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Submission Number: NND.001.01018

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What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise? Innovation

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation? Innovate Australia Ltd

Your Submission

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

See attached

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

See attached

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

See attached

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?

See attached

Do you agree to your submission being published? Yes I agree to my submission being published in my name

Supporting material provided:

Bushfire dot info website - Submission from Innovate Australia to Royal Commission - April 2020.pdf

Creation of a national bushfire information website, bushfire.info, to serve as an easy point of access to individual bushfire agencies, and to assist the states and territories with access to the latest research information and technological innovations.

Currently, bushfire information is provided separately by each Australian state and territory. As a result, Australia as a nation lacks a central bushfire hub that would: collate data and statistics; display tools and research outcome developed by Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, universities and other institutions i.e. bushfire predictive services; bring uniformity of glossary, symbols and icons; provide easy access to states and territories bushfire agencies.

To address the above listed shortcomings, Innovate Australia is proposing to develop a national bushfire information website, optimised for mobile devices, and using a logical and easy to memorise domain name:

bushfire.info

Innovate Australia has already created a demonstration website as the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for this submission.

The creation of the bushfire.info website should have a positive impact on the strategic and tactical planning of bushfire management of emergency services across the nation. It could help to bring uniformity and encourage interstate collaboration, for example in adapting the uniform type of maps used by authorities, or choosing consistent, intuitive symbols and icons, which currently vary from one authority to another, as illustrated below.



At a later stage, the website could also integrate information provided by local agencies and deliver it to the public in a number of formats.

Currently, Innovate Australia is collaborating with a U.S. based artificial intelligence (AI) company Gridspace to develop a national phone/text helpline 1800 HELP ME, designed to use AI to engage, evaluate and connect users with a variety of social services, such as personal crises, veterans' affairs, suicide prevention, domestic violence, legal referrals, etc. Once the technology is perfected, it would become a useful addition to bushfire.info website, as a voice/chat information channel.

The bushfire.info website could be developed in successive stages:

Stage 1

A simple and convenient way to access the main bushfire information links in all Australian states and territories. (currently existing)

Stage 2

Activating the map on www.bushfire.info to display basic warnings and to do so, creating and using a uniform Australian legend of bushfire signs and icons similar to our national traffic signs.



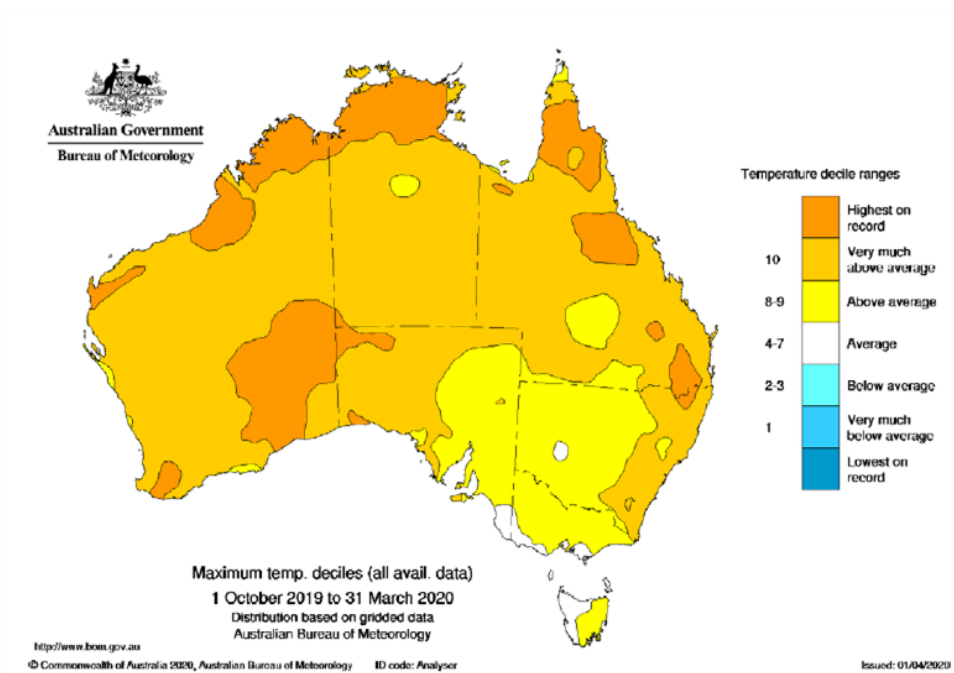
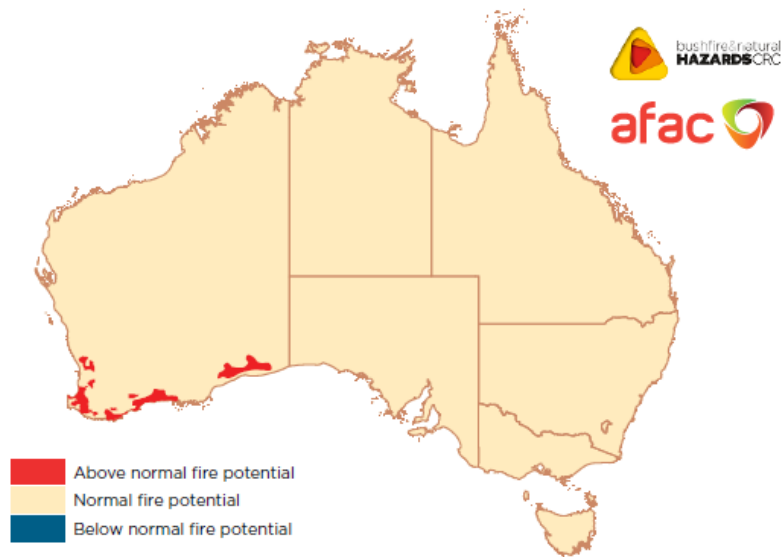
The uniformity will allow the meaning of bushfire signs and icons to be instantaneously recognised by emergency services, other bushfire professionals and the general public alike, no matter what state or territory they find themselves in during a bushfire emergency.

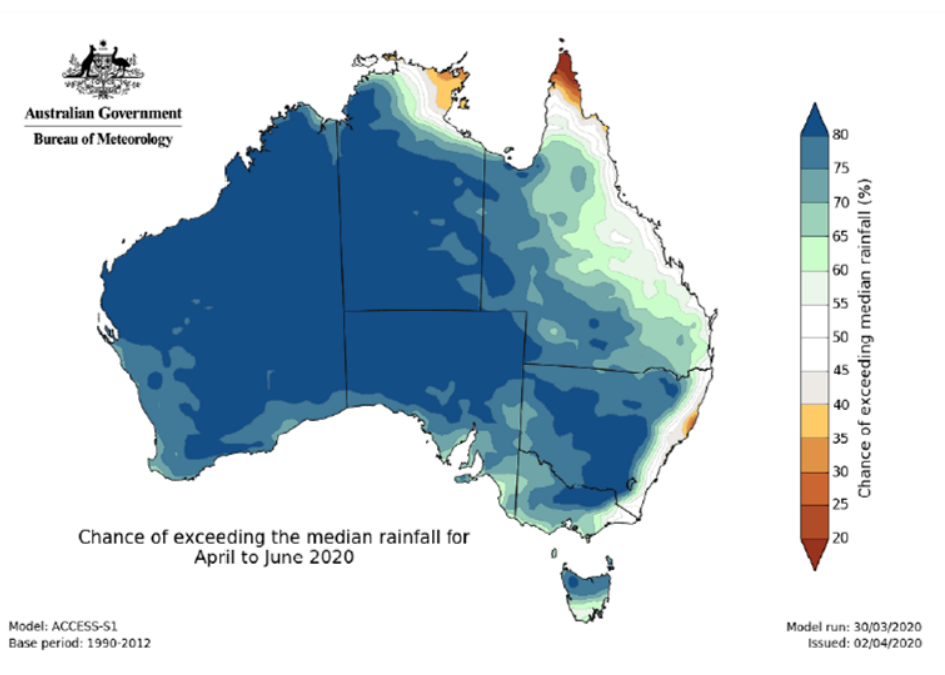
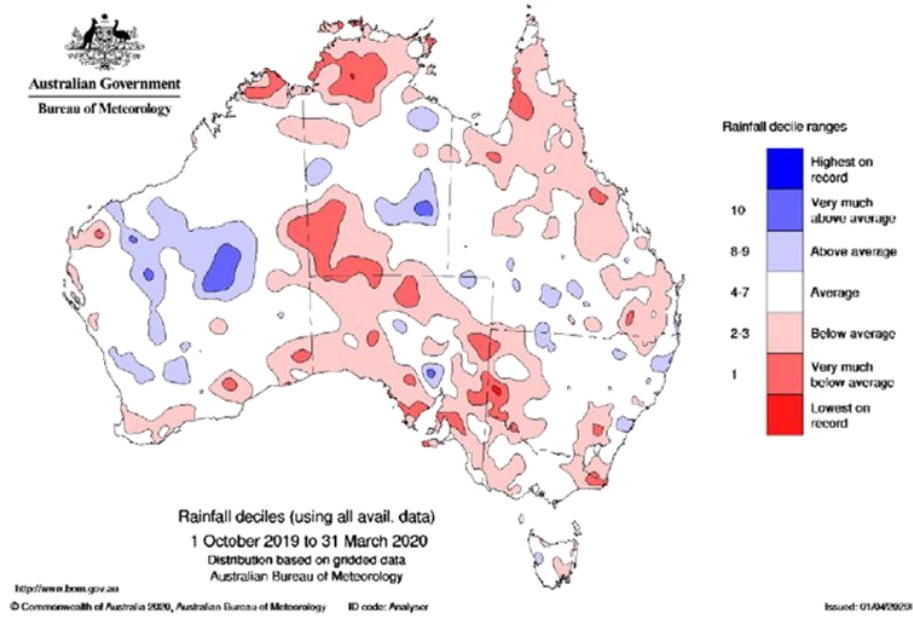
Stage 3

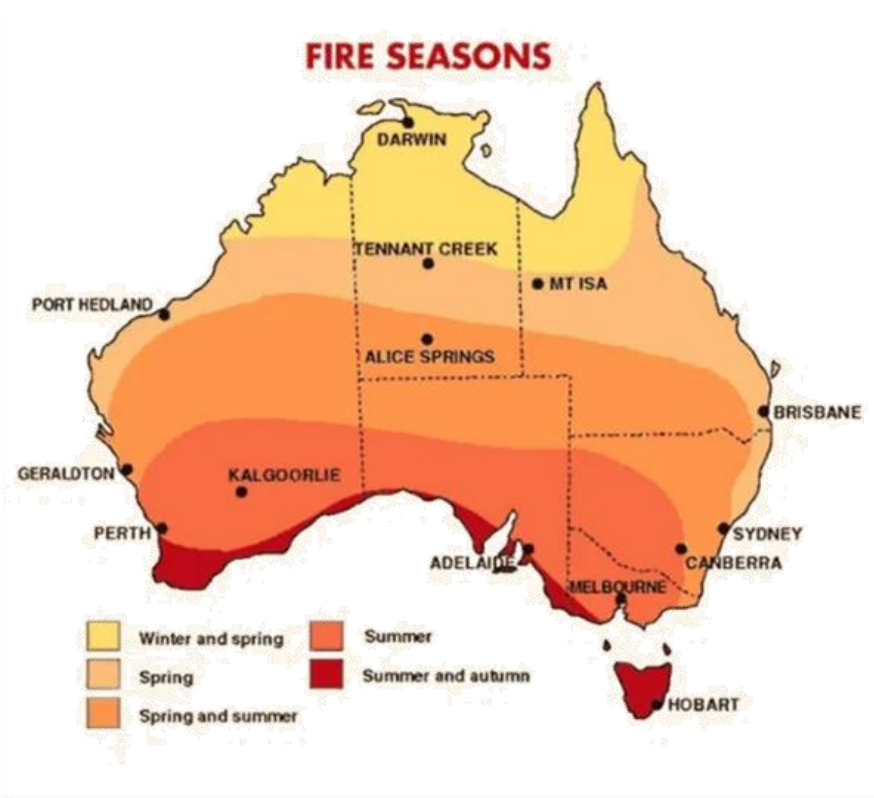
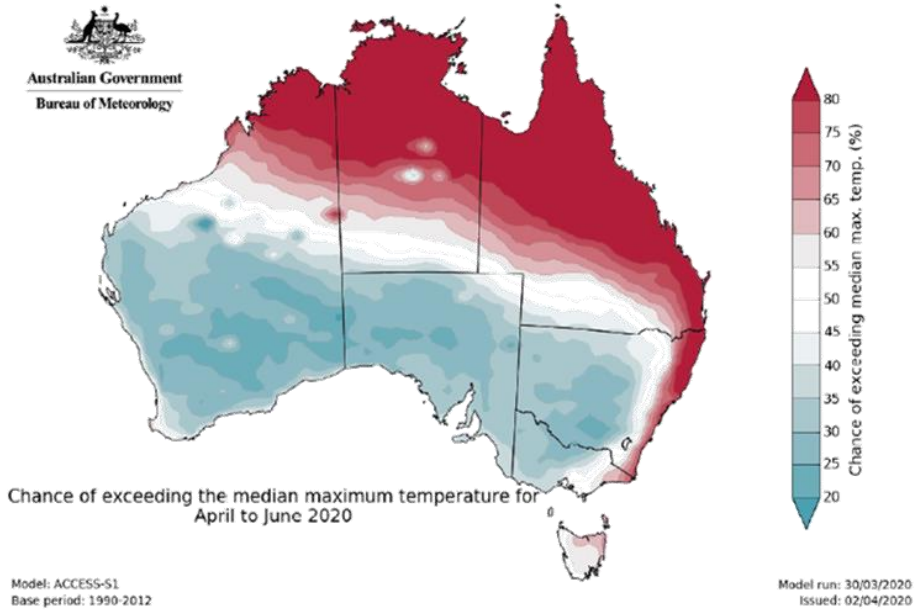
Utilise the map on bushfire.info to allow public access to important and pertinent information, often painstakingly collected and collated by the leading Australian bodies such as Bushfire CRC (Cooperative Research Centre), AFAC (The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities

Council) and various research and academic institutions, as illustrated by the following examples, mostly taken from a Bushfire CRC leaflet.

Australian Seasonal Bushfire Outlook: April 2020





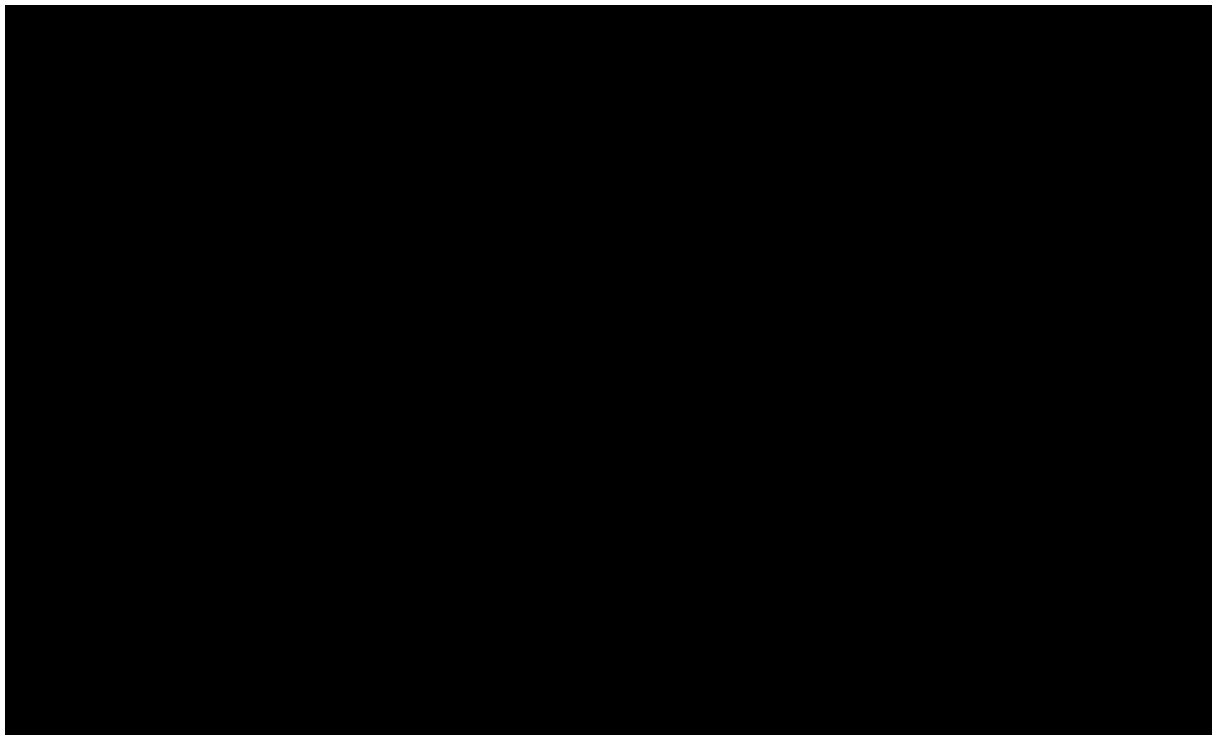


Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Stage 4

The bushfire.info website to become an Australian Bushfire Clearinghouse, a central hub where all key bushfire information is gathered, kept and distributed for all stakeholders including the Australian public. It should also serve as a platform where, especially the Australian companies, would be able to showcase their innovative solutions relevant to the topic of bushfire.

Case in point could be the latest winner of the Australian Computer Society's Best New Disruptive Startup Platform Award, Sentient Hubs, run by David Lucido.



The company believes that bushfire agencies can improve situational awareness and reduce time to decision through:

Interactive Risk Assessment & Planning

- Advanced modelling that blends disparate data and models (terrain, vegetation, wind, fire, etc.) to better predict fire movement

- High-confidence/High-resolution localised forecasts on-demand (e.g. wind speed, air temperature, relative humidity, rainfall)
- Interactive ‘What if?’ Scenario Planning Tools

Common Data Platform – Breaking Down Silos for a Single Point of Truth

- Leveraging Siloed Data – Connecting Agencies, Service Providers, Public, etc
- Equipment and Personnel Tracking – to assist Inventory Management and on-the-ground planning and action
- Data, Format, System, Vendor Agnostic

Response Orchestration - Common Operating Environment

- Improved Situational Awareness, Coordination & Staging
- Precision ‘Look-Ahead’: Connecting changing conditions to operational decisions
- Multi-Channel Communications Portal (Public Broadcast)

Companies like Sentient Hubs, which potentially could provide a whole gamut of innovative solutions, usually have limited resources and simply cannot afford to crisscross the country, knocking on doors and trying to get to the decision-makers. On the other hand, the decision-makers usually have access to resources, but are extremely time-poor and cannot afford to spend hours in meetings, especially with start-up companies, listening to pitches.

By providing a central platform on bushfire.info for showcasing innovations and new technologies, the decision-makers can gain access to the latest information on the use of Drones, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Virtual and Augmented Reality, Blockchain, etc, applicable to the abatement of bushfires in Australia.

In summary, Innovate Australia believes that even if only Stage 1, “To use the bushfire.info website as a simple way to access the main bushfire information links in all Australian states and territories.”, would be adopted by various Australian bushfire organisations, it still would be a measurable improvement over the current flow of information.

Various bushfire agencies should be complimented on creating high quality public awareness campaigns, but they must be frustrated that public response is not proportional to the quality of the campaign. Because simply of the limitation and the cost website addresses are usually displayed for two seconds, which is not enough time for an average person to remember the domain name and therefore to follow up on the ad's 'call for action'.

With the use of bushfire.info, the domain *cfs.sa.go.au* becomes an easy to remember *bushfire.info/sa* and where visitors would be able to find there the 5 Minute Bushfire Plan. The *firechat.wa.gov.au* becomes *bushfire.info/wa* and *vic.gov.au/knowfire* campaign would be located at *bushfire.info/vic*. After a few years, it would be extremely difficult for the viewers NOT TO REMEMBER the bushfire.info web address. The main priority should be the message itself.

Besides simplicity and convenience of access, the bushfire.info project brings together three components, crucial to success in the fight against Australian bushfires: information, innovation and collaboration.

Peter Kasprzak

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