Barwon South West Bushfire Management Planning

Phase One Engagement Summary

Background
In Barwon South West, our planning process has been informed by collaborative work previously done with Colac Otway, Surf Coast and Corangamite shires, and with the Western Borders Stakeholder Reference Group.

We have built on the values and objectives established through previous processes and our current engagement strategy is testing what we already know; encompassing new ideas from a wider range of stakeholders across the region and considering the different grassland and forested landscapes.

DELWP has also successfully bid for funding to work with Melbourne University to conduct predictive fire modelling to understand the effects of reducing roadside fuel loads, and what that might mean for private land, critical infrastructure assets, habitat, and townships and smaller settlements.

We also have two projects underway to improve our understanding of the ecological responses to fire in the Far West of the region.

Engagement Approach
Our engagement approach has been to learn from and build on work already done in partnership with CFA and Local Government across the region. We have widened our approach to capture the views of a broader cross-section of the community and to include people and organisations who are not traditionally involved in emergency planning.

Engagement Processes
Our first step was to understand what previous collaboration partnerships had already told us in terms of community values and objectives with respect to bushfire planning. We identified our existing partners in emergency management and new groups we needed to engage with to reflect a wider cross-section of the community.

In August, we ran a workshop in Casterton to understand community values and to test and revise strategic objectives in a grass-land and plantation landscape. This workshop was attended by our partners from CFA, Parks Victoria, Wannon Water and Local Government. Community representatives from Vision Australia and Landcare also participated.

In September, we conducted a dedicated roadside vegetation workshop in Camperdown in partnership with Melbourne University and colleagues from Local Government, CFA, Parks Victoria and Vic Roads. Landcare and community representatives nominated by council also attended.

We have also engaged with the plantation industry, apiarists, Agriculture Victoria, Regional Development Victoria the Victorian Farmer’s Federation, Victoria Police and emergency relief agencies.
We are working closely with Aboriginal cultural heritage advisors and have developed a dedicated engagement strategy which includes Traditional Owner Corporations.

In partnership with Moyne Shire Council, we have also been able to go out to communities in areas recently affected by fires and meet with land owners and residents to hear concerns and ideas about roadside vegetation.

**Promotion**

The Engage Victoria survey was promoted through local media releases and through multiple partner and community agencies such as CFA, Landcare and Local Government.

**Participants**

Ninety-seven surveys were completed for the Barwon South West survey. Most of surveys were completed by people who live in the region.

More than forty percent of surveys were completed by people who had previous experience of bushfire in the area.

**Engagement Outcomes**

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<tr>
<th>Top values</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Property</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Health and Wellbeing</td>
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<td>Human life</td>
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*Top four values by percentage of people who described these values as ‘Extremely important’*
Values by level of highest importance

Values of highest importance levels - total surveys completed = 97

Values rated from most important to least important

Values by overall importance level - total surveys completed = 97
What you want to see in future around bushfire risk management in the landscape

- Closer cooperation between private and public land managers in managing risk
- Local information about how to prepare your private property
- Simpler rules to allow private land owners to manage vegetation on their land
- The community is interested in learning more about traditional Aboriginal customs and practices around the use of fire in the landscape
- The community is interested in a range of possible vegetation management methods such as planned burning and mulching

What you want to see in future around managing roadside vegetation

- Closer cooperation between the fire agencies, Vic Roads and local government to improve planning and to better use available funding and resources
- The community is concerned with striking a balance between keeping roads safe and accessible during an emergency, minimising the risk of fires starting along roadsides, managing weeds, maintaining wildlife habitat and preserving native grasses
- The community is interested in a range of possible vegetation management methods such as planned burning, slashing, mulching and grazing

Next Steps

Eighty percent of respondents want to receive updates through the Engage Victoria website, so we will place updates on the site. In addition, we will establish a newsletter group in response to high demand for regular updates.

We will also be conducting some further workshops with partner agencies, industry groups, community organisations and community representatives.

There will be further opportunities through Engage Vic and local engagement opportunities to contribute to strategy refinement through the summer period.
Appendix 1: Survey

What is your interest in bushfire risk management in Barwon South West Region?
Tick all that apply
- [ ] I live in Barwon South West
- [ ] I have a property in Barwon South West, but I live somewhere else
- [ ] I own/operate a business in the Region
- [ ] I work or study in the Region
- [ ] I'm a community volunteer in the Region
- [ ] I visit the Region for recreation (i.e. Bushwalking, trail riding, camping etc.)
- [ ] I have past experience of bushfire in the area
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Postcode:
If you ticked 'I live in Barwon South West', 'I have a property in Barwon South West', or 'I own/operate a business in the Region', could you provide your postcode?

Thinking about bushfire risk management, how important are the following objectives to you?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Quite important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Minimise loss of human life</td>
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<td>Minimise impact on human health and well-being</td>
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<td>Minimise loss to critical infrastructure networks and assets</td>
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<td>(e.g. telecommunications, power supply)</td>
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<td>Minimise economic loss to public property, commercial forest</td>
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<td>plantations, agriculture, business and tourism</td>
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Minimise the damage to the environment (native plants, animals and waterways)

Preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage and practices and customs around the use of fire in the landscape

Preserve the places and traditions that give me a sense of belonging in my community

Minimise loss to private property (e.g. homes)

Thinking about the objectives above that were most important to you, please explain why these were important.

Thinking about bushfire risk management in the landscape, what could government agencies (e.g. local government, CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Parks Victoria) do to improve bushfire risk management on public and private land?

You have 1,000 characters left.
Thinking about bushfire risk management, what could private land owners do to manage the landscape to help improve bushfire management on their private land?

Thinking about bushfire risk management, do you have any questions or comments about how fuel could be better managed along road and rail reserves?

How would you like to be involved in future stages of the planning process?

- [ ] Receive updates on engagement opportunities for this project through Engage Victoria
- [ ] Hear about more opportunities to engage in my area

If you ticked one of the above, please provide your email address.

Is there anything else you would like to add?