

## Phase One Engagement Summary

### Background

In Hume Region, the planning process for strategic bushfire management planning (SBMP) has been developed through the multi-agency Hume Region Safer Together Working Group (STWG), under direction of the Safer Together Coordinating Committee (STCC).

We have built on the values and objectives established through previous planning processes, including the development of the Alpine North East Risk Landscape SBMP and the Hume Regional Strategic Fire Management Plan 2011 – 2021 (SMBP v1). The development of the previous plan involved consultation with communities, stakeholders and experts, including representatives of industry, land managers, emergency services and local governments, and with a wide range of experts including ecologists and cultural heritage experts. The development of the current plan builds on and extends the consultative processes of SBMP v1.

Our current engagement strategy is testing our current knowledge and assumptions and considering new insights and perspectives from a wider range of community members from across the Hume Region.

### Engagement Process

Our engagement approach has been to learn from and build on consultation already done in partnership with fire agencies and land managers and Local Government from across the region. Our conversations included acknowledgment that in Hume, fires are an ever-present part of our landscape and require active management across the whole year not just during the fire season.

We intend to widen our approach to capture the views of a broader cross-section of the community and to include individuals and organisations who are not traditionally involved in emergency planning (such as Traditional Owner groups).

We understand that some communities and groups of people are more vulnerable to bushfire than others, including those who may not have experience of bushfires, summer visitors, people with disabilities or illness, the elderly and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is also an understanding that some places are more at risk of bushfire than others. The process of strategic planning will guide our responses to bushfire risk to ensure that those places, communities and assets most at risk of bushfire are prioritised for mitigation and management.

We respect and acknowledge that communities consist of individuals who have their own specific experiences and personal opinions that can be drawn upon to seek guidance for future Strategic Bushfire Management planning.

### Engagement Process

The Safer Together Working Group consulted on content for engagement including development of key questions based on the strategy content to date. An engagement framework was developed and endorsed by the Safer Together Coordinating Committee, and it's this framework that has guided the development of this aspect of the engagement process.

Our first step was to understand what previous consultation (with key stakeholders, partners and community representatives) as part of the current version of the strategic bushfire management

plan for Alpine and North East 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 more comprehensive cross-section of the community.

We are working closely with DELWP Aboriginal Inclusion Officers to develop a separate engagement strategy to engage with our Traditional Owner groups.

We have spoken with Local Government representatives who are closely connected with their communities to better understand community concerns about fire breaks, roadside vegetation and fuel reduction methods.

### **Promotion**

The Engage Victoria survey was promoted through FFMVic and CFA social media and via emails to individuals/organisations subscribed to FFMVic Hume Region Planned Burned Notification and 'My CFA' distribution lists. Survey participation was also promoted via multiple partner and community agencies such as EMV, PV, CFA, CMA and Local Government.

### **Participants**

One hundred and eight respondents completed the Hume Region Bushfire Management Planning Survey. More than 80% of respondents indicated they reside within Hume with around 50% working locally and of these, 25% owning their own businesses.

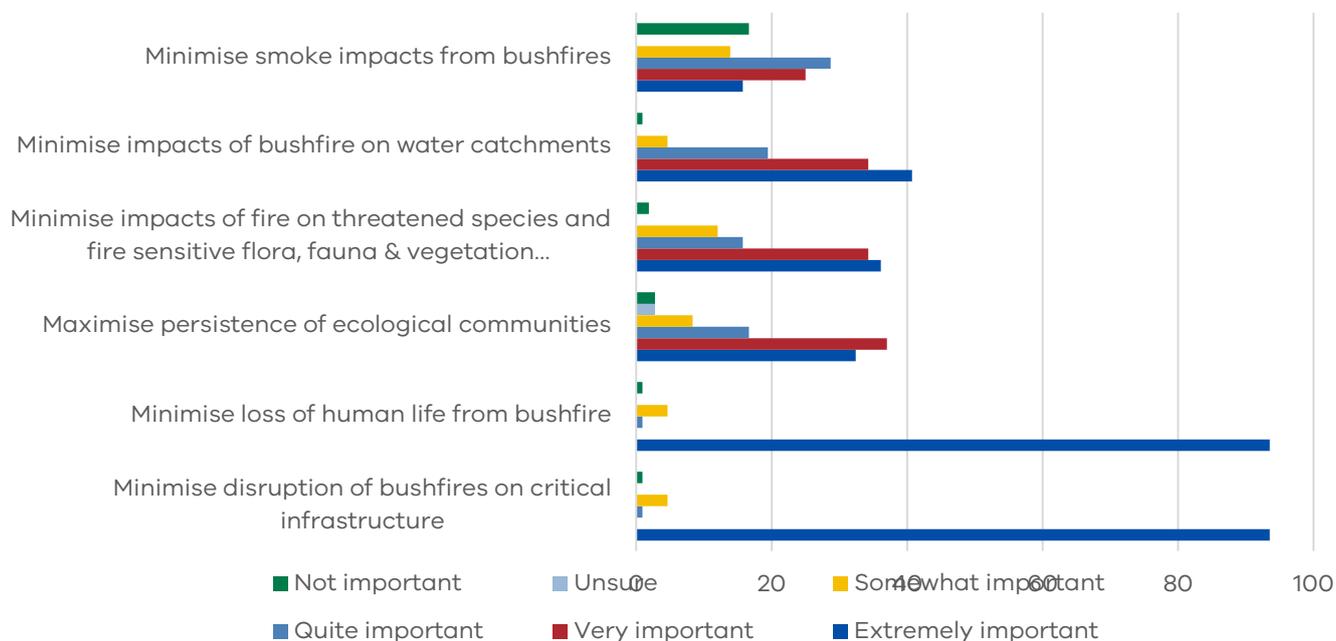
44% of survey respondents have had previous experience of bushfire in their area. This experience suggests that these individuals have a good awareness of bushfire risks, may be more prepared for bushfire and may be able to respond effectively, than compared with individuals with no prior bushfire experience.

'Experience is a great teacher'

### **Engagement Outcomes**

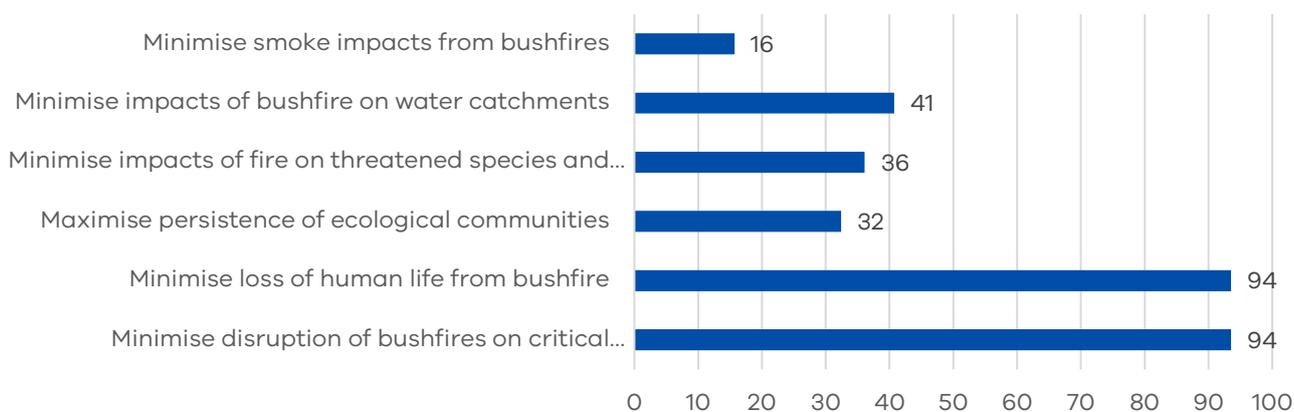
The survey asked respondents to rank six key bushfire management objectives from most to least important. These results are summarised in Table 1(a) and 1(b). The ranking concludes that objectives focussed on minimising the loss of human life and disruption of bushfires on critical infrastructure were most the highly ranked. A subset of responses who indicated an objective was 'Extremely Important' are shown in Figure 1b.

**HUME REGION - BUSHFIRE MANGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**  
Summary of Responses (n=108)



**Figure 1a** – Summary of the six Bushfire Management Objectives from least to most important, shown as a percentage of the total responses received

**HUME REGION - BUSHFIRE MANGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**  
% of 'Extremely Important' responses



**Figure 1b** – Bushfire Management Objective responses that were ranked as 'extremely important', shown as a percentage of the total responses received

When respondents were asked to explain why particular objectives were important to them, five key themes were noted, focussing on the:

- Protection of human life and critical infrastructure;
- Protection of ecological impacts/ loss of flora and fauna/protection of stock and crop losses;
- Keeping people informed and safe during a bushfire;
- Minimising impact of smoke from bushfire; and
- Protection of cultural heritage.

When asked about what government agencies (e.g. local government, CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Parks Victoria) could do to improve bushfire management on public and private land, responses were categorised into the following nine themes, with the common themes highlighted in red text:

1. Finding the appropriate level of balance with activities that decrease fuel loads (including via planned burning), while protecting forest values and ecological communities;
2. Focus on residents taking more responsibility for their own personal safety. Additionally, for fire agency improvements to public safety messaging and education;
3. Improved road/track maintenance for safe access and to reduce fuel loads along roadsides;
4. Reduce bureaucracy around complex issues such vegetation clearing;
5. Improved infrastructure -e.g. underground power lines;
6. Increased utilisation of traditional practices - including early forestry and/or Aboriginal practices and customs;
7. Increased focus on climate change impacts;
8. Reduction in the numbers of building permits issued in high fire prone areas; and
9. Better coordination (locally and strategically) of fire agencies and community preference to work with fire agency staff directly on ground, as compared to remotely.

Six key themes were identified in relation to steps that individuals could take to help improve bushfire management of private land (most common themes highlighted in red text):

1. Improve education and awareness to better understand bushfire risk, control methods, personal responsibilities and fire impacts on environment & management practices;
2. Clean up fuels around homes and/or maintain fire breaks;
3. Plan and equip their homes with the expectation that one day they might be under threat from bushfire;

4. Landowners wanting to conduct/or work directly with FFMVic to control burns on adjacent land/roadsides to their property;
5. Greater opportunities for fire agencies to invite community members to participate/train in fuel assessments and planned burning to gain a greater understanding of what to do on their own properties; and
6. New campaigns to encourage more people to join their local CFA brigade.

### **Next Steps**

Three different options were presented for respondents to participate in future stages of the planning process. The most preferred method was to receive project updates via the Engage Victoria website (35% of total responses), which we will undertake in coming months.

Hume region are soon to establish a Bushfire Management Advisory Reference Group (BMARG), to provide advice and stakeholder and community input to the Safer Together Working Group and Safer Together Coordinating Committee on proposed strategies to reduce bushfire risk. The purpose of the group is to:

- a) Provide an avenue for government, stakeholders and community members to input into high-level strategic bushfire planning, regardless of land tenure for the Hume Region;
- b) Allow for a range of voices and views and facilitate the sharing of local knowledge to ensure that different agencies, stakeholder and community values and preferences are considered; and
- c) Provide advice on how agencies can support and encourage the broader public to actively contribute to fire management planning by distributing information and promoting opportunities for community input through existing networks.

Two further opportunities will occur via the Engage Victoria website during the compilation of the Hume Strategic Bushfire Management Plan from early 2019.

### Appendix 1: Survey

What is your interest in bushfire management in the Hume region?

- I live in the area
- I have a property in the area, but I live somewhere else
- I own/operate a business in the area
- I work in the area
- I'm an emergency services volunteer in the area
- I'm a community volunteer in the area (eg. Field naturalists, 'Friends of' group)
- I visit the area frequently
- I visit the area frequently for recreation (ie. Bushwalking, trail riding, camping etc.)
- I have past experience of bushfire in the area
- Other (please specify)

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

	Extremely important	Very important	Quite important	Somewhat important	Not important	Unsure
Minimise loss of human life from bushfire	<input type="radio"/>					
Minimise disruption of bushfires on critical infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>					
Maximise persistence of ecological communities	<input type="radio"/>					
Minimise impacts of fire on threatened species and fire sensitive flora, fauna & vegetation communities.	<input type="radio"/>					
Minimise impacts of bushfire on water catchments	<input type="radio"/>					
Minimise smoke impacts from bushfires	<input type="radio"/>					

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

You have 1,000 characters left.

Thinking about bushfire management, what could government agencies (eg local government, CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Parks Victoria) do to improve bushfire management on public and private land?

You have 1,000 characters left

Thinking about bushfire management, what could private individuals do to help improve bushfire management on private land?

You have 1,000 characters left

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

- Sign up to the Hume newsletter
- 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.

You have 255 characters left

Is there anything else you would like to add?

You have 1,000 characters left

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