Response to Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements:
Notice to Give Information

June 2020
Introduction

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide information to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. The unprecedented scale and impact of the 2019/20 bushfires, combined with drought conditions followed by floods and then the COVID-19 pandemic has seen governments and communities stretched to their limits.

It is acknowledged that managing disaster risk is a shared responsibility between all levels of government and the community. The Commonwealth Royal Commission, as well as State-led inquiries such as the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry, present an opportunity to learn and adapt, to focus on how we can improve processes and relationships – between and within governments, and with the community – to better withstand these events in the future.

LGNSW’s responses to the questions posed by the Royal Commission are set out below. LGNSW has also attached a copy of its submission to the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry, which sets out further information on the role of local government, and recommendations that aim to improve the way NSW and Australia prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters.

LGNSW also notes that it is a member of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and endorses the information and recommendations contained with the ALGA submission to the Royal Commission.

1. Provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of LGNSW in relation to assisting local government and communities to:
   a. prepare for natural disasters;
   b. respond to natural disasters; and
   c. recover from natural disasters.

LGNSW’s role

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing NSW general-purpose councils and related entities. LGNSW facilitates the development of an effective community-based system of local government in the State.

LGNSW supports and advocates on behalf of member councils and delivers a range of relevant, quality services, for example:

- Actively and persuasively representing the views of local government to the NSW and Australian governments
- Providing effective, responsive and accountable leadership to member councils
- Providing a comprehensive range of high-quality services and policy advice to members
- Increasing the capacity of local government to deliver quality services and meet the needs of local communities across NSW
- Enhancing the profile and building community trust in and awareness of local government.
Committees

LGNSW participates in a range of committees, working groups and ministerial and agency advisory bodies. LGNSW representatives can be the LGNSW President, Chief Executive and/or staff, or Mayors, Councillors and/or staff from member councils, recruited through an expression of interest process, depending on the nature of the committee or advisory body.

LGNSW representatives contribute advice and expertise, represent the views of member councils and can facilitate access to networks and individuals within the local government sector to inform government and other organisations on a range of strategic and operational issues.

LGNSW is represented on the following committees of relevance to preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Terms of Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bush Fire Coordinating Committee</td>
<td>The Committee is responsible for a) planning in relation to bush fire prevention and coordinated bush firefighting, b) advising the Commissioner on bush fire prevention, mitigation and coordinated bush fire suppression; and c) such other functions as are conferred or imposed on it by or under this or any Act (Rural Fires Act 1997 s48.1).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bush Fire Coordinating Committee - Standing Advisory Sub-Committee</td>
<td>The purpose of the Standing Advisory Sub-Committee is to advise the BFCC and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Commissioner on cooperative and coordinated bush fire management issues and provide a forum for the organisations represented on the BFCC to analyse and discuss issues and develop policy advice for the BFCC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Fire Service Advisory Council</td>
<td>The Council is (a) to advise and report to the Minister and the Commissioner on any matter relating to the administration of rural fire services under this Act; (b) to advise the Commissioner on public education programs relating to rural fire matters and on training of rural fire fighters; (c) to advise the Commissioner on the issue of Service Standards; (d) such other functions as may be conferred or imposed on it by or under this or any other Act. (Rural Fires Act 1997 s124.1).</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW RFS / Local Government Liaison Committee</td>
<td>The Committee was established to: Discuss and resolve significant issues of a strategic nature and have mutual interest to Local Government and the NSW Rural Fire Service and provide advice to the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service. Discuss, resolve and report upon issues referred to the Liaison Committee by the NSW Minister for Emergency Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC)</td>
<td>The Committee was established to: Review, monitor and develop emergency management policy and practice at a state level, and Facilitate strategic State level emergency management capability through interagency coordination, cooperation and information sharing arrangements (State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, s15).</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEMC - Mitigation Standing Committee</td>
<td>The Committee coordinates the development of policy, programs and tools to mitigate natural disaster risk in the State of NSW.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Welfare Services Committee</td>
<td>The purpose of the SWSC is to assist the State Welfare Services Functional Area Coordinator to establish and maintain systems in order to provide welfare services in response to an emergency and to provide advice and strategic direction to the SEMC regarding welfare services related issues. The committee’s membership includes agencies that provide advice and guidance in their areas of expertise and have access to valuable networks that may assist in disaster welfare work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee</td>
<td>The State Health and Wellbeing Recovery Subcommittee was established by the State Recovery Committee in response to the significant bushfires of the 2019-2020 bushfire season. The Subcommittee provides specialised support and advice to the State Recovery Committee to enable health and wellbeing recovery strategies.</td>
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LGNSW is also represented on the NSW Environmental Trust, State Pest Animal Committee and State Weeds Committee, who advise on issues relating to environmental management, pest animal management and the impact of weeds, which have some relevance to natural disaster management and recovery.

Grant programs

LGNSW works with the NSW Government and Federal Government to offer councils capacity building, development support and other resources across important local government functions.

Among these resources are the important grant programs managed under agreements with government agencies. These grants programs bring funding and resources into the reach of councils that otherwise may not be available.

For example, LGNSW is currently administering the Increasing Resilience to Climate Change grant program, funded by the NSW Government. The program provides funding to address identified climate change risks and vulnerabilities facing NSW councils. Projects are selected on merit, but with an emphasis on those projects that can be replicated and improve adaptive capacity of the councils involved. So far $2.25M has been awarded across 23 projects, with a third round of funding to commence in July 2020. Information about the projects that have been awarded can be found at https://lgnsw.org.au/policy/increasing-resilience-climate-change.

2. Describe at a high level the responsibility of councils in New South Wales in preparing for, responding to and recovery from natural disasters, and LGNSW’s position on any improvements that might be made.

The 2019/20 bushfire reason was unprecedented in scale. More than 5.5 million hectares in NSW were burnt – more than 6% of the state – and more than 2,400 homes were destroyed. Tragically, 25 people lost their lives in NSW.

50 of NSW’s 128 local government areas were the subject of natural disaster declarations.

The local government sector makes a substantial contribution to disaster relief, recovery and management efforts, particularly in providing on-the-ground support to emergency services and their communities.
Councils, as the closest level of government to communities, are at the vanguard of disaster recovery efforts and are best placed to deliver *locally led* economic stimulus, recovery and rebuilding measures.

However, it is difficult for councils to generally make provision for natural disaster liabilities and rebuild in budget frameworks given the potential size of such events relative to a council budget. Given these financial capacity constraints, councils rely heavily on State and Federal funding support.

Councils are also at the heart of planning and developing more sustainable, shock-resistant environments and communities, whether those communities are rural, regional or urban, and stand ready to do more, but need additional and targeted assistance and support from the State and Federal Governments.

This support could take the form of additional or shared resourcing, grant funded programs, tools and templates, direct untied funding, guidance and training, access to data and data analysis tools and consistent standards and reporting frameworks.

**Recommendation 1:** LGNSW recommends additional and targeted assistance from the Federal and State Governments to local governments to assist them in contributing to effective and efficient natural disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

**Council roles and responsibilities**

In NSW, the legislative framework for council natural disaster responsibilities is broadly set out in the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (SERM Act) and expanded on through the State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) that is established under this Act.

The current EMPLAN notes:

22. *The SERM Act recognises the involvement of local government in all stages of an emergency is critical (i.e. in prevention, preparation, response and recovery).*

23. *Where appropriate, the roles and functions of the SEMC are delegated regionally through Region Emergency Management Committees (REMC) and locally through the Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMC).*

24. *Local government plays a pivotal role in LEMC. The LEMC is responsible for carrying out the preparation of plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies in the Local Government Area (LGA). Noting the responsibility for planning by Combat Agencies.*

The general manager of each council is typically the chair of the LEMC (s28, SERM Act), which also consists of the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOC - who is a suitably qualified NSW Police Force officer with appropriate emergency management experience) in each LGA (s32, SERM Act), senior representatives of emergency service organisations, representatives of Functional Areas\(^1\) as appropriate and any other representatives deemed appropriate.

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\(^1\) The Functional Areas are Agricultural and animal services, Telecommunication services, Energy and utility services, Engineering services, Environmental services, Health services, Public information services, Transport services, Welfare services.
Councils are also responsible for providing executive support facilities for the LEMC and LEOC.

The NSW State Recovery Plan, prepared under provisions of the SERM Act and the EMPLAN also highlights the role of councils in recovery:

55. Local Council plays a key role in managing local recovery, providing services and assistance to the community and advice to State Government.

56. Local Council chairs the Local Recovery Committee, when a Recovery Coordinator is not appointed.

57. Local Council provides Executive Support to the Local or Regional Recovery Committee.

58. Local Council provides the Recovery Centre Manager and Administrative Support to the Recovery Centre, where established.

59. Local Council provides expertise and local knowledge to inform the Local Recovery Committee.

In addition to the broad responsibilities highlighted above, further examples of council natural disaster responsibilities include:

**Preparation:**
- Contributing to bushfire risk management plans (developed through Bushfire Management Committees) and implementing actions identified in these plans
- Preparing and implementing Fire Management Plans on council reserves and Crown Lands under council’s care and control, and proactive fire hazard inspections on these lands
- Ongoing fire break (asset protection zone - APZ) management on council managed land and monitoring and enforcing maintenance of vegetation and APZs on private land
- Working with the RFS and Fire & Rescue NSW to deliver fuel management burns on council land
- Maintenance of fire trails on council managed land
- Community awareness and engagement activities and links to external information and resources relevant to the local area
- Mapping land considered bushfire prone in accordance with RFS guidelines or flood prone to assist with considering development applications

**Response**
- Operational and administrative support to the LEMC, LEOC and evacuation centres (in addition to business as usual council functions that must be maintained)
- Providing specialist plant (such as water tankers), equipment, personnel and critical local knowledge to agencies involved in emergency response
- Information sharing online, through social media and via direct phone line to bolster the reach of official channels and communications regarding emergency, including for Disaster Welfare Assistance Points
Recovery

- Preparing community recovery plans to identify and coordinate optimal recovery actions (for example, see Richmond Valley Council’s Community Revitalisation Plan from the 2019 Bushfires)
- Appointing a recovery manager and recovery advisory committee to ensure the community is adequately consulted and included in recovery decision making, alongside emergency services, state and federal government agencies and not-for-profit organisations
- Recovery meetings and community information meetings
- Dedicated recovery support webpages to consolidate all relevant assistance for the local area
- Encouraging local procurement for recovery actions to help revitalise local economies
- Assessing and removing dangerous trees from roads, parks and other Council managed facilities
- Coordinating local relief funds for those directly affected by disasters
- Damage assessments
- Clearance of roads and bridges
- Removal of debris, clean up and disposal
- Environmental remediation and restoration

Further information about a selection of these responsibilities, and recommendations on improvements that might be made, is set out below.

Climate change

Local governments are on the frontline when dealing with the risks and impacts of climate change. Councils prepare and adopt strategies, plans and projects related to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

However, as the ALGA submission noted, Australia’s efforts to address and respond to climate change is not taking full advantage of the opportunity for partnership and collaboration with local government. Councils need additional support, and sometimes grant funding, to carry out effective adaption and mitigation activities.

NSW councils passed a number of resolutions at the 2019 LGNSW Annual Conference in recognition that communities across NSW are facing the impacts and consequences of climate change.

**Recommendation 2: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and State Governments increase investment in local government grant programs for adaptation and mitigation activities.**

Risk mitigation and reduction

Councils play a key role in bushfire risk mitigation and resilience projects, including hazard reduction activities. An impediment to the delivery of hazard reduction works for local government is the structure of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) funding programs available - where annual works programs are linked to annual grants processes and there is not

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enough flexibility for councils to undertake these works as needed and when the risk warrants action.

In addition, funding cycles do not correlate well with the bushfire danger periods, with announcements often being made in late spring/early summer and guidelines preventing reimbursement of any works undertaken before the announcement. This makes it difficult for all agencies to allocate their own budgets before the bushfire danger period commences as there is uncertainty around which priority activities will be funded by RFS.

**Recommendation 3:** LGNSW recommends that the Federal and NSW Governments review hazard reduction funding programs, including structure and timing, to improve flexibility and appropriateness.

Betterment and mitigation funding

Local governments plan and provide infrastructure for their communities. LGNSW has long advocated for betterment funding. Rebuilding infrastructure to its original specifications and condition is not sufficient to provide our communities with the level of resilience they need in the face of more frequent and increasingly severe natural disasters.

Under the current national Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), essential public assets directly damaged by an eligible disaster may be reconstructed to their pre-disaster function – there is little provision for betterment. This leaves those assets vulnerable to the next natural disaster event.

Betterment funding, for a relatively small additional investment, can save millions of dollars in years to come by ensuring infrastructure is rebuilt to a more resilient standard.

LGNSW also calls for the expansion of the defined list of essential local government assets covered by the DRFA to include local government waste, water and wastewater assets and other community assets such as community centres, which are critical for community health, wellbeing and recovery.

Closely related to the issue of betterment funding is the adequacy of mitigation funding.

At a national level local government has been strongly advocating for the establishment of a targeted natural disaster mitigation program.

Our call for increased disaster mitigation funding is supported by a 2014 Productivity Commission inquiry into natural disaster funding, that found reconstruction and recovery consumed 97% of disaster funding in Australia.

Appropriate betterment and disaster mitigation measures serve to protect exposed communities, ultimately reducing the need for recovery funding, and lowering insurance premiums for those living in highly exposed areas.

It also stimulates economic and social recovery as communities and businesses feel confident investing in and committing to regions that are supported by resilient infrastructure.

**Recommendation 4:** LGNSW recommends:
- That the DRFA be amended to include greater provision for betterment funding and eligibility criteria be extended to include local waste and water utility infrastructure.
- The establishment of a natural disaster mitigation program.
Emergency management

Councils also play a key role in emergency management and supporting community safety. Mayors, Councillors and council staff led and supported their communities during the recent bushfires, even when many of them were personally affected.

Local government coordinated Local Emergency Management Committees and Evacuation Centres, and as the crisis moved to the recovery phase, they hosted bushfire recovery meetings and committees in communities across the state. Some councils also provided support to community recovery hubs, a community-led initiative to share information and to offer a place to gather to share experiences.

Councils also supported combat and other response agencies and moved rapidly to clear roads, remove hazards and to repair essential public infrastructure.

Some clean-up activities took longer due to a more comprehensive assessment of damage and remediation being required, and councils were concerned that the 21-day emergency clean-up period in NSW law, which is designed to financially support local government to undertake works, was not sufficient.

**Recommendation 5:** LGNSW recommends a review or extension to emergency clean-up periods where the damage from disasters is extensive and widespread.

Emergency Services Funding

There have been large increases in resourcing for the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), NSW Fire and Rescue (NSWF) and the State Emergency Service (SES) over the past decade. In the wake of the recent fires, there have understandably been calls for the Government to further increase the capacity of our emergency services.

The bushfire disaster highlights the need for the emergency services to have a strong and sustainable funding base, but it has also highlighted the need for the funding model to be equitable, efficient and accountable.

Under current arrangements, NSW councils contribute 11.7% of the combined emergency services budget through the Emergency Service Levy (ESL).

Councils cannot afford the continuing escalation of the ESL. The ESL has already been increasing at rates far in excess of council revenue growth and this is not sustainable. LGNSW has long called for the abolition of the ESL on both insurance companies and local government and advocated it be replaced by broad based property tax.

NSW is now the only mainland state that does not fund its fire and emergency services by a broad-based property levy.

**Recommendation 6:** LGNSW recommends the NSW Government replace the current ESL with a broad-based property levy.
3. Describe any opportunities to improve coordination between LGAs (particularly adjacent LGAs across State or Territory borders), State Government and Federal Government to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters.

The collaborative effort between all three levels of government, combat agencies, volunteers and communities in responding to the widespread bushfire events across NSW and Australia was remarkable.

Agencies and individuals demonstrated adaptability, flexibility and a willingness to engage and work together for the common good.

State-local coordination

While a significant number of NSW Government agencies were involved in the response and recovery, feedback from councils experiencing bushfire events in 2019/20 expressed concern about lack of overall coordination.

Some councils reported there had been a lack of communication at a state level regarding processes. Councils were often reporting to several different agencies as well as hosting community forums where the process was unclear for participants. Councils also found issues in the sharing of information between agencies. Some councils reported that information collected by one agency was not being provided to others, increasing the on-the-ground response needed and duplicating reporting requests from already stretched councils.

Recommendation 7: LGNSW recommends improvements to streamline communications, reporting and the sharing of information to and between government agencies to remove or reduce duplication.

Cross Border Cooperation

Councils in border locations advised of problems in coordination and cooperation between state response agencies. This appeared to result from differences in operating policies and procedures, command structures and a lack of interoperability between systems and communications equipment.

This suggests that there is a need to review current arrangements for managing interjurisdictional bushfire and other natural disaster responses. Improvements may involve a model emergency management approach, cross border emergency management plans, joint training activities, the development of coordinated communications procedures and interoperability.

Recommendation 8: LGNSW recommends a review of current arrangements for managing interjurisdictional bushfire and other natural disaster responses.

Involvement of Australian Defence Forces

A key form of support councils received was personnel from the Australian Defence Forces (ADF). The announcement and arrival of the ADF to assist in recovery was welcomed, and councils appreciated the assistance provided, however council feedback suggests it was not always well coordinated. Neither local government nor the State representatives had a clear understanding of what the ADF could and could not do, and the ADF personnel often arrived
with limited tools and equipment, leading to concerns that they were not being used to their full potential.

**Recommendation 9: LGNSW recommends that ADF disaster support capabilities be documented and included in formal emergency response and recovery planning.**

**Data capture and sharing**

As Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council notes in its submission, capturing and sharing of emergency management data is an issue, and there would be value in having a single emergency management tool across all jurisdictions to enable better remote cross border interaction within emergency operation centres.

**Recommendation 10: LGNSW recommends a review of emergency management tools across all jurisdictions to improve data management and sharing during emergencies.**

**Communications systems and public information**

As Wollondilly Shire Council notes in its submission, there is a need for better communications and systems for public information and warnings. Allocating dedicated district personnel specifically to monitoring progress of the fire, and updating social channels, apps and community messaging would be of great benefit in providing timely information with appropriate levels of local detail.

The lack of mobile phone reception (black spots) across many rural and regional areas is an impediment to emergency evacuation and recovery, and repairs to telecommunications systems were slow.

**Recommendation 11: LGNSW recommends the Federal Government prioritise and invest in improvements to telecommunications systems, including resilience measures, particularly in natural disaster prone areas.**

**Recovery activities, including funding**

When natural disasters occur, there is a need to provide rapid support to individuals, communities and councils. Councils were appreciative of the immediate payment of $1 million under the National Bushfire Recovery Fund to the most severely bushfire impacted councils.

However, many individuals and councils found navigating the eligibility criteria and pathways for applying for other Federal and State recovery funds were complex and not clearly communicated.

**Recommendation 12: LGNSW recommends a review of the governance and communications frameworks for recovery funding to reduce complexity and increase clarity.**

Longer term support for the recovery and rebuilding of communities is also needed in the form of economic development and local employment that also contributes to recovery of the natural and built environments. For example, funding for new or expanded council projects that deal with the aftermath of natural disasters such as:

- waging a frontline battle with invasive and emerging weed and pest animal species
• working to revegetate koala habitats following devastating bushfires
• addressing water quality issues post fire and flood
• protecting endangered and threatened species from further threats
• managing coastal erosion and dune rehabilitation projects after storm/flood events.

**Recommendation 13: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and State Governments provide additional funding for new or expanded council projects that contribute to the recovery of the natural and built environments.**

**Community support services**

Disaster and crisis cause strong emotional and physical reactions – sadness, grief, and anger – long after the fire has passed, and this is quite normal.

Access to mental health services – and health services generally – in rural and regional areas is an ongoing matter of concern. Although healthcare is a state and federal responsibility, councils often take on additional responsibilities to meet the needs of their communities.

At LGNSW’s 2019 Annual Conference, NSW councils resolved to call for a joint taskforce representing local, state and federal governments to formulate a model for improving the provision of medical services in rural and regional areas, and funding financial relocation packages for the engagement of doctors in rural towns. While inequitable access to medical and welfare services is damaging to community resilience at all times, this shortfall is particularly harmful when communities are in the natural disaster recovery phase.

Regional communities also experience higher levels of youth suicide, worsened by a lack of youth counselling services, programs and centres. Councils across NSW operate youth centres and services, but often cannot fund these for full time staff or hours of operation.

Improved funding for services supporting youth and community wellbeing will improve the resilience of communities’ post disaster, and we have been pleased to see Federal and State funding support in these areas. Local government calls for these additional outreach programs and services to remain funded and in place for many years to come.

**Recommendation 14: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and NSW Governments adequately fund health services, particularly in rural and regional areas, and specialised youth and community wellbeing services, to increase resilience to emergency situations.**

**Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group**

As the scale of recovery became clear, in early January 2020 LGNSW, the NSW Office of Emergency Management, NSW Office of Local Government, City of Sydney and Sydney Resilience Office partnered to establish the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group (LGBRSG).

This Group is assisting council disaster recovery and support operations in local communities by collecting and coordinating offers of support from councils so they can be matched to the councils where support is needed, when it is needed. The group provides:

• a database of services and resources being offered by local government;
• a matching service between councils offering support and councils requiring support;
• general guidance on potential risks and safe methods of work; and
- connection to organisations that can provide advice on supporting disaster recovery.

Forms of assistance have included:

- records officers to locate archived planning files for hundreds of properties and structures damaged in fires
- planners to replace staff that have had to take leave as their own properties had been damaged by fires
- engineering staff to conduct assessments of damaged timber bridges
- work crews to clear debris blocking access roads
- media and communications work to assist community recovery.

The LGBRSG represents an excellent example of generosity, coordination and collaboration among councils and NSW Government agencies in supporting recovery and rebuild, and we have recommended that the NSW Government consider how it can support and reintroduce when necessary the successful recovery model pioneered by the LGBRSG.

**Recommendation 15:** That the NSW Government consider how it can support and reintroduce when necessary the successful recovery model pioneered by the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group.

**Conclusion**

LGNSW appreciates the opportunity to provide information to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, and the invitation to appear before the Commission on 24 June 2020. A Summary of LGNSW recommendations is included at Appendix 1.

For more information please see the attached LGNSW Submission to the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry (Appendix 2) and the ALGA Submission to the Royal Commission (Appendix 3).

For further information, please contact Kelly Kwan, Executive Manager, Advocacy on kelly.kwan@lgnsw.org.au or 02 9242 4038.
Appendix 1: Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: LGNSW recommends additional and targeted assistance from the Federal and State Governments to local governments to assist them in contributing to effective and efficient natural disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Recommendation 2: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and State Governments increase investment in local government grant programs for adaptation and mitigation activities.

Recommendation 3: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and NSW Governments review hazard reduction funding programs, including structure and timing, to improve flexibility and appropriateness.

Recommendation 4: LGNSW recommends:
- That the DRFA be amended to include greater provision for betterment funding and eligibility criteria be extended to include local waste and water utility infrastructure.
- The establishment of a natural disaster mitigation program.

Recommendation 5: LGNSW recommends a review or extension to emergency clean-up periods where the damage from disasters is extensive and widespread.

Recommendation 6: LGNSW recommends the NSW Government replace the current ESL with a broad-based property levy.

Recommendation 7: LGNSW recommends improvements to streamline communications, reporting and the sharing of information to and between government agencies to remove or reduce duplication.

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Recommendation 11: LGNSW recommends the Federal Government prioritise and invest in improvements to telecommunications systems, including resilience measures, particularly in natural disaster prone areas.

Recommendation 12: LGNSW recommends a review of the governance and communications frameworks for recovery funding to reduce complexity and increase clarity.

Recommendation 13: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and State Governments provide additional funding for new or expanded council projects that contribute to the recovery of the natural and built environments.

Recommendation 14: LGNSW recommends that the Federal and NSW Governments adequately fund health services, particularly in rural and regional areas, and specialised youth and community wellbeing services, to increase resilience to emergency situations.

Recommendation 15: That the NSW Government consider how it can support and reintroduce when necessary the successful recovery model pioneered by the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group.