

# ROYAL COMMISSION (Bushfire) and NSW Bushfire Inquiry REPORTS

## **Background**

There have also been over 240 formal inquiries and reviews in Australia in relation to natural disasters since 1927. Collectively, these reports have made thousands of recommendations and findings. Major findings from both the Royal Commission into National natural Disaster Arrangements (Bushfire) and the NSW Bushfire Inquiry Reports, are discussed below where relevant to Ku-ring-gai Council operations.

## Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (Bushfire) Report was released on 28 October 2020. The full report contains more than 500 pages, twenty-four chapters, a huge Appendix and up-to-date referencing. More than 1,700 (documented) public submissions were received and the report contains 80+ recommendations.

The terms of reference of this Royal Commission were broad and directed us to examine, among other things:

- The responsibilities of, and coordination between, Australian, state, territory and local governments relating to natural disasters;
- Australia's arrangements for improving resilience and adapting to changing climatic conditions;
- What actions should be taken to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters; and
- Whether changes are needed to Australia's legal framework for the involvement of the Commonwealth in responding to national emergencies.

The report fully recognised the huge and varied role local government plays in fire management – particularly as custodians of local knowledge and being proactive in the preparedness and land-use planning phases – so often over-looked (compared to reactive response and fire suppression). Resourcing for fire management is seen as incredibly variable amongst the many local governments in Australia. The Royal Commission acknowledges that local government will, in general, have a more detailed understanding of its local community (e.g. on specific risks, vulnerabilities and locally available resourcing) than other levels of government, hence delegation from state legislation to local governance is effective for disaster management and for restoring local communities after a disaster.

Sections of the Full Report (bolded categories are particularly relevant to Council):

- **Introduction** – an excellent summary of the 2019-2020 fire season, terms of reference, engagement for the Commission, the 'Bushfire history' project, other inquiries and the scoping/reporting of the Royal Commission.
- **Natural Disaster Risk** – this chapter looks at Australia as a continent prone to natural hazards, climate-driven natural hazards are increasing in frequency and intensifying. Also investigating when natural hazards become disasters – which are extensive, complex and with long-term consequences. The chapter concludes by stating that Australia's disaster outlook is alarming, particularly in terms of both exposure and the concepts of vulnerability and resilience. This is particularly relevant to Ku-ring-gai with so many properties located along the bushland/urban interface zone.
- **National Coordination Arrangements** – recommendations to strengthening coordination within and across levels of government and other agencies, including AFAC. Issues covered in this chapter include existing arrangements for national coordination and their actual effectiveness during the

2019-2020 fire season. Issues examined included gap analysis of arrangements, tensions of interest, accountability, transparency between agencies and AFAC's role to policy development. Australia's future challenges and strategic leadership were strongly emphasised.

- *Supporting Better Decisions* – this chapter deals with data, data needs, data consistency and data sharing – particularly with reference to climate data needs for adaptation, risk assessments and scenario planning. There is a general consensus and overall need for fine-scale and good quality data for natural hazard risk mapping, exposure and vulnerability assessment – and a strong and urgent need for a national risk information system. Good and up-to-date data is required to inform good decision-making on risk – and for disaster impact assessment.
- *Declaration of National Emergency* – details when and where and under what circumstances an enhanced Australian Government role can be enacted in emergencies. Examines constitutional power, referral of power from the states, a proposed declaration model for Federal-State & coordination between State & Federal frameworks. Focuses on the circumstances for declaration of national emergency status.
- *National Emergency Response capability* - examines resource sharing, national interoperability, training standards, public safety broadband and communication interoperability (particularly at State borders) and interoperability of private firefighters and primary producers. Also broaches the issue of developing a national register of personnel and equipment for large-scale and national disasters.
- *Role of the Australian Defence Force* – examined Defence's role in natural disasters, public perceptions, awareness of the ADF role and capabilities and the processes (legal and financial) for obtaining ADF assistance. The chapter also examined the issue of call-out of the ADF Reserves.
- *National Aerial Firefighting Capabilities and Arrangements* – an extensive review of capabilities, benefits, effectiveness of aerial firefighting. Included are issues of funding, development of an Australian aerial firefighting industry and sharing of resources between States as well as sourcing aircraft from overseas. Perhaps the most recent and rigorous review of this topic yet undertaken;
- *Essential Services* – aspect such as transport, supply chains, critical infrastructure risks. Emphasising the critical importance for continuation of essential services, risks to supply chains during disaster periods, critical infrastructure risks and improving coordination between critical infrastructure operators and between government and critical infrastructure operators.
- **Community Education** – discusses the critical point that response agencies (such as RFS) may not be able to respond to all cases/properties during a disaster (i.e. bushfire or flood event), due to resource limitations, capabilities. This chapter focuses on the need for residents to understand both their potential risk and vulnerability status (i.e. if living at a bushland/urban interface) and by thorough community education and awareness programs residents can increase their capacity to become disaster-resilient communities. By informed education, people can become pro-active to be aware of hazards, risk – and how best to act before and during emergencies. The Climate Wise Communities program of Ku-ring-gai Council is a strong vehicle for enhancing the level of community resilience to bushfire.
- **Emergency Planning** – this chapter focuses on the need for a collective and collaborative approach to natural disaster planning and details the continuing and critical role of local government disaster management, also examining its capabilities. In particular it is noted that State governments need to understand and be accountable for the capacity and capability of their local governments in order to ensure that they are able to perform their diverse role in disaster management in the local area (includes planning, preparedness, education, response and recovery). The report lists aspects such as public education and awareness programs on bushfire risk, contributing to bushfire risk management plans, managing firebreaks and asset protection zones, working with fire agencies to undertake hazard reduction activities (including prescribed burning), land use planning, maintaining fire trails and providing operational and administrative support to local emergency management committees. The large role expected of local government in holistic disaster management varies – as some local governments experienced significant difficulty in fulfilling their responsibilities during the 2019-2020 bushfire season. Discussion on this topic explores ways to strengthen local government capacity. **Essential reading for Ku-ring-gai local government Councillors and Officers.**

- **Evacuation Planning and shelters** – Another important chapter with high relevance for local government. Explores aspects such as local involvement in planning, seasonal populations and potential evacuation needs, evacuation and access routes, the issue of essential service outages and compounding events and the inability to evacuate. Further discussion on the urgent need for national standards in terminology – i.e. Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) and planning for evacuation across administrative boundaries and the adequacy of evacuation centre facilities. Relevant to Council with our specified NSPs.
- **Emergency information and warnings** – this chapter emphasises and details the critical importance of emergency information and warnings. Covering the topics of fire danger rating systems – and the progress of the Australian Fire Danger rating System as a national standard, it also covers bushfire warning systems, emergency alert systems, use of mobile devices for community warnings/alerts and the importance of having and maintaining a radio – for ABC emergency information. Critical for community – whether regional or urban dwellers – particularly relevant to Ku-ring-gai residents.
- **Air Quality** – as 80% of the population was affected by poor air quality during the 2019-2020 bushfires, this topic is very relevant for local government. The chapter discusses examines the topics of natural disasters and poor quality air and its health impacts, air quality monitoring (and near real-time reporting needs), health advice in relation to air quality, public health interventions and accurate air quality forecasting. This issue has particular relevance to local governments in the Greater Sydney Basin – as hazard reduction activities are often ‘blamed’ for air quality issues. **Future regulatory moves may mean there are even stricter prescription needs for hazard reduction activities, relating to weather conditions, or possibly severely limited such activities.**
- **Health** – profiles Australia’s health system, arrangements and capabilities during natural disasters. Particularly covering aspects such as access to healthcare and medications, mental health effects and delivery of mental health services. In addition, jurisdictional arrangements and the role of Medical Assistance Teams are discussed.
- **Wildlife and Heritage** – a short summary emphasising the mammoth impacts that the previous fire season had on biodiversity – an estimated 330 threatened species and 37 threatened ecological communities were heavily impacted and millions of hectares of forest/woodland communities were severely burnt. The chapter looked at aspects such as government responsibilities for environmental protection, integration of non-government organisations in emergency response for wildlife and particularly the issue of data and information required for wildlife management and species conservation. This chapter lacks on information and future directions on plants/fire regimes. I was disappointed with the scope and directions of this chapter, particularly as the 2019-2020 bushfire season had huge implications for maintenance of biodiversity values and ecosystem resilience. Many excellent public submissions on biodiversity maintenance and fire regimes which were made to the Royal Commission were not included in the chapter content.
- **Public and Private Land Management** – A critical chapter on both public and private land management, including aspects such as hazard reduction measures (including prescribed burning), effectiveness of fuel management – indicating that no single fuel management strategy ‘fits all’ cases. Fuel management on private land was also discussed as well as improving information on fuel data collection – and the need for national consistency. **Essential reading for all those interested in fire management.**
- **Indigenous land and fire management** – provides an excellent review of recent practices, stressing differences of application and the need for caution in overall (generic) burning methods in differing regions of Australia, and a possible way forward – incorporating local indigenous knowledge (where still known or recorded) into our fire management ‘tool box’.
- **Land-use Planning and building regulation** – essential reading local government planners and technical officers. Focusing on how and where we build, or should build – in terms of impacts from natural hazards (i.e. the urban-bush interface), the issues of land-use planning influencing exposure and building regulations influencing vulnerability, the issues of identifying, communicating and incentivising proportionate action to reduce risk and the role of good data in land-use planning and effectiveness of current building standards. Covers many very relevant topics for planners in local

government – including looking at the potential for housing retro-fitting at the bushland-urban interface and potential insurance incentives. Also a discussion of disclosure of bushfire risk ratings prior to sale – by local government and real estate. **Essential reading for local government planners.**

- **Insurance** – covering aspects such as the role and necessity of insurance in natural disasters, maintaining adequate insurance cover (also for rebuilding post-disaster), insurance data and pricing, consumer understanding and guidance on debris clean-up. An important issue was that as insurance prices risk, lowering risk through mitigation actions (i.e. increasing building resilience to bushfire impact by retro-fitting) can benefit both consumers and the insurance industry. Recognition of mitigation (by the industry) can reduce insurance premiums and in turn provide financial incentives for mitigation. **For an LGA like Ku-ring-gai, with an extensive bushland-urban interface, this point should be further explored and championed.**
- **Coordinating relief and recovery** – this chapter focuses on the objectives and priorities of recovery, including the process, capacity to undertake locally-led recovery, recovery coordination and planning and development of recovery plans. The role of non-government organisations and charities is discussed – including donations and distribution of donated funds and goods. Recovery volunteerism, particularly capacity and coordination is discussed and a national framework for coordination of recovery efforts is also included. Recovery exercises and training are also noted.
- **Delivery of recovery services and financial assistance** – extensive discussions regarding recovery support and accessing financial assistance for recovery. In addition focuses on topics such as delivery models of recovery assistance, information sharing during recovery, disaster recovery funding arrangements (the DRFA and activation, process, thresholds) and the interaction between recovery and insurance.
- **National Research and Emerging Technology** – very relevant to local government and its role in requiring best quality information for fire planning and management. Australia has been and will continue to be very proactive in the development and use of technology tools for fire management – particularly with implications from climate change. Includes topics such as the use of airborne LIDAR technology to determine fuel loadings at any one time, real-time weather and fire activity data, continental hazard and risk profiling and most importantly - sharing of data/technology, etc.
- **Assurance and Accountability** – This final chapter deals with how the xx recommendations can actually be actioned and responsibility for actioning recommendations of the Royal Commission. In addition the need for independent assurance bodies is considered valuable to aid in the adoption of continuous improvement and best practice procedures.

Putting the whole Royal Commission findings into a nutshell, a ‘whole-of-nation’ effort and cooperation is necessary to make Australia more resilient to natural disasters, which are predicted to become both more frequent and intense. This calls for action, not only by all levels of government and individuals, but also by industry, businesses, charities, volunteers, the media, community groups and others. All phases of activity – planning, preparedness, communications and technology, land management, response and recovery (short and long-term) are essential to managing bushfire impacts. The Royal Commission emphasised that transparent, accountable and strong coordination and cooperation is critical to strengthen our national resilience to disaster events. Many of the xx recommendations are more generic and policy-focused than many of those in the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and implementation of the many inter and intra-government and overall strategic actions may be difficult to implement in a short timeframe.

# NSW Bushfire Inquiry

- The [NSW Bushfire Inquiry](#) (the Inquiry) was also recently released on 25 August 2020 by NSW Parliament, which has reviewed the causes of, preparation for and response to the 2019-20 bushfires. The Inquiry was chaired by Dave Owens APM, former Deputy Commissioner of NSW Police, and Professor Mary O’Kane AC, Independent Planning Commission Chair and former NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer.
- The Inquiry met and heard directly from people who have been affected by the 2019-20 bushfires and received 1,967 submissions from emergency, support personnel, organisations and general public informing the Inquiry.
- The NSW Bushfire Inquiry has made 76 recommendations in its response. Some of these recommendations are for immediate action whilst others need to commence now but will take time to complete. These recommendations broadly range from improvements to operational systems and processes through to significant research and strategic policy frameworks that require further development and consultation with key stakeholders. Only those recommendations relevant to the operations of Ku-ring-gai Council (KC) are listed below. It should be noted that further investment and significant resourcing may be required within Council to implement a number of these recommendations.

## ***Recommendations (Limited to those potentially affecting Ku-ring-gai Council)***

Implications for Council in implementing recommendations for the Inquiry are noted as follows. For reference the number refers to the recommendation within the Inquiry:

1. **Inquiry implementation** - KC may be required to provide data to support reporting, evaluation and accountability of implementing inquiry recommendations.
2. **Preseason fire risk evaluation** – KC will need to ensure consistent messaging and implement complimentary community bushfire education programs particularly with regard to communicating preseason risk advice.
3. **Bushfire behaviour database** – KC will need to provide information (e.g. fire trail works, APZ management, hazard reduction burns) to support the establishment and implementation of a national fire behaviour database to monitor trends in fire activity, cost and effectiveness of mitigation efforts.

Council is currently and will continue to improve mapping of our bush fire mitigation works / assets, in conjunction with the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Management Committee (HKBFMC).

4. **Ignition detection and fire edge intensity technology** – KC may need to provide infrastructural support for remote-sensing systems to improve fire detection and monitoring.
5. **Research centre and technology fund** – KC would have a support role in research applications. This initiative may lead to cost savings in data acquisition (namely vegetation coverage and LIDAR), which is currently a significant cost if KC were to purchase for bushfire management purposes (such as the estimation of bushland-urban interface zones with high fuel loadings).
7. **Simultaneous Section 44 protocol** – Nil direct implications to KC however, it may influence Council role in emergency management operations during s44 declaration with potential to support other Council areas.
8. **Cross agency accountability** – Implications for KC through changes being made to the operation of the Bushfire Management Committee. Notably there will be more stringent deadlines for periodic review of [Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Risk Management Plan](#) (HKBRMP), Fire Access

and Fire Trail (FAFT) plan and Operation Coordination Plans. This will require resourcing within Council and will require Agencies (including KC) to ensure representatives have enough discretion, administrative support and authority to agree and implement risk mitigation activities at the local level. Further, of note, is that any unresolved HKBFMC issues will be referred to the Bushfire Coordinating Committee (State Level). This will greatly assist the coordination of local implementation of the plans (especially in amending FAFT) and bring greater cohesion between state and district FAFT plans.

10. **Aviation personnel** –when NSW Fire & Rescue lead our hazard reduction burns and utilise helicopters Council nor NSW Fire & Rescue cannot provide aviation support roles like air attack/air observer and heli base manager, Council is reliant on other agencies providing this capability (ie National Parks and Wildlife Service directorate of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment). Recently this has not been an issue, but it may present itself into the future with the additional demands for resources.
11. **Local Council capacity** - KC will need to continue resourcing the LEMO role (and their training) and ensure the LEMO has relevant delegations, ensuring the authority to commit resources. Furthermore, KC will be required to have greater collaboration with Resilience NSW and availability to form agency partnerships. A strengthened LEMO role in Council would also improve the management and response to other natural disasters such as heat, storm and flood events.
14. **Australian Warning System** - KC will need to ensure that any changes to emergency warnings (as a result of the need for interstate consistency) are understood, communicated and integrated into required workflows.
15. **Bushfire preparation program evaluation** – Implications for KC’s community bushfire education activities (such as our ward-winning [Climate Wise Communities program and the Simtable bushfire simulation tool](#)), fire trail maintenance, Asset Protection Zones, treatment areas, etc. as they will be reviewed and assessed as part of wider assessment of bushfire preparedness programs. This may include further emphasis and ‘ramping up’ on this critical aspect of bushfire preparedness by KC.
17. **Neighbourhood Safer Place upgrades** – Implications for Council in potentially creating more Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) and upgrading current places (particularly with reference to adequacy of Asset Protection Zones).
18. **Asset management** - KC will need to ensure the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) are provided with up to date information on structures, asset and infrastructure at risk of bushfire (through *State Digital twin*). Asset management systems and GIS resources will be required of KC to provide such details on an annual basis (including fire trails, APZs and other defendable spaces). Although unclear at this time but it may impact how development assessment, APZ notation on private property, etc. is noted and recorded, hence it may lead to extend development assessment timeframes and costs. Further, tracking asset renewal and modifications into the State database is unclear. May require further resourcing needs within KC.
19. **High quality planning and hazard reduction activities** – In utilising a ‘risk-based’ approach to hazard reduction, the methodology will draw on Council resources in providing improved data management, transfer of information from KC to RFS and increased ongoing collaboration, namely through the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Management Committee. In addition, communicating hazard reduction priorities (and implementation) to the community will require additional resourcing to a level required within the Inquiry.

Further, KC (as part of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Management Committee) has begun preparing a new Bushfire risk management plan which is based on current modelling and risk management practices. The investment to date on this approach may be at risk if it is superseded by an alternate methodology.

20. **Hazard reduction** – KC will be increasingly relied upon to implement more comprehensive hazard reduction activities. This will require additional funding if activities are deemed necessary beyond the current scope of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Risk Management Plan. Further, staffing for compliance will be required to monitor concerns over “community incentives” for hazard reduction, over clearing/impact of Threatened Ecological Communities, unregulated burning, community health/safety, etc. Possible additional funding needed for waste to assist with greater disposal of green waste. The Bushfire Technical Officer will further investigate this issue.
21. **Hazard reduction techniques research** – Implications for KC. The Bushfire Technical Officer will keep abreast of the latest research in hazard reduction and convey findings to all relevant areas of Council.
22. **Aerial audits of APZ’s** – Funding implication potentially with increased and more specific monitoring and auditing in implementing APZs (via remote sensing and other technologies). Conversely, if external funds are made available to achieve this, then an opportunity is presented to KC.
23. **Complaints forwarding to the Commissioner** - KC will be required to forward complaints about bushfire hazards to Commissioner of NSW RFS. It is unclear if this is all complaints or if there is a criteria to be met. Has potential to create additional administrative workload.
24. **Good neighbour** - Increased expectation on KC to be a ‘good neighbour’ by undertaking bushfire preparedness activities and improved communications on these activities. Meeting community perceptions of risk, which are often above and beyond actual risk will require additional resources to both enact the required response and communicate those activities that are undertaken. In addition, maintenance of KC’s valuable and unique biodiversity assets is an expectation that the community values. Fire management by KC must align with maintaining our unique biodiversity in the long-term.
25. **Cultural (cool) burning** – There will be a strong emphasis for KC to apply indigenous cultural burning practices. Further research by Council on this topic is now underway. Actioning this burning method will require additional resourcing and staff to enact this methodology if the practice is not adopted by the RFS.
26. **Aboriginal land management practices** – Implications for Council if there are requirements directed by Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. At this stage these requirements are unknown for KC.
27. **NSW Bush Fire Policy** – Proposed to develop a NSW government Bushfire Policy (similar to Flood Prone Land Policy) which Council will need to apply through its fire planning activities (also in application of s.733 of NSW Local Government Act). This will have significant implications for KC as a potential flow on from the policy may be the requirement for Council to build greater resilience into local communities and decrease costs associated with recovery and rebuilding. Further, there may be planning implications, to realise the objectives of the Policy during construction or modification of built assets. The issue of house ‘retrofitting’ may have significant future implications for the KC community, particularly due to the large number of older residences at the bushland-interface zone.

28. **Immediate actions** - Significant impact for KC through establishment of an enforcement, compliance and education program which adopt a risk-based approach to routine inspection of local bush fire prone developments to ensure *“every development on bushfire prone land is prepared for future bushfire seasons in accordance with bushfire protection standards of the day, that account for worsening conditions”*. Will need clarity on this role for local Council in achieving this recommendation. It is further noted *“ensure local government is resourced to enable effective audit, enforcement and compliance powers in respect of local developments and assets on bushfire prone land”*. Hence, it is assumed that requirements encumbered on KC by this recommendation will be resourced.

Further, insurance subsidies for property owners who undertake mitigation works to reduce insurance leads to concerns for environmental impacts from such incentives for the impact on biodiversity, slope stability, etc.

It is unclear if Compliance with *AS3959 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas* would be considered a mitigation activity suitable for an insurance subsidy, if so, there will be implications for planning and compliance (namely, building inspections). In addition, the inspection and auditing role will extend to pre 2009 development (prior to the implementation of *Planning for Bushfire Protection*). Undertaking this role will require significant administration, compliance, asset condition monitoring documentation and field inspection.

29. **Critical infrastructure** - KC will be required to assist RFS in identification of “critical infrastructure” along with details of that infrastructure.
30. **Telecommunications** – KC may be required to provide property or infrastructural support for improved telecommunications provisions.
31. **Road access and egress** - KC will be required to assist RFS in identification of emergency egress via roads and waterways and ensure critical road infrastructure is audited to enable safe evacuation. Identification of critical roads will have implications for road management and maintenance funding. Management of critical road will need to be included within the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Risk Management Plans.
32. **Roadside vegetation management** - KC will be required to undertake roadside vegetation monitoring and management to support adequate access and egress, particularly at identified ‘pinch points’.
33. **Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) plans** - KC will need to assist in acceleration of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai FAFT plan and continue with an annual audit of fire trail network. This information will be integrated into a single FAFT management system by state agencies. KC has previously contributed to state-wide FAFT planning and undertakes auditing of FAFT’s to the satisfaction of the RFS hence no additional implications are currently needed.
34. **Air quality** –KC will be required to assist in responding to and manage smoke complaints from residents. This will be supported with an improved understanding of health impacts and smoke forecasting capacity. Initial findings from the Royal Commission also highlight air quality and smoke management as a major issue of future concern. There is the potential for this issue to escalate and impact on the viability of hazard reduction burning within the greater Sydney Basin. An implication for KC is that the air quality issue may further ‘narrow’ the window for hazard reduction burning and may lead to increased mechanical methods for hazard reduction.
35. **Bushfire smoke education** – KC will be required to support education programs for bushfire smoke awareness. This may have flow on implications for compliance with regard to wood burning, pile burns and general burning in the open.

36. **Ecosystem and land management monitoring** – KC will be involved in supporting programs which identify impacts on biodiversity and will most likely be required to fund (or assist with) ecosystem and land management monitoring, forecasting, research and evaluation. The Bushfire Technical Officer will assist in coordinating such programs and setting priorities for ecological appropriate fire regimes.
40. **Firefighter safety** –KC will need to maintain compliance with industry standard PPE as Council staff participate in hazard reduction activities. Further, Council retains a Cat 1 tanker which can be seconded by the NSW RFS at any time for emergency response, this vehicle must comply with RFS vehicle standards. There are also possible flow on effects for FAFT if, for example, tanker dimensions and capabilities are altered significantly.
41. **NSW RFS mental health** – Limited implications for KC but noted that support, especially during Section 44 Fires (I.e. when the [Rural Fire Service](#) Commissioner declares a localised "State of Emergency" for a specific district suffering severe fire conditions that cannot be managed without drawing in extensive resources from other areas), be extended to other agency staff.
48. **Backburning research** – Nil implications for KC. Council is keen to work with any relevant research bodies should they wish to conduct backburning research within the LGA.
53. **Injured wildlife** –Limited current implications for KC, however, there may be a role for local councils if and when guidelines are completed for managing injured wildlife during / following bushfire events.
69. **Evacuation centre management** – Implications for KC in providing training to staff and ‘interested community volunteers’ in evacuation centre establishment and management during an emergency.
70. **Evacuation centre “fit for purpose”** – Implications for KC to provide suitable evacuation centres which may have potential costs associated with capital, compliance and risk assessment in meeting a suitable standards.
71. **Data collection at evacuation centres** - KC may be required to participate in *Opt-in* scheme that enables personal information to be shared between governments and disaster organisations to support disaster-affected people.
72. **Aboriginal Affairs** - KC may have a requirement to assist Aboriginal Affairs in including Aboriginal people directly in emergency planning and preparation.
73. **Well-being of vulnerable people** - KC may be required to assist in the identification of aged care facilities in flood/fire prone locations through provision of local data. KC already has existing data to assist in this issue.
75. **Animal evacuations** - KC may be required to assist with providing information to support people when evacuating with animals, particularly larger domestic livestock (e.g. registration details of companion animals, provision of holding areas, etc). Although KC has a limited role, due to its urbanised character, the LGA may be able to offer assistance to the community in adjoining LGAs.
76. **Resilience NSW Services** – KC will be required to support appropriate functional areas during emergency conditions hence the implication for KC is to maintain close agency affiliation.

## Conclusions

- The Inquiry acknowledges Local Governments’ essential role in bush fire preparedness, response and the substantial efforts of Council staff in contributing towards bushfire preparedness, planning and response.

- Key themes for Local government which are required to support enacting the Inquiries recommendations would include:
  - Increased accountability and potential auditing of Councils' fire management programs;
  - Increased community education and awareness programs;
  - Increased local capacity building to support community resilience both during and after bushfires;
  - Greater support for Councils' Local Emergency Management Officer role;
  - Greater support for strategic planning and compliance for new and potential retrofitting of built assets;
  - Greater support for bushfire risk reduction activities and communication of such activities to the community.

In additional implementation of future bushfire mitigation planning / activities will need to consider COVID restrictions / protocols.