



The bushfire problem

State and Council Emergency Risk Assessments clearly identify bushfire as the major potential risk in both Manningham and Nillumbik, particularly in the 'Greater Warrandyte' area of Warrandyte, North Warrandyte, Warrandyte South, Park Orchards and Wonga Park. A lower level emergency than the 2009 'Black Saturday' fires would still result in massive loss of life if residents are not well prepared.

The Victorian Emergency Management Reform white paper (December 2012) emphasises that changing attitudes and behaviour takes time. The Federal Emergency 'Guidelines for Community Education, Awareness and Engagement' Manual 45 also emphasises the importance of 'localised' programs and activities in developing 'Community Resilience' to bushfire threat.

What has WCA has done so far to address this problem?

On 1 June 2012, the Warrandyte Community Association (WCA) received a one year Victorian Government 'Fire Ready Communities Grant' of \$86,200 for households to develop effective fire plans in the 'Greater Warrandyte' area. Manningham and Nillumbik Councils contributed an extra \$7000 and \$3000 respectively and local community organisations \$4000. Most of this funding has gone back into businesses in the 'Greater Warrandyte' community which have helped us realise this endeavour. The project, 'Be Ready Warrandyte', emphasising 'Living with Bushfire Risk', ends in August 2013.

This is what we have achieved in our first year,

1. We have completed a professional survey to establish the status of household fire planning and to inform future action. This was published as the 'Bushfire Survey Key Findings' report, analysed and written by the RMIT Centre for Risk and Community Safety. It is available in a glossy 48 page hard-cover as well as online. The recommendations are also summarised in a leaflet.
2. We developed a wide range of publicity materials to advertise the program. Besides the familiar roadside advertising we used cartoon, fridge magnets, car stickers and many other means – not the least the full supporting coverage in the Diary and other media outlets.
3. The WCA website has been rebuilt with 'Be Ready' local fire information and links. This is currently being updated to reflect feedback from users and future programs.
4. The website has an online sample fire-plan tailored to local needs to help locals write their own plan.
5. Most successfully, we have released a humorous educational video, parodying typical attitudes and featuring local identities from the Warrandyte Theatre Group. It has been distributed State-wide by the CFA and is online on YouTube.
6. Our latest development is a unique 'Warrandyte Fire Watch' app. consolidating local fire warnings, alerts, traffic and weather information, created by the international organisation, Random Hacks of Kindness. This is a first for Australia as far as we know.
7. We are holding scenario planning workshops with the local emergency services based on a fire outbreak in Warrandyte to help people prepare better fire plans.
8. An ongoing program is conducting meetings with all 70 local Warrandyte organisations to gain support.
9. We plan to hold public meetings/workshops prior to the next fire season.

None of this would have been possible if we hadn't established an effective management team consisting of WCA members, local CFA and Council Emergency Staff and local residents with invaluable professional advice on market research, advertising, computing and so on. The glue that holds it all together is the part-time project management by the local Warrandyte 'Good Work Group'.

This project complements and enhances existing government programs by taking a local community approach. It involves Council Emergency Services Officers and local CFA. It has been widely praised by the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Chief Officers of CFA, MFB and the

Emergency Services Commissioner. Its success is due to the active involvement of local professionals and volunteers in community organisations and all the Emergency Services.

What we intend to do next

Following the completion of the Survey, this program has only had six months to achieve its aim of ensuring that Warrandyte households have an effective, written fire plan.

It is envisaged that two more years will be required to adequately address Community Resilience in line with the white paper recommendations. A year by year approach to funding is suggested based on feedback and assessment.

The Recommendations in the Key Findings Report identify six important areas to be addressed in the future beyond targeting households as well as consolidating the existing program. Consequently, WCA is applying for a National Disaster Resilience Grant to implement an appropriate program which will address them as follows:

1. What to do if a bushfire strikes with minimal warning

(Support for this recommendation came particularly from the CFA Chief Officer). Develop online and print material to emphasise the importance of back up planning. Organise Scenario Planning Workshops to help residents to better plan. Develop sample fire plans for particular constituencies, e.g. single mothers, the elderly, the business community. Organise a 'Bunkers or Bunkum' workshop.

2. Address gender differences in bushfire planning

WCA is participating in the development of the Municipal Association Victoria Gender and Emergency Management Strategy. This will inform our general promotional material and will be specifically followed up in Facebook and other Warrandyte social media sites.

3. Develop a suite of activities to be undertaken over a period of time in preference to isolated, stand-alone initiatives

An iterative programme incorporating several different ways of conveying the same message is planned to reinforce the 'Living with bushfire risk' message. Besides video and conventional media, this will include the targeted 'Scenario planning' workshops and other education style events with a strong emphasis on visual representations and storytelling.

4. Develop diverse tools targeted to different groups in a locally-relevant way, with a locally-oriented web site as a central component.

The website will be regularly updated in response to community needs and use patterns and will continue to be a central component of communication which will also include social media and conventional print, radio and television.

5. Target groups that have specific information needs.

The website will target new residents, families with children, residents living in North Warrandyte, those wishing to update or improve an existing Bushfire Survival Plan, etc. Outputs envisaged are; a business community action plan, additional bushfire information added to the new residents kit, programs for the elderly or disabled and signage targeting visitors to Warrandyte, a schools program to complement more official approaches, videos for younger children, an app. to assist householders to develop their bushfire survival plan through the international 'Random Hacks of Kindness' computer group and possibly a 'bushfire video game' to engage teenagers.

6. Adopt a two track approach to target both those members of the community who are least engaged with bushfire preparedness and those already engaged with the idea of preparing for bushfire.

'Be Ready Warrandyte' proposes to extend its engagement with other local community groups (70) to reinforce the need for an effective written fire plan, whether sporting, cultural, political, environmental or other. Appropriate media messaging will be tailored to suit (social, video, radio,

print etc.). WCA has a data base of 650 residents including 170 survey respondents who have specifically requested further information on bushfire topics. These will be individually invited to participate in planned workshops and events in addition to media coverage and public advertising. Activities will include the need for back up plans and alternative arrangements, what to do with pets, discussion of bunkers (e.g. community meeting – ‘Bunkers or Bunkum’).

Future activities will depend on Council support to access Federal funding through agencies such as the National Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme.

The ‘Be Ready Warrandyte’ project is funded by a Victorian Government’s Fire Ready Communities Grants Program. Manningham Council, Nillumbik Council, the Warrandyte Community Bank and the Community Market Committee have also provided funding support.

Local Warrandyte fire information is available on www.warrandyte.org.au/fire or ‘Be Ready Warrandyte’ 9844 5855.

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