

Part B

Empowering ‘Stay or Go’

**Consideration of the Welfare of the Community during
Bushfire in Western Australia**

Proposed Policy Statement Community Management Control Plan Suggested Legislative Descriptors

Greg Pobar



for the

2001

Executive Leadership Program

of the

Australasian Fire Authorities Council

Australian Institute of Police Management

These documents are part of an assignment that is a requirement for the Australasian Fire Authorities Council and the Australian Institute of Police Management Executive Leadership Program 2001. The views and opinions interpreted or expressed by the author are not those of the organisations described or that of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia.

Important Footnote :

This report has been updated in view of the recent **New South Wales wildfires of December 2001 and January 2002**. The intentions of the policy and process have been tested against the protocols adopted by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales Police Service and the challenges that these organisations faced. (Brinkworth & Sullivan pers comms). This policy review and accompanying documents have been tested in desktop against these wildfire events. I am grateful to officers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service for his input to enable closure of this review.

Fire Service of WA

Proposed Policy

Managing the Community during Bushfire

Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia Fire Services

Managing the Community during Bushfire

1. Introduction

1.1 Bushfires within Western Australia exhibit varying degrees of threat to the community, including people, property, environmental assets and general well being. The degree of bushfire threat is based on a diversity of influences including weather conditions, topographical and vegetation assemblages, adopted land management practices, response planning and the level of preparation adopted by homeowners and businesses.

1.2 Regularly, communities are challenged by bushfire and fire services exhibit a range of strategies to protect the community based on the circumstances described. As a result, this paper recognises that it is difficult to determine an exact strategy or describe definitive procedures applicable in all cases.

2. Intention

Within Western Australia, the community may choose to stay with their properties if they are threatened by bushfire and if they are prepared for bushfire within the advice described by FESA.

If safe to do so the community should also have the option to relocate to a safe haven.

There are circumstances when the community may be directed to evacuate.

There is no desire to force evacuations during a bushfire.

3. Planning for Community Safety

3.1 The Fire and Emergency Services in partnership with government and non-government organisations will develop the best possible advice to communities living in bushfire prone areas.

3.2 The interpretation and implementation of the advice by the community is their 'informed choice'.

3.3 The Fire and Emergency Services Authority in partnership with the Police and Local Governments will develop operational procedures that allow for :

- a) Informing the community whenever possible of likely threat (FESA)
- b) On assessing the communities survivability, contacting residents in the predicted fireground whenever possible and providing additional information, advice and direction (FESA/Police)
- c) Identification and provision of the use of refuges from bushfire should residents decide to relocate (Local Government, Local Emergency Management Committee)
- d) Providing welfare and information to the community (Local Government, Local Emergency Management Committee)
- e) Assessing the communities short term vulnerability once the fire has passed (Local Government, Local Emergency Management Committee)
- f) Developing safe access corridors and community security plans for the community to return as soon as possible (FESA / Local Government)

4. Procedures and Authority

4.1 The Fire Brigades Act and the Bush Fires Act provide the authority to evacuate persons in case of fire. This policy recognises this authority however

does not consider 'forced evacuation' during bushfire unless in extreme circumstances or on advice from Police Services.

4.2 The Incident Controller supported by the Incident Management Team is responsible for the assessment, identification and warning of communities at risk. The directions of the incident controller with respect to community management are carried out by Police, Emergency Services and Local Government.

4.3 A local government liaison officer and police liaison officer should be onsite and in constant communication with the Incident Management Team at all times once a community is determined to be under threat.

5. Safe Havens

5.1 The identification of Safe Havens or Bushfire refuges and their development and management falls within Local Emergency Management Planning as tasked to the Local Emergency Management Advisory Committee (LEMC). The Fire and Emergency Services Authority will notify LEMC once an incident controller identifies a community likely to be under threat from bushfire.

6. Access

6.1 Access into a predicted fireground, is determined by the Incident Controller. Emergency Service Personnel are normally granted access and immediately report to the forward control point for tasking.

6.2 Residents who were not at home or wish to return home can only do so when safe access corridors are identified.

6.3 Safe access corridors are those that are free from :

- a) Fire
- b) Smoke
- c) Fire appliances parked irregularly with hose lays across the road
- d) Firefighters working from the road
- e) Unstable or fallen power poles and lines
- f) Fallen or likely tree falls

6.4 Until the area is declared safe, all other access is to be managed and residential security implemented.

7. Recovery

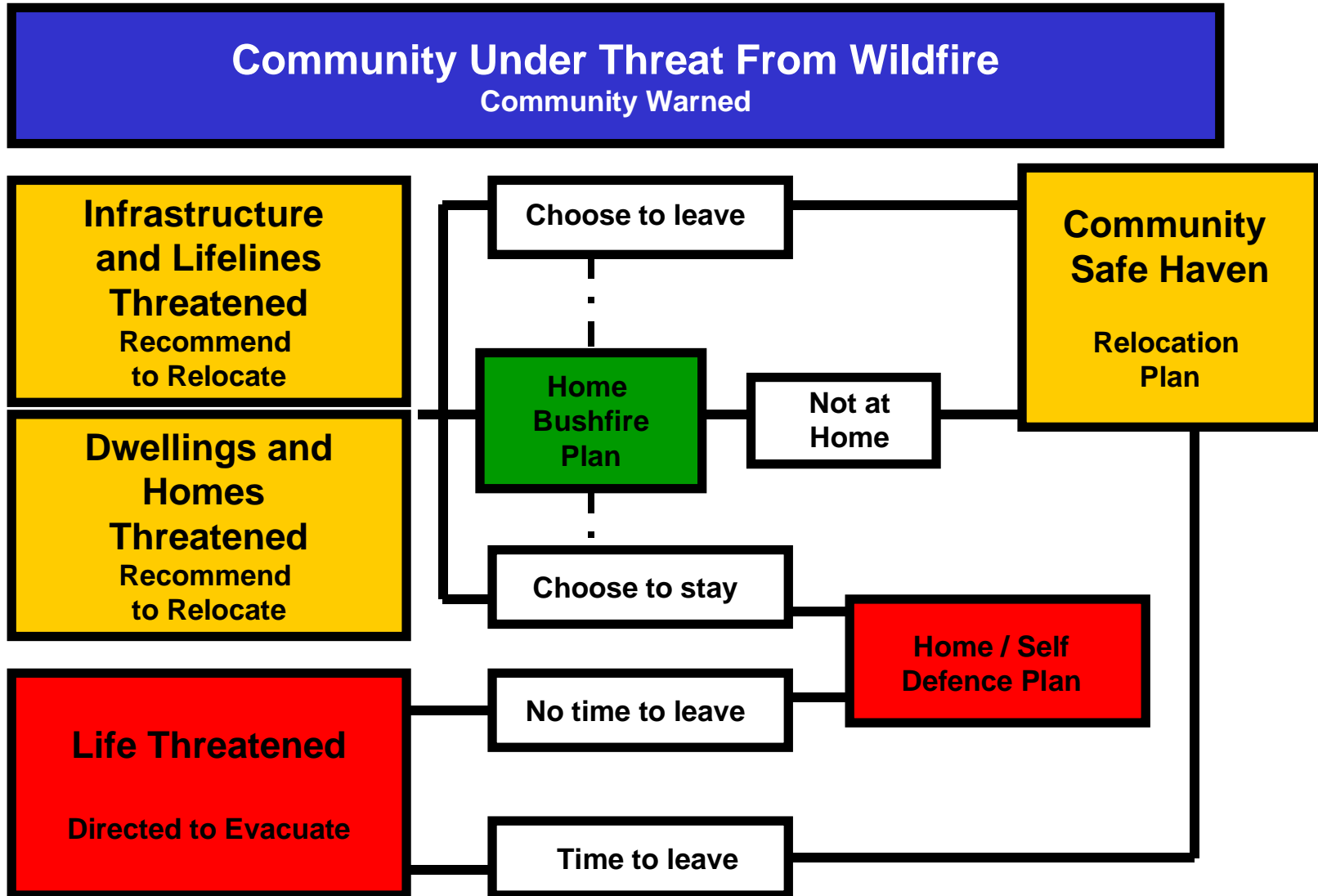
7.1 The Local government is responsible for the support, welfare and recovery of the community from the bushfire as per the Local Emergency Management Plan.

7.2 The Fire and Emergency Services Authority, if required, will initially support the recovery program through the provision of situational updates and advice.

Fire Service of WA

Community Welfare Control Plan

Community Safety Plan



Prediction	Action		Message
<p>There are communities likely to be concerned or threatened by the wildfire over the next 3 hour prediction?</p>	<p>Support officers to door knock Police, SES, Rangers, Fire Liaison Officers</p>		<p>Residents are advised of fire in area Residents are advised to put action plan into place.</p>
	<p>Activate Community Warnings through COMCEN Media and Public Affairs</p>		<p>Residents are advised of fire in area Residents are advised to put action plan into place.</p>
	<p>Notify LEMAC</p>		<p>LEMAC to identify and prepare Safe Havens, transport, traffic plans and community information and support</p>
<p>Community is likely to be threatened by wildfire with likely impact on basic infrastructure (roads, power, fences, sheds)</p>	<p>Support Officers to door knock Police, SES, Rangers, Fire Liaison Officers</p>		<p>Residents are advised to put their plan of action in place. If the involves relocating then do so now to the nearest Safe Haven at.....</p>
<p>It is unsafe for residents to move into the area</p>	<p>Notify Police</p>		<p>Only once access roads are clear of fire, smoke, appliances, dangerous trees and power poles can residents be allowed back into the area.</p>
<p>Community is likely to be threatened by wildfire and likely loss of life is of concern</p>	<p>Support Officers to door knock Police, SES, Rangers, Fire Liaison Officers</p>		<p>Community is directed to relocate to the safe haven</p>
			<p>Those who argue to stay are advised on to how to protect themselves and property from wildfire.</p>
			<p>This is a life risk fire and residents are directed to leave. Any use of force can only be used by Police Services</p>
<p>It is unsafe for residents to move out of area</p>			<p>Everyone is advised as to how to protect themselves and property.</p>

Incident Control Guide

Community/Sector Threat	Level 1 Blue	Level 2 Yellow	Level 3 Red
<p>Bush Fire threatens no or little infrastructure or property</p>	<p>Bush Fire is likely to cause confusion or concern in developed and populated areas</p>	<p>Bush Fire is likely to impact on power, roads, sheds and property with some loss likely</p>	<p>Bush Fire burning in conditions where life is at serious risk and/or fire fighting operations cannot attack the headfire</p>
<p>Immediate Assessment</p>	<p>Likely on 2 Hour Projection</p>	<p>1 Hour Lead Required</p>	<p>1 Hour Lead Required</p>
<p>Operations include monitoring of situation and offering advice</p>	<p>Community is warned</p> <p>LEMC is notified</p> <p>Information flow from IMT to LEMC is established</p> <p>Police mobilised</p>	<p>Residents are directly advised</p> <p>Assets are protected</p> <p>LEMC is active</p> <p>Safe Haven and support is established</p> <p>Full support services mobilised</p>	<p>Residents are evacuated or told to stay</p> <p>Site security is established</p> <p>Airborne Reconnaissance implemented</p>

Fire Service of WA

Suggested Legislative Considerations

Suggested Legislative and State Policy Development

Considerations regarding Evacuation

In considering policy or emergency service legislation, it is recommended that :

1. The authority to force evacuations be described.
2. 'Direction' and 'Advice' be defined
3. 'Evacuation' and 'Relocation' be defined
4. 'Safe Refuge' be defined
5. Allow for Individuals or groups of individuals to take actions to protect their property providing that they are already on the fireground and that the environment in which they are placed, is of no threat to life, allowing for their own reasonable conduct.
6. Individuals or groups of individuals can be directed to relocate should the incident be likely to endanger life.
7. Police Officers, acting within the direction of the Hazard Management Agency, be given the authority to use force in circumstances where it is determined that a real risk to life exists, only after the direction is made clear.
8. All persons directed to relocate or removed are to be offered safe refuge, be registered and be administratively accountable by the defined emergency service.

9. Authority to be given to prevent entry to persons or described persons into an area described by signage, direction or by hazard management agency for a range of reasons including civil control, safe access, investigation etc.

10. Provision for the indemnity for emergency service workers providing advice and direction within the context of 'reasonable judgement ' and 'good intention'.