in communities throughout the fire affected area with catering support and/or guest speakers. This support was a great way of enabling the community to access information specific to their neighbourhood needs in a less formal environment.

Community Initiated Activities

Community initiated Fund Raisers

A number of community groups' organised fundraisers to support fire affected families. Some of these events were support by volunteers registered with Volunteering SA/NT.

- Inglewood Inn and Houghton Oval Bushfire Relief Fundraiser at Houghton on 18th January 2015
- Vibe Hills Bushfire Fundraiser at the Kersbrook Soldiers Memorial Park 8th February 2015
- Kersbrook Equestrian Centre – Equestrian Event Fundraiser for Pinery Fires January 2 2016
- Houghton Fest (a follow-on event from the Inglewood Inn event)– February 2016

Funds raised at these events were donated to the State Emergency Relief Fund.

There were many smaller events, BBQ's and luncheons arranged by Community Fire Safe Groups and other local groups.

Service Provider Initiated Activities

Many NGO's, Service Clubs, and individuals mobilised quickly to provide help to people affected by the fires.

They can be categorized as follows:

- **Humanitarian**– Australian Red Cross, Summit Health, SAVEM, RSPCA
- **Physical** – Blaze AID (fencing), Samaritan's Purse (clean up), Habitat for Humanity (clean up and rebuilding), Toyota Landcruiser Club (Clean up and transport of goods), Mormon Helping Hands (clean up, gardening), Garden Clubs (re-vegetation).
- **Donated goods/services** – fence posts , fodder, garden supplies, Insurance Council, Hut Centre, Tools for Blokes, feral animal management, donated household goods (including Facebook pages), Wood for Good (in development).
- **Financial Support** –CWA, Lions, Tzu Chi, Saint Vincent de Pauls, Salvation Army, Rotary

Support organisations who participated in the Service Providers Group were able to refer fire-affected people to other help as they were well informed about recovery activities and support available through the reporting structures.

Many alliances between organisations emerged and sub groups formed to maximise the support to the community.

Australian Red Cross

Red Cross initiated activities and/or supported events initiated by the Community Development Officer, the Local Recovery Coordinator and Community led initiatives

Community Events supported by Red Cross:

- Member of the Community Reference Group and Local Recovery Committee
- Inglewood Inn Fundraiser at Houghton Oval – 11 January 2015
- VIBE Kersbrook Fundraiser – 8 February 2015
- XITH – Australian Red Cross Young Humanitarians attended the gaming event targeted at youth, held by Adelaide Hills Council - Jan 2016
- Port Power Football Clinic at Kersbrook Oval
- Men's Comedy Night
- Teenage Make-up and self-esteem days;
- World Environment Day, 5 June 2015
- Family Fun Day at Woodhouse (Australian Red Cross volunteers provided First Aid demonstrations), 14 June 2015
- Retired Aged Men Being Out (brewery tour)
- Storm Birds (5-7 year olds) in Kersbrook
- Pillowcase Project (Children's Preparedness session) during school holiday program in Cudlee Creek and with 3 classes at Birdwood Primary
- Grape Growers Sundowner Session. Australian Red Cross brought Charles Smedley, owner and winemaker of Mandala Wines who has been affected by Smoke Taint twice. Charles shared his personal journey of overcoming the challenges and emotional rollercoaster of being impacted by bushfires.
- Australian Red Cross was requested to support an evening organised by a community member for people who have lost their homes. The purpose of the evening was to hear from someone who has been through a similar experience but is at least 5 years into their recovery. Steve and Ali Pascoe from Strathewen came over and spoke to the group. Australian Red Cross coordinated Steve and Ali's participation in this event. August 2015
- Kersbrook Fire Expo on 18 October.
- Couples Cooking Class with Rosa Matta – 30th October at Heathfield High School
- Sampson Flat Bushfire Community Resilience Exhibition. Australian Red Cross volunteers provided emotional support (PFA) to guests and had a preparedness stand alongside Jeff Ayers' "Community Lessons Learned" exhibit. 16 January 2016.

Red Cross initiated events

- Rob Gordon community information evenings (Kersbrook (X2), Gumeracha, One Tree Hill)
- Anne Leadbeater toured of the Adelaide Hills to work with fire affected communities, local and State Government and Red Cross People. A total of 104 people were engaged during 8 sessions/workshops, over 3 days. 17th-20th August 2015
- Supporting the Supporters Sundowner at Houghton Oval with Jolie Wills from NZ Red Cross.

Support to School Communities

Red Cross provided recovery resources, including lesson plans, to affected schools and facilitated workshops with school staff at 8 Adelaide Hills Schools. 72 teachers, SSOs & staff attended practical workshops with disaster specialist Michelle Roberts. The sessions focused on supporting teachers with practical tips and information on how children may experience and react to trauma and disasters. Sessions were very well received and extra sessions were requested by schools who had heard about sessions by word of mouth. Schools visited:

- Springhead Lutheran (11 teachers)
- Gumeracha Primary (11 teachers)
- One Tree Hill Primary (25 teachers)
- Kersbrook Primary (6 staff)
- Lobethal Primary (11 teachers)
- Lenswood Primary (8 teachers)

Parent Information Sessions were also conducted as a follow-up to the workshops.

Recovery Resources were provided by Red Cross to:

- Gumeracha Library
- Council staff who attended 'Recovery Basics' sessions
- Schools
- Post Offices

(Information included "After the Emergency" Children's Recovery Books and MP2 players; Coping with Major Personal Crises; Helping Children and Youth After an Emergency).

Training for Recovery Workers and Volunteers – "Supporting the Supporters"

The CRG recognised that personnel working in recovery needed also support. Red Cross initiated a range of opportunities to support those working in recovery.

120 Local Government staff attended training and workshops. Other organisations also attended including SAVEM and Conservation Volunteers Australia. Training included:

- Psychological First Aid (Full Day):
- Introduction to PFA (3 hour workshop)
- Recovery Basics: Positive Ageing Network

Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources

The Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Officers continue to be very active in supporting property owners. They initially set up in the Recovery Centre and visited properties by appointment.

One-on-one advice was provided to over 150 fire affected property owners about weed management, property design, native vegetation, sustainable agriculture, and water resource management. Through the Service Providers Group and beyond, they have teamed up with many organisations like Horse SA, Gardening and other community groups, and the CFS. They attended community gatherings to present on

property management issues, including specific sector information forums and large or small community get-togethers and barbecues.

They produced a broad range of very helpful fact sheets and brochures to help inform property owners about what to expect and how to respond to land and biodiversity issues following a bushfire. Distribution was through public meetings, community events, the Recovery Centre, the Newsletter, websites and social media. State Flora also provided a \$20 gift voucher to accompany an NRM publication.

As part of a broader initiative supported by the Community Development Officer, AMLR engaged team members of the Aboriginal Learning on Country NRM program to rebuild the walking trails at Roachdale Reserve.

Activities to support better land and biodiversity management will continue as part of on-going 'business as usual' for AMLR officers.

Blaze Aid

Blaze Aid provides valued assistance to help rebuild fences following bushfires utilising coordinated volunteer effort. Initially Blaze Aid planned to establish their operation at the Kersbrook Soldiers Memorial Grounds. This did not eventuate so the Local Recovery Coordinator with the support of PPSA negotiated access to the recently closed Lenswood Research Centre owned by PIRSA. PIRSA facilitated the availability of the site at very short notice, and it proved to be a very suitable site for Blaze Aid to base their operation.

Blaze Aid commenced assisting property owners in the Sampson Flat fire ground on 18 January. Up until the 22 April (their last report), they had commenced work on 104 properties. Of those 104 properties, work was completed on 81 properties, they were continuing to work on 27 and were yet to commence on seven. A total of 268 people had volunteered their time and effort, from both locally and interstate.

Blaze Aid took registrations for help up until the 22 March 2015 and continued to provide help until the end of May 2015.

Many of the sites Blaze Aid worked on also accessed donated pine posts from wine regions around the state.

Blaze Aid reported that the Sampson Flat Camp was one of the most difficult they had managed due to the steep terrain and hardness of the ground for fence posts. Older volunteers found the going very tough, which limited the pace at which fencing could be done. They also struggled to find enough volunteers with fencing experience to supervise volunteer gangs.

At the time of writing, Blaze Aid have not provided a final report on their activities, however it is evident that their work has been very important to assist fire affected property owners on the road to recovery.

Subsequent to the Sampson Flat event, the State Recovery Office has been liaising with Blaze Aid management to ensure that assistance can be available to assist with the location of suitable accommodation for their base camp following future events.

Conservation Volunteers Australia

Conservation Volunteers Australia supported families referred through the Recovery Centre who are in need of volunteer support to clean-up and manage the environment on their property post fire.

They have also organised replanting days and a corporate challenge on World Environment Day.

Habitat for Humanity has also called on CVA volunteers to assist with projects.

Disaster & Recovery Ministries

From day one of the fires, Disaster & Recovery Ministries provided pastoral and spiritual support through their chaplains at the invitation of the ERFs. They visited more than 400 homes and provided follow up visits when required. They distributed gifts from “Shoe Boxes with Love” and they made referrals to the Recovery Centre when they encountered people who were not coping to bring them into the ‘case management’ program.

The Uniting Church also provided funding and support for the July School holidays program.

They were regular attendees at Service Provider meetings and provided valuable feedback.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity joined the Service Providers Group at the onset. Their effort to support families commenced over time as families came to grips with the task ahead. The support they provided included assistance with cleanup of fire debris, tree removal, fence removal and support and advice regarding rebuilding.

Habitat for Humanity assisted 70 families/property owners with property clean up with 80 activity days. Over 300 unique volunteers were engaged in Sampson Flat activities, with over 250 of them first time Habitat for Humanity volunteers.

Habitat for Humanity joined the Rebuilding Group and made a valuable contribution to the production of literature aimed at helping to rebuild.

Horse SA

Horse SA continues to be very active in their support to horse property owners. In addition to their own events to support horse owners, they have partnered with AMLR officers to organise a range of information forums and more informal ‘coffee and chat’ events on private land, in stables or sheds. Due to the number of horse properties affected by the fire, this has proven to be a very valuable partnership.

Horse SA has given invaluable service to assist owners of horse properties to manage their properties post fire and rebuild more sustainably. They have produced a large range of very helpful information sheets.

Insurance Council

The Insurance Council of Australia was very supportive and co-organised a series of public meetings focusing on insurance. They were readily available to provide support where individuals were having issues negotiating with assessors and insurance companies.

Lions Club

The Australian Lions Foundation provided financial support to individual families and projects. Access to funds were supported through the Lions Club of Torrens Valley

PPSA/Livestock SA

Livestock SA was supported by PIRSA to coordinate the distribution of donated fodder immediately following the fires.

A distribution depot was established at the Kersbrook Soldiers Memorial Park manned with volunteers from the Community. The South Australian Road Transport Association assisted with a call to members with many providing free transport for donated fodder.

Rebuilding Group

The Rebuilding Group was formed as a sub group of the Service Providers Group to harness the effort from likeminded agencies in the building sector led by the Australian Institute of Architects and including the Planning Institute of Australia and Habitat for Humanity.

They provided pro bono initial advice and support for people engaging with the planning process to rebuild. In conjunction with the Community Development Officer and Local Recovery Coordinator they organised community forums and were available for referral on an 'as needs' basis (e.g. via referral from the Recovery Centre Staff).

Each member made a valuable contribution to the production of literature aimed at helping to rebuild.

Rotary Clubs

The Rotary Club of Gawler Light provided BBQ's at public meetings and other events. Rotary Clubs also arranged working bees to help with property clean up.

Rural Business Support

Rural Business Support was very active providing support to rural businesses. They were very engaged with the Service Providers Group providing valuable insight and contributions to identify programs and activities to support emerging needs. They were a member of the SRC Small Business sub-committee and were contracted by ERFS to provide additional case management support to small business owners and families in financial distress.

Samaritans Purse

Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief offers practical, physical assistance to those in greatest need. In response to the Sampson Flat fire, Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief deployed a Site Management Team with a purpose built Disaster Relief Unit. In order to support local recovery and ensure a coordinated response, they partnered with the Clovercrest Baptist Church as their host and coordinated their efforts with the State Recovery Office and Volunteering SA-NT Their response was to provide help with clean up to the community.

SAVEM

South Australian Veterinary Emergency Management (SAVEM) set up at the Kersbrook Football Club during the emergency to assist with the management of injured stock, pets and wildlife.

They continued on-call well into March and were actively represented at all public forums. Following the emergency effort they collaborated with AMLR to develop information on feeding wildlife post a fire. They also collaborated with ZOO SA and the Toyota Landcruiser club to soft release kangaroo joeys.

Many families were supported by SAVEM through the care of their injured pets and stock. SAVEM was a significant contributor to the Service Providers Group and was able to refer people to other services as a consequence.

Summit Health/ North Adelaide Medicare Local

Summit Health provided counselling services at Gumeracha, Nairne and Mount Barker. They also attended public forums and information sessions organised by the Local Recovery Coordinator and Australian Red Cross.

Additional support was sourced from the North Adelaide Medicare Local (now a PHN) following continuing demand for help

Telstra

Telstra attended Service Provider meetings until all services were back to normal. They provided one on one support where residents encountered difficulty through the automated service.

Toyota Landcruisers Club

The Toyota Landcruisers Club members were early responders in the aftermath of the fires providing on the ground assistance in conjunction with a range of agencies including:

Property clean up, transporting donated fence posts, household goods, animal fodder, tools and toolboxes and assisting Habitat for Humanity with rubbish removal.

In the three months following the fires, 29 members contributed over 600 hours of voluntary service and drove 9,000 km's delivering items needed across the region.

Volunteering SA/NT

Volunteering SA-NT established a register to capture spontaneous volunteers and direct their effort to support activities where possible. Over 1400 people registered. On the advice of the State Recovery Office, online and telephone registration of spontaneous volunteers was closed on Thursday 5 March 2015. They were all thanked and informed of other volunteering opportunities.

Volunteers from the register were called upon to support community events and the Service Providers Group members accessed the register to source volunteer assistance.

Wood for Good

The Wood for Good project was initiated by Craig and Deb Hosking from Austral Tree Services. Wood for Good is a philanthropic program that processes, packages and sells waste timber with the proceeds going to charities.

The potential for post fire stockpiles of timber to be utilised in for the Wood for Good program with part proceeds being returned to Sampson Flat Community projects is being considered by the Adelaide Hills Council.

Youth Justice

The Recovery Centre and Youth Justice have developed a partnership to offer fire affected families support in property clean ups. This has been very successful to date with property owners reporting how helpful the program is. The Recovery Centre continues to identify suitable properties to link with this service to aid in the recovery process.

Very positive reports have been received regarding the positive engagement and assistance provided and benefits for the participants in the program have also been reported as very positive.

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OTHER RECOVERY SUPPORT AND ACTIVITIES

Support from Community external to the fire region

A number of spontaneous community led groups emerged to provide valuable support including:

Adelaide Fires 2015 – Facebook page

Adelaide Multi Stake Mormon Helping Hands Bushfire Cleanup

Bushfire SA Assistance – Facebook page

Sampson Flat Garden Revival – Facebook page

Tools for Men – Facebook page

The Garden Recovery Group

The Sampson Flat and Eden Valley Fires Garden Recovery Project

RECOVERY CHALLENGES

Demographics

The area is typical of major city hinterland populations. Much of the population are commuters to the city, that live in the area for lifestyle purposes and many have small hobby farms and acreages. This brings a unique set of challenges for a community that does not necessarily have the historical resilience from generations of living off the land.

It also means those who have that resilience are dealing with many new neighbours who have not.

Many children go to school outside the fire region, so the effort to support school age children cannot rely on the local schools alone. Some schools have only one or a small number of children from the fire region making it more difficult to provide consistent support.

Vulnerability ratings for the affected population are generally lower and the socio-economic background is generally higher than the State average.

This brings challenges, as many families have never had to rely on welfare type systems before and can find this very difficult to deal with.

For some there has been a reluctance to seek help early as a result of people believing that there are many that are worse off and so, more deserving of help. This has led to a surprising number of people only seeking help months after the event when they have become overwhelmed by the recovery task. This has been more evident in the older age bracket probably because they have previously been self-sufficient and not accustomed to seeking help.

The communities are also geographically separated and fiercely independent of each other which has required the recovery effort to be multi targeted and duplicated across the region.

The fire destroyed no township centres or community assets and the homes that were destroyed are not commonly linked to the same community.

Three Council districts were affected, but none have their head office in the fire region so it was important to keep Council Staff engaged and informed about recovery efforts to prevent disengagement.

The terrain is also particularly challenging which impeded recovery efforts for cleanup, rubbish removal and fencing.

The proximity to the Metropolitan area however bought the reality of bushfire to the city as many suburbs in the foothills were evacuated and smoke could be seen billowing from the Hills skyline. The fire emergency also lasted many days and received saturation media coverage over more than a week. This resulted in an unprecedented outpouring of support, which was disproportionate to other major fire responses.

For example in 2014, South Australia had many large bushfires, four of which burnt over 425,000 ha however, most of the damage was in National Parks, Forestry Land or private broad acre properties. In total 17 homes and 5,500 stock were lost. Those fires did not result in the same level of support as has been generated for the Sampson Flat Fire. One public appeal in 2014 raised \$25,000 whereas the Sampson Flat public appeal in 2015 raised in excess of \$1.9m. In addition the NGO support has been overwhelmingly stronger for Sampson Flat. The State Government response was also greater as the event was declared a “major emergency” which triggered a higher level of support.

Again in November 2015, the Pinery Fires did not see the same level of public support despite the devastation including loss of 2 lives, the raising of 95 homes, significantly higher stock losses, the destruction of numerous farm outbuildings and equipment and 85,000 ha of mostly high value farming land and crops being burnt out.

The lack of public response for the appeal to support the Pinery Fire victims could be attributed to the much shorter duration of the fire event and therefore the media coverage was not as prolonged. Another possibility is that the event occurred less than 12 months after the Sampson Flat event and there may have been less capacity amongst those willing to give to be able to do so again so soon. Or it could be a combination of the former coupled with the event posing little risk to the population base in Adelaide.

This discrepancy in public response should be carefully reviewed by emergency management planners to assist in the development of mitigation strategies to minimise inequity of service delivery to disaster affected communities in the future.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND TRANSITION

The Duty Minister was very keen to see a community led recovery and this was the focus of the Recovery Team from day one.

The Community Reference Group and the Community Development Officer played lead roles in ensuring that the Community was the central focus of all activities.

An important role of the Local Recovery Coordinator was to guide the transition from actively supported recovery to recovery embedded in the community.

All agencies involved in the recovery effort were requested by the Local Recovery Committee to develop transition plans. The Community Reference Group provided important guidance to the thinking and planning for transition which was particularly important in the lead up to start of the next bushfire season and the first anniversary of the fires.

To assist in readiness for the next fire season a Bushfire Expo was held at the Kersbrook Primary School on 18 October 2015. The School Principal and staff, the CDO, Recovery Centre staff and Red Cross all contributed to the success of the day.

As a result of feedback from their respective communities the Community Reference Group did not wish to organise an official event to commemorate the first anniversary of the day the fires started. Instead the Community Development Officer worked with the community to put on an exhibition.

The “Sampson Flat Community Retrospective: Celebrating our Resilience Exhibition” was held at the Golden Grove Art Centre and at the Torrens Valley Community Centre from 16 January to 5 February 2016

The Exhibition displayed a collection of images, objects and stories relating to the 2015 Sampson Flat Bushfire. It showcased the resilience of people affected either directly or indirectly by the fires through their stories, art and images. Over 30 artists, including every Kersbrook Primary School student, exhibited.

Minister Bettison opened the exhibition and Mayors from the three affected councils were in attendance and spoke: Mayor Bill Spragg (Adelaide Hills Council), Mayor Kevin Knight (City of Tea Tree Gully), and Mayor Glen Docherty (City of Playford).

To provide the opportunity for the community to reflect upon how far they had come, the idea of a community diary emerged. The book “Resilience and Recovery, a Scrapbook of Community Reflections” resulted and it is an inspirational collection of stories, poems, letters, anecdotes, photographs and news that illustrates the depth of community spirit and the strength of community resilience that has emerged and stands as a lasting record of their trials and tribulations in recovery

This beautiful book celebrates all that is good about belonging to a community and all the good that can come from adversity.

Heartfelt thanks go to the volunteers who worked with the Community Development Officer, for all the wonderful work and the hours of effort invested in bringing this book to life.

On 18 March 2016 a special “Sharing Lessons Learnt and Celebrating Resilience Day” was held at the Golden Grove Arts Centre. This was an enormous undertaking by the Community Development Officer and was a huge success. Over 130 people attended the day to hear Community Leaders share their personal journey towards recovery. The speakers were:

Daniel Palmer, Author, Sampson Flat Bushfire: The Paracombe Experience. Daniel shared his very personal story of dealing with the trauma post disaster and the importance of getting help when things aren't going as planned.

Janet Pedler shared the road to reopening of the Roachdale Nature Reserve.

Mike Walsh shared his experience of being a Principal at the Kersbrook Primary School and the children's perspective.

Paul Clark from Kersbrook Hill Wines and Cider told of the trials and tribulations of recovery a business and a family.

Ray Sims, leader of the Humbug Scrub Fire Safe Committee provided a great overview of the importance of Fire Safe Communities.

Han Robot, founder of the RAMBO's men's club gave a presentation on the need to be connected following disaster.

Nicki Stuart shared how she has rebuilt her equestrian business and the importance of paying forward. Nicki held a fundraiser for Pinery Fire Victims on the anniversary of the Sampson Flat Fires.

Jeff Ayes presented his “Lessons Learnt” brochure and how this has helped many to think about preparedness differently.

Matt Thomas provided an insightful presentation on his experience as a member of the “Return to Home” sub-committee and the new resultant policy frameworks.

Tom Brookman presented on the importance of land and property rehabilitation to assist with personal recovery and the opportunity to rethink land management.

In the evening a dinner was held to recognise and acknowledge 135 people who had been nominated by their own community as Community Champions.

The effort of the Community Development Officer and the team of volunteers she pulled together to make this happen deserve special mention. It was a mammoth task and resulted in a very moving day that really highlighted how far the community had come.

The Day also highlighted the extent to which the community had taken responsibility for their own recovery with appreciation of the coordinated effort to support them.

SUMMARY

The Local Recovery Coordinator – Sampson Flat Fires, Interim Report, July 2015 - made 9 recommendations based on the lessons learnt from the recovery effort during the 6 months following the event. These recommendations and the State Recovery Office responses are included later in this report. An additional 4 recommendations have been made with this report.

The second six months of recovery focused heavily on building resilience within the community, connecting communities and understanding the lessons learnt. The Recovery team and the Community Reference Group were particularly keen on ensuring that the transition from supported recovery to community self-sufficiency was as seamless as practicably possible.

Community development initiatives were focused on programs that would continue beyond supported recovery and projects that would sustain resilience in the longer term. The Community Development Officer was instrumental in facilitating the delivery of a very wide variety of programs and projects in response to the communities identified needs. There is no doubt that the efforts of the CDO have been instrumental in sustaining a community led recovery.

The Community Development Officers efforts were instrumental in sustaining a community led recovery.

Community activities initiated during recovery that are continuing include the Kersbrook Community Shed, Kersbrook Public Hall Playground (funds successful through Community Benefit SA Grant - \$23,500), Kersbrook Lego Group, RAMBO's, Fire Preparedness Signage, Place Making Projects at Humbug Scrub, Kersbrook, Cudlee Creek, Gumeracha, Paracombe and Houghton and various revegetation programs.

The CFS has continued to receive interest in the establishment of new Community Fire Safe Groups and relationships between many existing groups has strengthened. An additional focus on preparing for recovery has emerged through a Community Fire Safe Group at Scotts Creek who have established a "Communities Preparing for Recovery (CPR)" Group to complement the CFS work.

Scotts Creek is not located in the Sampson Flat Fire region, but they have drawn on the experiences of the fire affected community to guide their work and strong relationships have developed between fire safe groups.

At the time of writing this report, the CRG was continuing to meet monthly, however there was keenness amongst members to move on from the formal framework of recovery. Many members have expressed interest in a new Adelaide Hills Council initiative to support community leaders. The Manager Community Development at the Adelaide Hills Council is attending the March CRG meeting to explore what this may look like.

Recovery Centre Staff continue to provide one-on-one support through case management from the Housing SA Gawler office. The demand on the service has gradually declined as individuals have transitioned to the new normal and the issues they are dealing with are less acute. Some individuals and families, particularly those who lost everything and those who have struggled emotionally, are continuing to access the service and staff are maintaining contact through well-being check-ups. The ERFS is developing a strategy to enable continued services to people whose case files remain open as part of the transition to business as usual.

The case management service provided by the Recovery Centre has proved to be very effective in transitioning fire affected people through their recovery

THANK YOU

The Local Recovery Coordinator published the following letter in the February newsletter to acknowledge the end of the contract and thank all involved in the recovery effort for their support and amazing commitment to supporting the Community.

Karlene Maywald - Sampson Flat Local Recovery Coordinator

Over 12 months ago, I was appointed to the position of Local Recovery Coordinator for the Sampson Flat Bushfires. What an amazing experience it has been to work with so many generous and willing people all focused on helping affected families on their road to recovery.

Following such a devastating event, it really is heart-warming to see the overwhelming response from the broader community.

By working with local community groups and leaders to co-ordinate non-Government, Government and volunteer support we have been able to ensure that more people have had access to more help when they have needed it.

It is important to recognise that whilst many in the community have recovered well, for others the recovery is on-going particularly for those that lost their homes. Individual circumstances play a big part in the speed of recovery and there is no “one-size-fits-all”, as each individual strives to create a new normal for their family.

My contract as the Local Recovery Coordinator comes to an end in February, but the recovery support does not end. Kayelene and the Recovery Centre Team are still on hand to support individuals on a case by case basis and the mobile recovery centres are still operational.

Anne Ellis, our Community Development Officer, continues to provide program support and we have some terrific community led initiatives happening to continue building resilience and connectivity within and throughout the region.

It has been an absolute pleasure working with the Community Reference Group who have guided the overall response and worked closely with recovery service providers to ensure help matched need as much as possible.

I cannot thank enough, the Community Leaders who put their hands up to help the recovery effort. They have been totally committed to the task of supporting their community and have worked tirelessly on your behalf.

There are too many service providers to name, but all deserve high praise for the manner in which they have worked proactively and collaboratively to maximise the response effort. Thank you to you all!!

It has been a privilege getting to know so many in the communities affected by the Sampson Flat fires, and to work closely with everyone.

Although my formal role concludes in February, the relationships and connections I have made over the past 12 months will continue for a lifetime.

All the very best, Karlene

INTERIM REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND SRO RESPONSE (BLUE)

Recovery Centre

The Recovery Centre at Gumeracha quickly became the hub of recovery activity. A range of agencies set up outposts at the Centre to provide a one-stop shop for fire affected families to gain information and seek support.

Initial Recovery Centre staff, were rotated into the Centre from Housing SA offices. An internal recruitment process was undertaken to appoint permanent recovery staff who commenced at the Centre on 16 February 2015.

Whilst every endeavor was made to expedite the recruitment process, it was still too long and created a risk of inconsistent support and confusion for those seeking help. It also delayed significantly the opportunity to develop trust and rapport with fire affected families. It is important to note that once the manager and staff were in place, support was of a very high quality.

The case management has proven to be very successful and should be introduced as soon as a Recovery Centre is established.

Recommendation 1- Interim Report

- **ERFS should develop and maintain a register of agency staff that can be made available for recovery work following a disaster.**
- **Staff on the register should undertake basic training to support their knowledge of coping with post trauma communities and what to expect at a Recovery Centre.**
- **An exemption from the usual internal recruitment process should be sought to expedite the placement of staff for the duration of recovery.**
- **Case Management model of care should be introduced as soon as possible.**

State Recovery Office Response

The Emergency Relief Functional Service is working to formalise agreements with new Participating Organisations trained in recovery work to increase resources during the recovery period. This will negate the need to use agency staff following an event. Staff recruitment, using existing role descriptions, will be undertaken as soon as the need for a recovery centre is identified to ensure staff appointments are finalised as quickly as possible.

Arrangements are in place to ensure that case management services are activated upon opening of the recovery centre.

Communication

At the time of the Sampson Flat Bushfires a centralised system for collecting and collating personal information about those affected by the fires was not in place.

People had multiple contact point opportunities including:

- Presenting at Relief Centre's during the emergency.
- Calling the Hotline (during and after the emergency)
- Calling Red Cross Register.Find.Unite
- Accessing the website "contact us" feature
- Presenting at the Recovery Centre once opened
- Australian Red Cross Outreach program
- Local Council Home visits and response to phone calls
- Pastoral and Disaster Ministries home visits
- Agency attendance at events
- Newsletter feedback email line

The information collected at the Relief Centre's was not accessible for recovery communication purposes once the Centre's were closed.

Many of the people who evacuated did not sustain property damage during the fire giving them no cause to visit the Recovery Centre once it opened, so we lost the opportunity to keep in touch with them.

Information collected by the Rapid Impact Assessment included property details but did not include postal or email addresses.

The Recovery Centre started off with a manual system of recording information and then later established a database to track contact with individuals. This system was for Recovery Staff use only and could not be accessed for more general communication purposes.

The Recovery Hotline tracked callers and advice offered, but this system did not interact with the information being collected at the Recovery Centre.

Australian Red Cross and Council outreach programs did not feed individual information into a Recovery Centre database.

The Local Recovery Coordinator established an e- mailing database for communication purposes by piecing together names collected at public meetings and the use of the Community Leaders networks. This however took time and was not a particularly efficient means to establish good communication networks early on.

Without a centralised database for collecting and collating information it was extremely difficult to keep track of recovery effort and analyse information to determine where there may be gaps in service provision or where duplication may be.

There was the potential for the Community to become confused about who was doing what and it was also very difficult to communicate with the community initially.

Recommendation 2

- **A centralised database should be established with multiple site input and access e.g. hotline, recovery centre staff, outreach reports**
- **All contact details should be collected at first point of contact and permission for access for communication purposes should be established**
- **A simple reporting system should be developed for NGO's (e.g. Australian Red Cross and Councils) to feed information into the database**
- **A methodology for sharing of information where appropriate should be developed**
- **Local Government resident contact details should be sourced to assist with communication**

State Recovery Office response

The SRO and the ERFS fully support the development of a common database of client details that is used by all relief and recovery staff, together with associated processes for the collection and use of data.

A common database has been established for use by the SRO and the ERFS. We are looking into how Red Cross can use the database without breach of privacy requirements.

The SRO will investigate whether SRO and ERFS will be able to access local government resident contact records for the purpose of follow up and communications with people affected by the disaster.

Community Development Officer

The Community Development Officer position was identified early on as being important for community recovery and development of longer term resilience. Unfortunately the process to secure support funding for the position through the Commonwealth Government process resulted in the appointment not being made until 10th March 2015.

In this instance, the person eventually appointed to the position was an Adelaide Hills Council employee who worked closely with the Local Recovery Coordinator from day one. This meant that she was exposed to the recovery activities well before she was appointed. This proved to be invaluable for developing a connection with the community. The value of having a local person with local knowledge in the CDO position was also evident in creating connections early.

Locals in the community will want to do fundraising events very soon after a disaster. Appointment of the CDO as soon as possible will enable them to engage early in support of the communities' effort to help each other. It is also important to establish a Community Calendar early to try and minimise the clash of community effort and avoid burnout

The CDO could also be more involved early on with managing spontaneous volunteers with Volunteering SA-NT to capture the spontaneous support and help direct it to effort to organisations that can manage and use them.

Community Development should focus on programs that immediately connect with vulnerable groups but should quickly transfer to self-sustaining longer term programs that build sense of community and resilience. I.e. harness the need to be connected in times of need and use this to build stronger communities.

A budget to assist with logistics and support would help build community connection early on. It is important to be aware of community recovery

Co-location of the Community Development Officer with the Recovery Centre Staff and other attending agencies enabled strong linkages to develop however it is important to ensure that all staff understands each other's roles and how they should interact.

Having the Local Recovery Coordinator at the Recovery Centre also provided for strong interaction and coordination of effort.

Recommendation 3

- **The Community Development Officer should be appointed as soon as possible following the event and based at the Recovery Centre if one is established.**
- **Appointment of the CDO should not be delayed by a request to the commonwealth for joint funding.**
- **The CDO should work closely with Volunteering SA-NT to maximise use of spontaneous volunteers.**
- **The Local Recovery Coordinator should also be co-located at the Recovery Centre where possible.**
- **Roles and responsibilities of Recovery Centre Staff, Local Recovery Coordinator and CDO should be well communicated and understood.**

State Recovery Office Response

The SRO agrees that it is desirable for the Community Development Officer (CDO) to be appointed as soon as possible after the event. There is a trade-off between the timelines of appointment of the CDO and the opportunity to recover from the Commonwealth 50 per cent of the cost of the CDO, through the Natural Disaster Relief Fund and Recovery Arrangements (NDRAA). If a claim is made for such an expense under NDRAA, it must be approved by the Prime Minister before an appointment or announcement may be made.

Work has been undertaken to reduce the delays as demonstrated by the more timely appointment achieved for the Pinery Fire. SA (along with other jurisdictions) has been strongly advocating with the Commonwealth for the CDO arrangements to be amended including removal of the need for Prime Minister approval. If achieved this will significantly reduce the process and time implications.

In the meantime the trade-off between a quicker appointment and making a claim to the Commonwealth will be taken into consideration for future events.

The SRO would be pleased to facilitate the necessary link with Volunteering SA-NT and the CDO.

The SRO and ERFs notes the LRC's recommendations regarding how and where the Local Recovery Coordinator and CDO operates and this will be accommodated where possible.

The SRO has prepared a 'Tool Kit' for both Local Recovery Committees and Local Recovery Coordinators which will include the roles and responsibilities of relevant positions and agencies.

This was demonstrated to the Pinery fire Local Recovery Committee on 18 January 2016. It will be provided to future Local Recovery Coordinators and Local Recovery Committees.

Community Reference Group

The establishment of separate Community Leaders and Service Provider Groups worked very well and proved to be a very effective way to support the community to lead the recovery effort, and also to harness the goodwill of the broader community towards those affected by the fires.

The Community Leaders developed strong connections with recovery staff and at the time of writing this report, have continued to maintain strong interest in being involved.

There is enormous capacity within this group and they should be encouraged to take the lead on finding solutions to emerging issues. This will help to build community resilience and help the recovery to be more community led rather than Government led.

The Service Providers Group provided the opportunity to harness the goodwill of a range of organisations and individuals to maximise support when it was needed. This is very important as often the community generosity and willingness to help can be overwhelming for the people affected by the fire. Individuals affected by disaster respond in different ways and at different times to offers of help so it is important to harness the goodwill and park it until it can be applied as needs arise.

If this is not done it will be virtually impossible to reignite the enthusiasm to help after the emergency has passed and they have disengaged.

The Community Reference Group, Leaders and Service Providers, provided strong leadership and guided the government response to recovery.

Recommendation 4

- **Consideration should be given to establishing both a Community Leaders Group and a Service Providers Group.**
- **Service Providers should be encouraged to develop partnerships and find solutions to emerging issues.**
- **A database of offers of support should be maintained and managed to ensure support can be accessed in a timely manner and providers thanked appropriately.**

State Recovery Office Response

The mechanism implemented by the LRC for the Sampson Flat event of establishing both a Community Leaders Group and a Service Providers Group worked well and supported strong community engagement in the local leadership of recovery. The SRO supports the use of this approach in future events.

In practice, the nature of community leadership arrangements would depend upon the dynamics and scale of individual events and the approach preferred by the LRC for individual events.

The SRO's call logging system includes tracking of all offers of support. All offerors were thanked, based on that system. The SRO, the LRC and the CDO collaborated on further interactions with offers of support.

State Government Response

The Sampson Flat Bushfire was the most complex event in South Australia for many years. Since the last major event many agencies have seen changes in policy, departmental restructuring, reductions in funding and resources and a loss of corporate knowledge as a consequence of staff movements. This sometimes resulted in over or under reactions to issues as they emerged.

In 2014 South Australia had many large bushfires. Four burnt over 425,000 ha however most of the damage was in National Parks, Forestry Land or private broad acre properties. In total 17 homes and 5,500 stock were lost. Those fires did not result in the same level of support as this fire.

Partnerships (formal and informal) between state agencies and non-government organisations are important to maximise the services that can be provided to the community and avoid duplication of effort.

For example state health could establish formal arrangements with counselling service providers and PHN's to respond to community needs following a disaster.

The Recovery Hotline was initially managed by the SEICCC and transferred to State Recovery Office from the end of January 2015. From an administrative convenience and efficiency perspective, this worked well. However, it did create two separate points of contact for the public and created a risk of inconsistent messaging and information dissemination.

Whilst endeavours were made to ensure that Adelaide based Hotline staff and Gumeracha based Recovery Centre staff had up to date, consistent information this was not always logistically possible due to the pace at which circumstances were changing.

Another complication was that Information regarding enquiries and advice to the public was stored in two separate unlinked locations which created confusion for the public who were unaware that their enquiry at the Hotline was not recorded at the Recovery Centre and vice versa.

A single integrated and shareable data base should be used to record contact points with the public and a better mechanism for sharing information that is not appropriate content for the website.

It is important to note that State Government agencies should avoid imposing a government led recovery response on the community. The State Governments role should be to guide and support the response and seek to fill the gaps that cannot be filled locally or by non-government recovery effort.

Recommendation 5

- **Members of The State Recovery Committee should ensure that the agency they represent has processes in place to enable continuity and transfer of knowledge regarding disaster response and recovery.**
- **A single integrated and shareable database should be used to record contact points with the public and a better mechanism for sharing information that is not appropriate content for the website should be developed.**
- **The State Recovery Office should continue to work to maximise partnerships (formal and informal) with agencies and non- government agencies that can provide support to communities following a disaster.**

State Recovery Office Response

Regarding knowledge management within agencies that support recovery, the Chair of the State Recovery Committee (SRC) has spoken to one agency where issues were identified. This recommendation will be placed on the State Recovery Committee Work Plan for further discussion and action.

Ideally the Recovery Centre staff and the recovery hotline operators will have identical information to assist community members. The recovery website is the primary repository for this information but some detail is not appropriate for dissemination to the public through that channel. In practice, such information is collated in hard copy and shared between SRO and ERFS.

The SRO is considering how we might collate and share such information more effectively for future events.

The SRO agrees that partnerships should be maximised. Since the Sampson Flat Bushfire the SRO has facilitated three forums with a range of agencies and non-government agencies with the aim of sharing information and forging new or closer relationships.

Local Government Response

In South Australia, Local Government does not feature in the Emergency Management Act, but they do feature in the State Emergency Management Plan – Zone planning and supporting a range of functional services. The Local Government Act 1999 says – ‘to take measures to protect its area from natural and other hazards and to mitigate the effects of such hazards’. The role of Local Government in recovery is not clearly defined or understood.

In this instance the three affected Councils were keen to be involved. They were not prepared though for the types or magnitude of issues that arose perhaps stemming from a lack of experience and/or understanding of the Emergency Management arrangements and the financial impact on ratepayers of the Councils recovery activities.

Recommendation 6

- **State and Local Government should continue to work together to clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify mechanisms to increase capacity and capability.**

State Recovery Office Response

The SRO supports this recommendation. The SRO is a member of all the Zone Committees and where possible increases the knowledge of Councils regarding recovery. In addition the SRO plans to develop “just in time” training that can be provided to local government elected members and officers immediately following a disaster event. This approach recognises that advance training for most councils would be stale and lost by the time an event occurred. Also, mass delivery of training is beyond SRO’s current financial capacity.

Spontaneous Donations and Volunteers

Spontaneous donations became a problem as individuals and groups organised collections with delivery of food to the Relief Centres the main concern initially. Some of these groups did very good work, although for some their effort was less beneficial. Government came under criticism (especially through social media) for not supporting donation programs.

The need to give was not managed as well as it could be. Pre-event agreements and improved public messaging will result in better management of this issue.

In the immediate aftermath of the fires, a number of private corporations offered a range of donated goods that would have benefited the impacted community. Due to a lack of a formal process for receipting, prioritising and distributing these gifts, not all were used to the best advantage. A formal process for collection and distribution of high value donations should be investigated.

An example of an initiative that could be used is GIVIT; Goods for Good Causes (see www.givit.org.au). In partnership with the Queensland Government, GIVIT manages all offers of donated goods and services during Queensland natural disasters.

For the first time in South Australia, Volunteering SA & NT were engaged to manage spontaneous volunteers. VSA&NT provided an online and telephone registration service for people wanting to volunteer. This service helped to manage community expectations by providing a registration service that was separate from the Recovery Hotline. Whilst there were some notable successes in matching volunteers with community need, there is real scope to make better use of this service.

A number of non-government organisations have sophisticated volunteer management systems in place and the linking of spontaneous volunteers to these organisations at the point of contact after a disaster could result in more volunteer effort in recovery and longer term linkages between volunteer organisations and volunteers.

Linking volunteers with existing organisations such as Habitat for Humanity, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Australian Red Cross and the like could help to keep people engaged in volunteering and better match the volunteer effort with the timing of when fire affected families are in a position to accept help.

Recommendation 7

- **State Government should consider adopting a mechanism to coordinate spontaneous donations to maximise community benefit and should consider GIVIT as a partner organisation.**
- **Consider expansion of volunteer register to include the referral of spontaneous volunteers to appropriate volunteer organisations at the point of first contact.**

State Recovery Office Response

The SRO has established an agreement with St Vincent de Paul Society SA Inc (St Vinnies) under which St Vinnies would manage donated goods in disasters, in collaboration with the SRO.

Queensland-based GIVIT offers an alternative model of potential donors registering an item on a website then holding it themselves pending GIVIT matching the item to an affected person who needs it, then affecting the transfer to the recipient via an intermediary charity. GIVIT receives \$250,000 per annum from the Queensland government for its services in disasters and also attracts public donations. GIVIT also serves the general public beyond its role in disasters.

During preliminary discussions between the SRO and GIVIT, GIVIT advised that it would require an annual fee in the order of \$250,000 from the South Australian government to fund operations in this state. SRO's initial view is that in the Queensland context the GIVIT model represents value for money, due to the high volume and scale of disaster events in that state. For South Australia, however, where disaster events occur much less frequently and generally at a much smaller scale, we question the value for money.

The SRO will have further discussions with GIVIT if the funding model is amended.

Pre-approved Funding

Government processes to access funds are time consuming and this delays the ability to get action on the ground quickly. The sooner recovery starts and the community can be supported, the sooner they get on track to recovery.

The State Recovery Committee should consider which actions and investments are likely to be needed post emergencies and seek to have the funding secured at the earliest opportunity. The Sampson Flat experience has demonstrated that the Local Recovery Coordinator, Counselling Services to support the Recovery Centre and the Community Development Officer are the most obvious needs. The Local Recovery Coordinator is a pivotal role and thought should be given to how the right person can be found to fill the role at short notice.

The State Recovery Committee could consider whether a register of potential suitable persons be established, in particular for areas of higher risk. It would also be useful to provide 'just in time' training and resources at commencement of the role.

The Recovery Centre did not have access to mental health counsellors initially and this was not ideal. Some individuals presented in a highly distressed state and would have benefitted from early access to expert support.

Recommendation 8

- The State Recovery Office should seek to have funding secured at the earliest opportunity for expenditure that is likely to be needed following a specified disaster including funding for a Local Recovery Coordinator and a Community Development Officer.
- Health SA should ensure that their plans include the timely provision of mental health support within the Recovery Centre.
- A register of potential suitable persons should be developed for the Local Recovery Coordinator role and a ‘just in time’ training and a resource package should be developed.

State Recovery Office Response

The SRO agrees that early availability of funding is beneficial to local recovery activities. Every attempt is made to secure funding quickly, as demonstrated following the Sampson Flat and more recently the Pinery Fire. The SRO notes that government’s decision regarding resources to be allocated to each event will depend upon the scale and circumstances of each event.

Health SA acknowledges the importance of timely provision of mental health support following disasters and has recently amended the Health and Medical Services Functional Service Plan.

The SRO has under development a “just in time” training and resource package for future local recovery coordinators.

The SRO recognises the benefit of developing a list of people who might be suitable local recovery coordinators for future disaster events, to support an early decision on that appointment. That list would need to take into consideration the potential for a disaster event to occur in many regions across South Australia and the importance of the appointee being acceptable to the local community and ideally already known in that community. In compiling such a list it would also be important not to inappropriately raise the expectations of people listed.

The SRO intends to discreetly develop a list of potential future local recovery coordinators, taking these issues into consideration.

Common Themes

A number of common themes for disaster recovery have been identified. A structured and pre-determined approach to managing these issues should be considered. Themes identified are:

- Provision of water
- Fencing support (including agreements with Blaze Aid)
- Dangerous tree removal
- Hard waste and green waste disposal

Recommendation 9

- **State Government should work with Local Government to identify opportunities to better support communities to manage common disaster issues including the provision of water, fencing support, dangerous tree removal, hard and green waste disposal.**

State Recovery Office Response

The SRO has secured an agreement with SA Water and the CFS in regard to the provision of 'critical water supplies'. Further consideration needs to be given to the issues of dangerous tree removal and hard and green waste disposal.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Dangerous Trees

DCSI's recovery services (Hotline and Recovery Centre) received numerous requests from private landholders within the fire scar for assistance with the felling and disposal of dead trees that continue to pose a risk to the safety of individuals and property.

The State Recovery Office, supported by Forestry SA, conducted a desktop analysis using satellite imagery of those properties reporting issues with dangerous trees. This analysis identified 11 properties of concern, totalling 20 acres of land, approximately 2085 trees with the potential to pose a risk to safety of people or infrastructure. Remediation of this issue was estimated at approximately \$1.25m. In addition, the analysis identified a further 45 hectares consisting of approximately 11,000 trees whose presence severely restricts land use – no cost estimates were conducted for these trees.

The felling and disposal of damaged trees can be a significant and costly issue for property owners. This was evident following the Sampson Flat Bushfire with a significant number of damaged trees that posed a danger to property infrastructure.

Recommendation 10

Consideration should be given to identifying strategies to reduce the implications and costs of removing fire damaged trees.

Managing Waste

Issues pertaining to the disposal of disaster generated waste consumed a large proportion of Recovery services staff effort. Plans for the disposal of different waste types (Recyclable, Hazardous, Green, Hard, and Household) were developed on the run and there was a lack of coordination between the different local governments. As a result, each council area adopted different policies and practices.

Recommendation 11

Consideration should be given to developing strategies that streamline the management of disaster generated waste.

Local Government

Rosemary Munslow, the Playford Council Local Recovery Committee representative reflected on her experiences in recovery as follows:

“After being appointed on the Sampson Flat Fire Local Recovery Committee with a good understanding of Emergency Management and a limited exposure and appreciation of Recovery and Community Development, it soon became apparent to me that Local Government needed to have a collective focus and an appreciation for the needs of the community.

The biggest take away that I have gained both professionally and personally is every individual person impacted by a disaster has different and unique needs.

This experience was insightful for me. It highlighted the necessity to have empathy, accept and appreciate individual differences, put yourself in the shoes of the community and model the behavior that we are proactively listening and not forgetting that significant events such as Sampson Flat Fire are not just a story in the history books.

With this new experience and gained wisdom I feel empowered to ensure that recovery elements have a focus in Local Governments Emergency Management Planning.’

In other States Local Government has a defined, legislated role in disaster recovery. South Australia has experienced Bushfire disasters at Eden Valley, Bangor, Sampson Flat and Pinery in recent years. Given this recent experience it may be timely to review the model of recovery management in South Australia.

In the Recovery Challenges section of this report, inequities in the public response to different disasters are discussed. State and Local Governments should also consider this issue in a review of the model.

Recommendation 12

SRO and the Local Government Association consider undertaking a review of the South Australian disaster management model including a comparison with other states and consideration of strategies to manage the inequities in public response to disaster.

Spontaneous Volunteers and Donations

Feedback from service providers indicated that they did not consider they had maximised the benefit that could have been realised with volunteers registering with Volunteering SA/NT.

Recommendation 13

Volunteering SA/NT consider holding a workshop with service providers servicing Sampson Flat and Pinery Fire regions to review how the volunteer register could be better utilised.

The Local Recovery Coordinator welcomes the SRO response to Recommendation 7 that an agreement has been negotiated with St Vincent de Pauls to manage spontaneous goods donation. This still requires the active management of the storage and distribution of goods as well as disposal of unwanted goods. The GIVIT program ensures that goods are retained by the donor until a person requires the goods. It is a virtual warehouse and is used in Queensland by NGO's on a day to day basis and by the Government during a disaster.

Recommendation 14

SRO should explore with NGO's the possibility of the GIVIT model being used in South Australia for the management of donations on a day to day basis as well as during a disaster.

In the interim, a formal process for collection and distribution of high value donations should be investigated.