



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee
Final Report:

Lessons to be learned in relation to the
Australian bushfire season 2019-20

APRIL 2024

Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends the Australian Government work with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) and state and territory governments to progress the establishment of a permanent, sovereign aerial firefighting fleet, which includes Large Air-Tankers and Very Large Air-Tankers, and small and medium-sized aircraft as appropriate.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends the Australian Government consider ongoing partnerships with donation management platforms, so that donations given in the wake of natural disasters are distributed in a way that is coordinated, transparent and meeting genuine need.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with government and non-government organisations that provide evacuation, relief and recovery centres both during and after natural disasters, to ensure the implementation of nationally consistent Child Friendly Spaces. The Australian Government should also consider the appropriate funding required for the development and rapid deployment of these Spaces.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the National Recovery and Resilience Agency (NRRRA) develop and implement a set of operating principles which are guided by Australia's current humanitarian and foreign aid principles. The principles should establish the role and function of the Agency and outline the ways in which the Agency will provide assistance which is trauma-informed, people-centred, and community-led.

The values that would inform the development of these operating principles would be the universal values of humanitarian assistance—impartiality, non-discrimination, political neutrality and cross-cultural awareness.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that development of the NRRRA's operating principles be undertaken in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government undertake an urgent review of the funding arrangements for the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), with a view to ensuring the fund is subject to the most stringent accountability and transparency measures, which are also consistent with the operating principles that should govern the operation of the National Recovery and Resilience Agency (NRRRA) by adoption of Recommendation 4.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the administration and expenditure of funding under the Emergency Response Fund and the several other funds administered by the National Recovery and Resilience Agency be included in the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Audit Program for 2022-23, and that the Government ensures that the ANAO is adequately funded to carry out the audit.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends the Australian Government use the Emergency Response Fund to increase investment in mitigation and resilience measures, in line with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission's 2014 report into Natural Disaster Funding.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends the National Recovery and Resilience Agency re-instate monthly funding reporting for the National Bushfire Recovery Fund (NBRF).

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the National Recovery and Resilience Agency establishes monthly reporting requirements for government and non-government entities receiving funding from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the National Recovery and Resilience Agency consider appointing additional members to their advisory board with specific expertise in response, recovery and resilience in bushfire affected areas.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends the Australian Government and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency work to develop a central, secure portal and reporting framework for organisations operating in natural disaster affected areas to upload information to, in order to streamline the recovery process and reduce re-traumatisation of natural disaster victims and survivors.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends the Australian Government apply the Disaster Resilience Star Rating (DRSR) model when assessing and funding government adaptation and resilience projects, in order to implement efficient and effective public mitigation investment. In applying the DRSR model, the Government should liaise with the Bushfire

Building Council of Australia to determine appropriate funding models and identify suitable investment projects.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Treasurer direct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to conduct an inquiry into the supply of the relevant range of general building and business insurance products to consumers in bushfire prone regions of Australia, with terms of reference that cover the following matters:

- **pricing and availability of insurance to consumers in bushfire prone regions;**
- **key cost components of insurance pricing in bushfire prone regions and how they have changed over time, particularly catastrophe risk;**
- **terms and conditions on which insurance is supplied in bushfire prone regions;**
- **competitiveness of markets for insurance in bushfire prone regions;**
- **the existence and extent of any barriers to entry, expansion and/or exit in the supply of insurance in bushfire prone regions;**
- **any impediments to consumer choice, including transaction costs, a lack of transparent information, or other factors;**
- **identifying any regulatory issues, or market participant behaviour or practices that may not be supporting the development of competitive markets for insurance in bushfire prone regions;**
- **the profitability of insurers through time and the extent to which profits are, or are expected to be, commensurate with risk, particularly having regard to the material financial risks posed by climate change; and**
- **potential policy innovations that would stimulate the creation of a market relationship between expenditure on resilience and mitigation measures by households and firms, and insurers' pricing of bushfire risk for those households and firms that undertake resilience and mitigation expenditure.**

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the National Cabinet agree to establish a working group to undertake a review into each jurisdiction's legislative framework and processes for:

- **hazard reduction;**
- **vegetation management; and**

- **land use management strategies, including Indigenous land use management practices;**

with a view to developing a national position and strategy on hazard reduction and land use management, in urban, regional and rural settings. The review would consider the impact of climate change on fuel loads and other bushfire hazards.

The Committee recommends that the working group draw on the expertise of subject matter specialists, including (but not limited to) tertiary researchers, wildlife and environmental managers, climate change experts, peak bodies (such as the CSIRO and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre), and First Nations communities with regard to land use management practices and cultural burning.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider a targeted research and investment program into new fire early detection and suppression technology, in partnership with Natural Hazards Research Australia.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Additional Comments - Australian Greens

Recommendation 1

That the Australian Government urgently transition away from coal and gas.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2

That the Australian Parliament enact the Coal prohibition (Quit Coal) Bill 2021.

Response:

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since the report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.