



UPDATE ON THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE WOOROLOO REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

January 2025

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INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to welcome you to the fourth and final update on the WA Government's response to the AFAC Independent Operational Review of the Wooroloo Bushfire.

When announcing the Independent Operational Review in 2021, the State Government committed to learning as much as possible about the Wooroloo Bushfire to improve our response and ways of working.

There are always lessons to be learned from major emergencies. Over the past three years, our emergency management agencies have worked together to jointly action the Independent Operational Review.

All recommendations have now been addressed, and all associated projects are now complete. This concludes an important suite of improvements to emergency management processes, and to community safety for Western Australians.

Of note, since the last public update in February 2024, agencies have met their commitments to effectively address Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 12. Project outcomes are detailed in the following pages, and highlights include:

- Construction of modular, transportable Incident Control Centre facilities to enable their rapid establishment, ready for deployment during the current southern bushfire season (Recommendation 1);
- An enhanced DFES Natural Hazards Resilience Program being piloted in Jurien Bay, which empowers a community-led approach to all hazards planning (Recommendation 2); and
- Replacement of the Emergency WA platform, including a refreshed website and the introduction of a mobile app (Recommendation 12).

Where projects have long-term horizons, or incorporate continual improvement, these components have been transitioned to agency business plans and will continue as a priority.

I would like to acknowledge the State Bushfire Advisory Council (SBAC) for their oversight role in ensuring high-quality community outcomes from the Independent Operational Review. Pleasingly, the Advisory Council has endorsed the work completed by agencies as fulfilling the Review's recommendations and intent.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Wooroloo Implementation Coordination Group, which has performed a critical role in the coordination of the Government response to the Independent Operational Review. With the closure of all Recommendations, this Group will now be disbanded.

I am hopeful that these public updates have been a useful resource for all those interested in our progress, and assisted the community with their recovery.

Thank you to everyone involved.

Murray Carter

Executive Director, Rural Fire Division
Department of Fire and Emergency Services



Building capability of volunteers through the Bushfire Officer Development training course.

Photo: DFES Incident Photographer

Acronyms and abbreviations

- DFES:** Department of Fire & Emergency Services
- DPLH:** Department of Planning, Land & Heritage
- SBAC:** State Bushfire Advisory Council
- DBCA:** Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- FPA:** Fire Protection Association of Australia
- IBOC:** Interagency Bushfire Operations Committee
- ICC:** Incident Control Centre
- DEMIRS:** Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
- WaPol:** WA Police
- ACEF:** Area of Community Engagement Focus
- TM:** Traffic Management
- SEMC:** State Emergency Management Committee
- BRMP:** Bushfire Risk Management Planning
- TAMO:** Traffic Access & Management Officer
- WALGA:** WA Local Government Association
- TWS:** Telephone Warning System
- NHRP:** Natural Hazards Resilience Program
- SPP:** State Planning Policy
- SES:** State Emergency Service
- RAP:** Restricted Access Permit
- AFAC:** Australasian Fire Authorities Council
- IAP:** Impact Assessment Process
- NEMA:** National Emergency Management Agency

RECOMMENDATION 1

Consideration of a dedicated Perth Hills Incident Management Facility (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was noted by the State Government –acknowledging the benefits of enhancing incident management capacity in the Perth Hills region yet recognising the significant analysis and consultation that would be required to enable such an investment.

DFES is leading the first stage of this analysis, comprising an evaluation of three shortlisted sites that could potentially meet requirements for the Perth Hills region. A final recommendation on the most suitable site, building and equipment configurations will then be made to Government.

This Options Analysis will be presented for consideration in budgetary processes, after which the State Government will determine the next level of detail required and any associated timeframes.

Contact: Executive Manager, Asset Planning and Services c/o:
ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

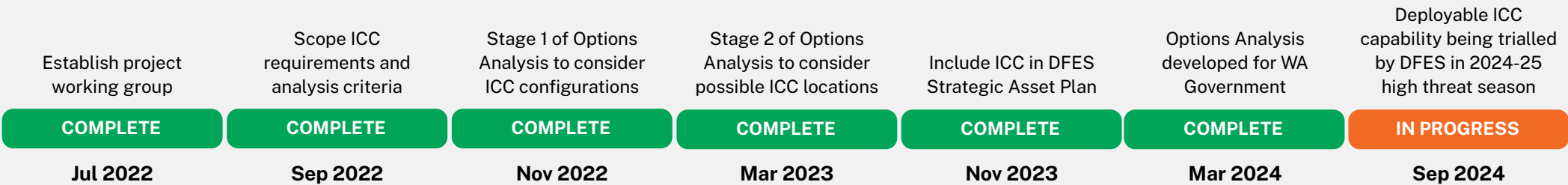
Summary and next steps

Following completion of Stages 1 and 2 of the Options Analysis, and the inclusion of the Perth Hills Incident Control Centre (ICC) in the DFES Strategic Asset Plan, DFES has developed sufficient information to inform state government decision making on any future ICC options for the Perth Hills area.

As such, this project was deemed suitable for closure, which was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in March 2024.

In addition, DFES has built modular, transportable ICC facilities to enable rapid establishment of ICCs, which will complement existing DBCA portable ICC facilities. Construction of the modular containers commenced in July 2024 and they have been tested during preseason exercising and are available for deployment during the current southern bushfire season.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 2

Enhanced and integrated community engagement programs for bushfire (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government. The Review recommended increasing the focus on landowners in high bushfire-prone areas implementing risk mitigation strategies and ensuring they are prepared for an extended stay without support following a bushfire.

DFES aims to integrate its community engagement program with the bushfire risk-management planning program (Recommendation 3), as these programs are highly complementary and together improve local communities’ understanding and involvement in local bushfire prevention.

The enhanced Areas of Community Engagement Focus (ACEF) program will be tested with a pilot community, concurrent with enhanced bushfire risk-management planning processes. Evaluation of the pilot will inform future directions for the ACEF program.

Contact: Director, Office of Bushfire Risk Management, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

DFES has finalised guidelines and implementation templates for the enhanced Natural Hazards Resilience Program (NHRP).

To test the enhanced NHRP, a pilot program is currently being delivered with the Jurien Bay community, in collaboration with DFES Midwest Region and Shire of Dandaragan.

The pilot program will be delivered over multiple years and learnings drawn from the pilot will enable further refinement of the program guidelines in the future.

This satisfies the requirements of Recommendation 2. As such, this project was deemed suitable for closure, which was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in September 2024.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 3

Finalisation of enhanced DFES bushfire risk-planning framework (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government and recognises the need to expedite the release of the enhanced Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BRMP guidelines). These guidelines were originally developed in 2015, with minor updates undertaken in recent years.

DFES is undertaking an extensive evaluation of the guidelines to ensure a contemporary, best-practice approach. The updated guidelines will improve bushfire risk assessment and treatment processes to better integrate Government and community stakeholders. Increased community participation in planning processes will be a priority.

The updated guidelines will be implemented through local Government planning processes, through 2023 and beyond.

Contact: Director, Office of Bushfire Risk Management, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

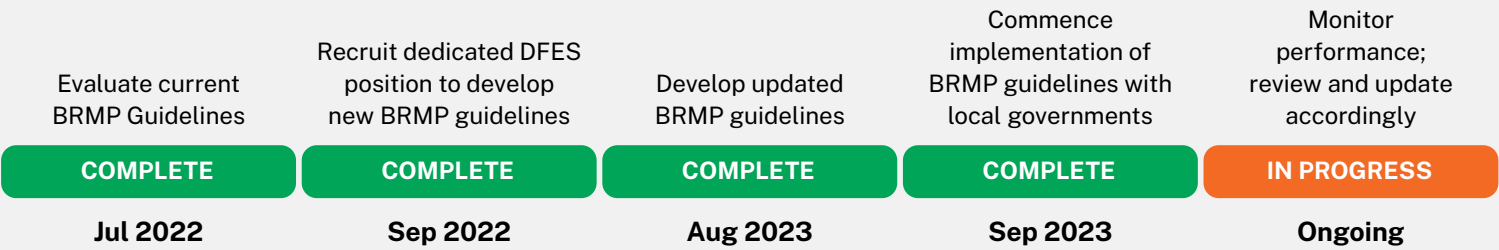
Following the completion of the BRMP guidelines in late 2023, a staged rollout with local governments commenced in February 2024. Local governments will transition to the new Guidelines as their current BRM Plans come due for review over the next two years.

You can see the updated guidelines here:
publications.dfes.wa.gov.au/publications/guidelines-for-preparing-a-bushfire-risk-management-plan-2023

Ongoing refinements and improvements will be made to the BRMP guidelines based on program evaluation and stakeholder feedback.

As indicated in the February 2024 Wooroloo update, this project was considered ready for closure once the rollout of the new guidelines was fully underway. The project closure was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in March 2024.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 4

Establishment of bushfire mitigation crews (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

The Wooroloo Review recommended the establishment of dedicated bushfire mitigation crews to work with local bushfire brigades in implementing mitigation activities in highly bushfire prone areas of WA. This recommendation was accepted by the State Government in-principle, noting the significant complexity in its implementation.

DFES is working with local government to undertake comprehensive analysis and options-development and to consider a trial of arrangements. There is significant alignment between this recommendation and Recommendation 3, as priority mitigation treatments are identified through the BRMP process. Options analysis will be developed and presented to Government for consideration in budgetary processes.

Contact: Superintendent Bushfire Mitigation Branch, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

The business case has been submitted to State Government to seek funding to establish a state mitigation capability.

This project was recommended for closure once the budget submission process was complete. The project closure was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in March 2024.

Project progress

Establish project working group	Scope and analyse mitigation team delivery models	Undertake cross agency consultation on delivery models	Complete Options Analysis and present to DFES Corporate Executive	Develop DFES business case	Options Analysis developed for WA Government	WA Government to consider further increases in state mitigation capability programs
COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Jul 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Mar 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Jul 2024 onwards

RECOMMENDATION 5

DFES role in WA land-use planning (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was noted by the State Government, recognising the importance of the advice provided by DFES in land use planning processes.

DFES will work to ensure that its advice provided in land-use planning processes is given appropriate consideration in determination of planning applications.

This will be achieved by a range of initiatives that aim to clarify DFES’ role as a referral agency, better understand how the advice DFES provides is used, improve internal policies, tools and templates to ensure consistency in the advice that DFES provides and building stronger working relationships with planning decision makers.

Contact: Director Land Use Planning, c/o:
ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

As outlined in previous versions, DFES has undertaken a range of initiatives to improve how we provide advice into land-use planning processes, and how this advice is used by planners and decision makers.

DFES remains committed to developing guidance and position statements that enables consistent interpretation and understanding of the advice we provide.

Engagement with Local Government planners remains a strong focus. Twice annual workshops provide an opportunity to discuss and resolve common bushfire planning issues and undertake case studies and scenario-based work that contextualises the advice DFES provides.

The work undertaken to date satisfies the requirements of Recommendation 5. As such, this project was approved for closure by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in March 2024.

Project progress

Clarify DFES role in planning system	Improve engagement with planning decision makers	Support DPLH revision of new SPP	Deliver local government workshops and bushfire training	Develop high priority DFES land-use planning guidance	Develop secondary priority DFES land-use planning guidance	Evaluate effectiveness of measures undertaken
COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	IN PROGRESS	IN PROGRESS
Nov 2022	Dec 2022 ongoing	Nov 2023	Nov 2023	Mar 2024	Ongoing	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION 6

Bushfire practitioner accreditation register (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government. The Fire Protection Association of Australia (FPAA) currently maintains a register of bushfire practitioners. Bushfire practitioners deliver bushfire assessment, planning, design and advice services and are accredited to different levels under the WA Bushfire Accreditation Framework.

DFES will work collaboratively with Department of Planning, Lands & Heritage (DPLH), Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation & Safety (DEMIRS), FPAA and the industry to improve the reliability, consistency and quality of work undertaken by bushfire practitioners in WA.

This will include elements such as improved oversight, auditing and compliance arrangements and identifying skills, training and capacity building opportunities for practitioners.

Contact: Director Land Use Planning, c/o:
ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

As communicated in the February 2024 Wooroloo update, this project was deemed suitable for closure, which was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in September 2023.

Cross agency work continues to ensure effective and appropriate oversight of the Bushfire Practitioner Register in WA. The WA Bushfire Accreditation Steering Committee, involving FPAA, DPLH, DEMIRS and DFES, continue to meet regularly and maintain an annual action plan.

FPAA have recently delivered more Bushfire Attack Level Assessor training, further building capability of the bushfire practitioner industry.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 7

Traffic management review (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government. DFES will lead a multi-agency review of traffic management (TM) arrangements at bushfires to determine steps for improvement.

The review will consider Vehicle Control Points, Restricted Access Permits, community messaging, the role of the Traffic Access & Management Officer (TAMO) in Incident Management Teams and arrangements for working with TM contractors.

The broad scope of this review across multiple facets of traffic management will result in a range of opportunities for improvement at major incidents. These improvements will be prioritised and delivered over stages in 2022 and 2023.

Contact: Chief Superintendent Metropolitan North, c/o:
ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

The development of a TAMO role statement and training course is now complete. Further TAMO training was rolled out in the lead up to the upcoming southern WA bushfire season.

Traffic Management communications arrangements for incident response have also been finalised following improvements made last southern bushfire season, providing greater detail on bushfire related road closures and access restrictions for impacted communities.

Together with the new TAMO tools, greater oversight of TM contractors and improved RAP arrangements completed previously, the requirements of Recommendation 7 are satisfied. As such, this project was deemed suitable for closure, which was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in June 2024.

Project progress

Undertake multi-agency workshop to scope improvements	Seek endorsement for priority improvements	Deliver phase 1 of TAMO training	Develop guidance to improve TM contractor management	Deliver improvements to RAP arrangements	Develop Phase 2 of TAMO training	Develop communications package for Traffic Management	Update doctrine and procedures as required
COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Jun 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Dec 2022	Jan 2023	Apr 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024

RECOMMENDATION 8

Road clearing capability (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government.

DFES will lead a cross-agency process to develop consistent road-clearing standards across fire and emergency agencies and build capacity to undertake road-clearing works for major incidents.

Similar to Recommendation 7, this work will involve identifying a broad range of potential improvements across areas such as common doctrine, procedures and standards, incident management arrangements, community messaging, working with contractors and cross-agency capability and data sharing. These improvements will be prioritised and delivered over stages in 2022 and 2023.

Contact: Chief Superintendent Country North, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

Since the last update in February 2024, work has been undertaken to develop a Capability Implementation Plan that outlines how DFES will enhance road clearing and hazardous tree management capability. The plan focuses on additional training required for DFES staff and volunteers, further changes to doctrine and procedures for bushfire response and integrating multi-agency capabilities with DBCA and the forestry sector.

Delivery of the Capability Implementation Plan will occur over 12 months to build enhanced sector wide capability.

This project was deemed suitable for closure, which was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in December 2024.

Project progress

Establish cross-agency steering groups to scope approach	Identify and prioritise improvement opportunities	Establish cross-agency data sharing arrangements	Develop communications strategy to guide Incident Management Teams	Establish common doctrine for tree risks and road inspections	Identify heavy plant support options from industry and the private sector	Update bushfire response and road clearing doctrine	Develop an approved Capability Implementation Plan for road clearing for 2025-2026 high threat season
COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Jul 2022	Sep 2022	Dec 2022	Dec 2022	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Apr 2024	Dec 2024

RECOMMENDATION 9

Evaluation of ARENA HP module to contract, manage and deploy heavy plant (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government. This project will evaluate the suitability of the ARENA Heavy Plant (HP) module in a multi-agency WA context.

A multi-agency working group will examine the capabilities of the ARENA HP system and provide recommendations to the State Government on the suitability of the ARENA HP module.

The project team will liaise with the Interagency Bushfire Operations Committee (IBOC) on project progress, findings of the evaluation and next steps.

Should the module be deemed fit for purpose in a WA context, the project team will scope implementation requirements and present a case to the State Government for consideration in budget processes.

Contact: Assistant Commissioner Operations Capability, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

As communicated in the August 2023 update, Recommendation 9 was approved for closure by DFES Corporate Executive and SBAC in June 2023, following the completion of the suitability analysis of ARENA HP which deemed the product suitable for application in WA.

In late 2023, DFES and DBCA co-funded a project to have the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC, the owner of ARENA HP), customise the software specifically to WA needs.

During 2024, other Australian states have expressed interest in using ARENA HP, and AFAC is now developing a national product which each interested state or agency can test in their own operating environment. Agency feedback from the testing will determine whether AFAC continue with a generic product or develop customised versions suited to individual state or agency needs.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 10

Review Impact Assessment Process (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government. The Impact Assessment Process (IAP) is an all-hazards process governed by the WA State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).

DFES will review the existing Impact Assessment Process in the context of the Wooroloo bushfire, drawing on input and knowledge from a range of agencies involved in the fire.

The review will consider the performance and efficiency of the current impact assessment process including associated tools and templates and multi-agency accessibility. Stakeholder input will be collated and developed into a report to be presented to the SEMC for consideration.

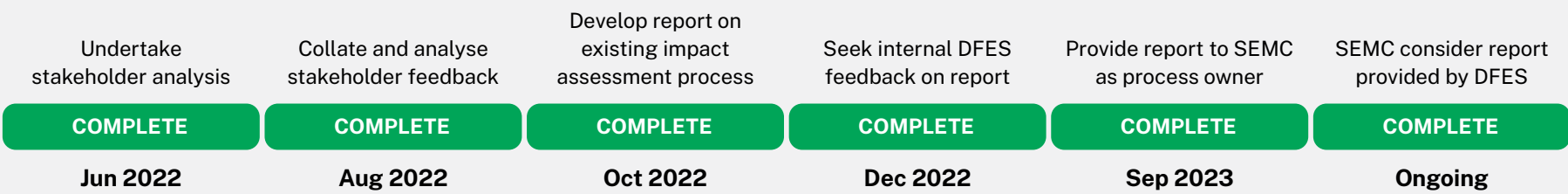
Contact: Chief Superintendent Country South, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

As communicated in the February 2023 public report, DFES presented the findings of the IAP review to SEMC in September 2023. This project was approved for closure by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in December 2023.

The SEMC Community Resilience and Recovery Subcommittee endorsed the Final Wooroloo Community Recovery Fund Evaluation Summary Report at their meeting on 18 April 2024. In regards to nationally consistent approaches, the Final Report on the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements is being considered by the Australian Government, state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 11

Backup power for telecommunications sites (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government.

The independent review recommended that DFES and local government continue discussions with telecommunications providers to explore the adequacy of current arrangements for backup power at telecommunication towers in emergency incidents.

Contact: Executive Director, Corporate Services, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

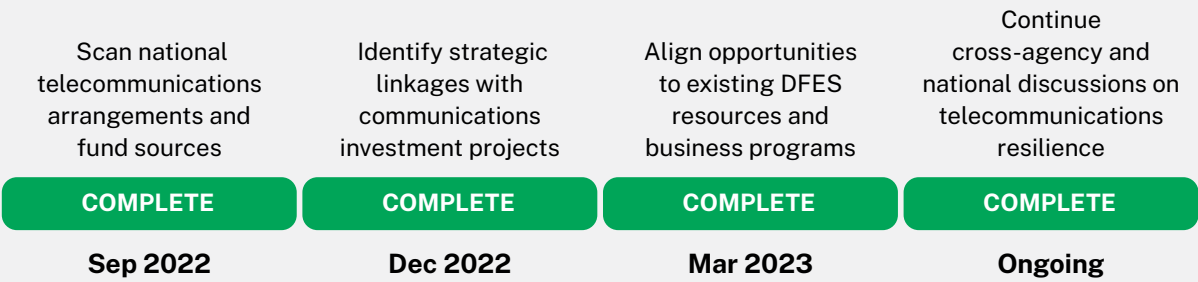
Summary and next steps

As recommended in the Wooroloo review, DFES is continuing discussions with national telecommunication providers and WA infrastructure managers to advance WA requirements.

DFES continues to be actively involved in numerous state and national committees and projects that seek to improve emergency management communications capability and reliability.

Ongoing and active participation in these initiatives satisfies the requirements of Recommendation 11. As such, this project was deemed suitable for closure, and this was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in September 2023.

Project progress



RECOMMENDATION 12

Upgraded Emergency WA platform (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government. DFES is leading a multi-year project to redesign the State’s official emergency information source, Emergency WA, and enable full alignment with Australian Warning System standards.

The project will use new and emerging technologies along with improved data inputs from multiple agencies to deliver faster, more personalised warning information to people impacted by emergencies.

Extensive consultation with emergency management agencies and end users will help ensure the upgraded platform meets community needs. Improvements to the Emergency WA platform will be released in stages.

Contact: Manager Public Information, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

In May 2024, DFES launched the first phase of the Next Generation Emergency Platform, delivering a refreshed website with faster, more accessible warnings. A further release in July aligned the platform with the Australian Warnings System, ensuring nationally consistent hazard warnings.

An Emergency WA Mobile App was launched in late 2024, offering high levels of customisation including the ability to set watch zones, allowing users to receive push notifications for alerts and warnings within their watch zones. Accessibility features, such as read aloud, text only and dark modes will cater for diverse community needs.

This work satisfies the requirements of Recommendation 12. This project was approved for closure by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC in March 2024.

Project progress

Develop project plan and secure funding	Establish the project team	Undertake needs analysis; sector and community	Design new platform architecture	Complete procurement for new Emergency WA platform	Replace the core Emergency WA platform	Launch Emergency WA App	Continue to refine, monitor and improve upgraded platform
COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Jan 2024	Jun 2024	Dec 2024	Ongoing to 2026

RECOMMENDATION 13

Improved Telephone Warning System (TWS) (PROJECT CLOSED)

Project description

This recommendation was accepted by the State Government.

DFES will undertake a review of current arrangements for issuing Emergency Alerts through the Telephone Warning System (TWS) to identify improvements to efficiency or effectiveness.

Procedural documentation will be updated and in place for the 2022-23 southern bushfire high-threat period. Further improvements will continue to be explored through possible alignments with the redesigned Emergency WA platform (see Recommendation 12) to achieve enhanced consistency and timeliness.

Contact: Manager Public Information, c/o: ruralfire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Summary and next steps

As communicated in previous Wooroloo updates, the closure of Recommendation 13 was approved by DFES Corporate Executive and endorsed by SBAC June 2023.

The DFES The Next Generation Warnings project team are collaborating on the National Messaging System to consider the integration of the national level TWS and state level emergency warning systems.

The technical feasibility of automated publishing of warnings through the TWS is being assessed and various technical challenges are being analysed for potential solutions.

The responsibility for this work has been formally transferred to Recommendation 12.

Project progress

