

Blue Mountains City Council
Bush Fire Recovery Action Plan

June – December 2020



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1. Summary of Progress Made

Action Recommendation Status

- **COMPLETE:** Tasks Completed. No additional or ongoing action required.
- **ON TRACK:** Tasks aligned to the recommendation are in the process of being implemented are on track for completion within the allocated completion timeframe. No additional action required.
- **AT RISK:** Tasks aligned to the recommendation are in the process of being implemented, but may not be finalised within the allocated completion timeframe. Actions and resource allocation to be reviewed.
- **BEHIND SCHEDULE:** Tasks aligned to the recommendation must undergo review and determination of resource allocation and enhanced priority.

Investigation Recommendations – Status of Projects

Status	RED	AMBER	GREEN	BLUE	Total
Actions		1	27	5	33
% of total	0%	3%	82%	15%	100%

Investigation Recommendations Actions Summary: June 2020 Version: 4

No actions with red status.

1 actions with amber status.

27 actions with green status

5 actions completed.

Report Summary

This document presents the Council's progress report in responding to the 2019-2020 bush fire recovery action plan following the devastating bush fires that impacted NSW in 2019-2020.

The report presents progress achieved to date against the action tasks by the Blue Mountains City Council in relation to the following areas with grant money allocated:

Project Area	Allocated Grant Money	Amount spent to date	%
• Health and Wellbeing	\$348,000	\$273,000	78%
• Waste Management	\$71,500	\$71,500	100%
• Rebuild			
• Environment, Animal and Agricultural	\$503,500	\$211,000	42%
• Infrastructure	\$220,000	\$50,000	23%
• Tourism, Local Business and Economic Recovery	\$427,500	\$107,000	25%
• Mayoral Relief Fund			
• Financial and Grant Reporting			
• Communications			
TOTAL	\$1,570,500	\$712,500	45%

Background

From late November 2019 through December and into the New Year, the Blue Mountains has experienced unprecedented fire activity which has, to date, led to property losses and damage in the following towns:

- Mt Tomah
- Mt Irvine
- Mt Wilson
- Berambing
- Bell
- Mt Victoria
- Blackheath
- Megalong Valley

Based on the Building Impact Assessment (as at 6/3//2020) summary of statistics impacts:

- 22 home destroyed, 10 damaged
- 13 facilities destroyed, 3 damaged

Action 1: Health and Wellbeing

State and Regional Activity

Appointment of Step by Step (complete) for 2 years

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- To continue to assist the community with recovery and resilience.
- To continue to roll out community recovery and resilience programs identified in the community needs and capacity assessment.
- To work closely with lead Agency – Gateway’s Step by Step, to liaise with community
- Continue to work closely with the Regional Health & Wellbeing Sub-Committee and the local Health & Wellbeing Sub-Committee (meets fortnightly)

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Resilient and prepared community

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
H&W.1	Community Recovery Grants Assistance Program	\$50,000	Council Local H&W Sub-Committee	Grants provided to community-led, grass roots activities. Activities must be associated with recovery/building community resilience. Suitable types of events include: -creating/enhancing community connections -creative activities/workshops -community events/festivals -physical activity -mental health initiatives		5 months	1/3/2020	30/6/2020	70%

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
				Activities can be targeted at either whole of community level or individuals but must benefit many people. Must be run by local groups, or organisations with a local presence or auspiced by a local Not For Profit organisation. Applications will be assessed by the local Health & Wellbeing Sub-Committee					
H&W.2	Community Needs and Capacity Assessment	N/A	Council Local H&W Sub-Committee Relevant Agencies Gateway	Needs Assessment will determine immediate short term needs of affected individuals and communities Work with Gateway's Step by Step: -Conduct survey with affected community -Liaise with community -Local Health & Wellbeing sub-committee continue to meet weekly		4 months	1/3/2020	30/6/2020	40%
H&W.3	Liaise with lead agency for outreach with affected communities and individuals Work at a regional level with Gateway's Step by Step	N/A	Council Step by Step	Continue to assess ongoing community recovery needs -Analyse community capacity through local organisations or agencies -contribute to action plan for ongoing health and wellbeing		4 months	1/3/2020	30/6/2020	40%

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
				issues of affected communities					
H&W.4	Clear communication to affected communities	N/A	Council	Council providing comprehensive information on website, Bushfire Recovery Guide, in addition to outreach services and fact sheets as required such as: -trees -community information -health & wellbeing -Biodiversity -regular newsletter		4 months	1/3/2020	30/6/2020	80%
H&W.5	State Government liaison: - Service NSW - Laing O'Rourke	N/A	Council State Government	Help Register all affected residents with Service NSW Liaise with State Govt contractor, Laing O'Rourke and local residents Advocate at State/Federal level for Stage II site clean-up help for those local residents that do not qualify as part of Stage I		4 months	1/3/2020	30/6/2020	30%
H&W.6	Community Thank You Event	\$50,000	Council	Thank you event to be held in the City for RFS, SES, Fire Brigade, Ambulance and other front line emergency services and their families		3 -9 months			

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
H&W.7	Staffing for Council Recovery	\$243,000	Council	Administrative Support Officer – Natural Disaster Recovery for 12 week period (Feb – May 2020) - \$23,000 Recovery Manager to June 2020 - \$40,000 Community Resilience & Recovery Officer – 2 years to support longer term recovery and community resilience programs - \$180,000		2 years	1 February 2020	30 June 2020	100%
H&W.8	Out of the Fire – Resilience in the face of natural disaster	\$5,000	Council	Blue Mountains Cultural Centre community photography exhibition		6 weeks	29 February 2020	March 2020	100%
	TOTAL	\$348,000							

Action 2: Waste Management

State and Regional Activity

- The Waste Levy exemption has been extended to 30 June 2020.
- Laing O’Rourke has commenced site clearance under contract from OEM.

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- To continue to assist the community to continue to prepare their properties and build resilience.

- To facilitate the safe disposal of waste generated by the fire, including fire damaged property, tree waste, hazardous materials as per the Waste Management Plan.

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Waste disposal to Lithgow complete

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
WM.1	Green Waste Disposal in bushfire affected communities	\$65,000	Council	Setup of Green Waste Disposal points at Mt Wilson, Mt Tomah and Bell Additional Chipping Services for communities of Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine, Mt Tomah and Bell		3 weeks	6 February 2020	End February	100%
WM.2	Management of Section 44 Waiver of the Waste Levy for Fire damaged waste.	Council	EPA Council	To be managed as part of the government clean-up. Fire impacted property database required to validate data for the waste management facility teams to administer. Systems set up to account for the changed fee.		4 months	March 2020	June 2020	30%
WM.3	Additional Kerbside collections of green waste	\$6,500	Council	Additional Chipping Services and/or collection/disposal for communities of Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine, Mt Tomah and Bell		4 months	March 2020	July/August 2020	80%
	TOTAL	\$71,500							

Action 3: Private Property Rebuild

State and Regional Activity

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- To provide information on the process of rebuild, including facilitating joint planning advice for applicants

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Rebuilt homes in fire affected areas

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
PPR.1	Rebuild Process in LGA	N/A	Council	Database of fire destroyed and damaged properties maintained Provide single point of contact for rebuild advice and approvals Provide consistent and clear information on the rebuild process Develop FAQs for staff and for use on website Waive DA and related fees for rebuild applications Set up 'priority processing' for advice and development applications for bushfire rebuild Facilitate efficient and safe rebuild of destroyed buildings		2 years	1 February 2020	TBC	20%

Action 4: Environment, Animal and Agricultural

State and Regional Activity

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- To address dangerous tree issues on public land.
- To provide advice on regeneration of land
- To provide advice on care for wildlife

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Dangerous Trees remediated
- Private and public land regenerated with information on future care for land
- Wildlife recuperating in a natural way

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
EA&A.1	Natural Area Visitor Facility Track Surface and Step Replacement	\$137,000	Council	Replace a significant number of steps and resurface selected tracks at Mt York and Pulpit Rock.		12 Months	March 2020	June 2021	10%
EA&A.2	Dangerous Trees on public land	\$35,000	Council	Dangerous and damaged trees identified on public land. Tree assessments undertaken by Council. Remediation by qualified contractors.		6 weeks	March 2020	August 2020	80%

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
EA&A.3	Soil erosion control	\$22,000	Council	Educate community on regeneration and manage fear of chipping onsite. FAQ on regeneration of property and erosion minimisation strategies. Fact sheets produced and community information sessions/workshops Need to manage the tree waste in natural areas		4 months	March 2020	June 2020	TBC
EA&A.4	Pest Control	\$45,000	Council	Conduct an integrated vertebrate pest control and research program using trapping techniques to control vertebrate feral predators to relieve predation pressure on native wildlife post fire and increase understanding of their abundance, feeding behaviour and ecological significance post fire.		6-8 weeks	May 2020	TBC	TBC
EA&A.5	Removal of fire impacted ACM	\$170,000	Council	Removal fire impacted ACM pipe Mt York - \$45,000 Removal fire impacted ACM Hat Hill Rd - \$100,000 Removal fire impacted ACM Mt Victoria - \$25,000		6 weeks			70%
EA&A.6	Investigation of Natural Area Visitor Facility Geotech	\$13,000	Council	Undertake geotechnical and structural engineering assessments for visitor facilities, including rock					50%

Action N°	Project	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
				overhangs, lookouts and safety barriers, affected by fire.					
EA&A.7	Dangerous Trees on private land	\$81,500	Council	Dangerous and damaged trees identified on private land. Tree assessments undertaken by Council. Remediation by qualified contractors.					
	TOTAL	\$503,500							

Action 5: Infrastructure

State and Regional Activity

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- To restore the function and presentation of public assets and spaces.
- To provide information to community on agency roles and services to make safer - private infrastructure and private trees.

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Install Recovery and Resilience Actions on Council Assets
- Remediate Council Assets

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
INF.1	Reinstate embankments	\$50,000	Council			3 months			TBC
INF.2	Resilient infrastructure	\$150,000	Council	eg. Dam Project Remediate Blackheath Golf Course dam to help/cope with future disasters Install sprinkler system on Bell Rural Fire Station to improve safety					TBC
INF.3	Town Entry signs	\$20,000	Council	Replace town entry signs damaged by bushfires		3 months	June 2020		TBC

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
	TOTAL	\$220,000							

Action 6: Tourism, Local Business and Economic

State and Regional Activity

- Participate and contribute to all regional grant applications and initiatives

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- To continue to identify market loss via research and data collection.
- To assist the local business community to build economic resilience.
- To communicate the financial assistance packages currently available for business directly impacted by fire.
- To encourage locals to support local business through media and existing channels.
- Business training targeted to recovering tourism industry, and to local builders to increase their success in applying for Council tenders/RFQ to be adapted and delivered online via webinar format to businesses.

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Vibrant and economically viable town centres
- Resilient local businesses able to face disasters

Action N°	Projects	Funding	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
TLB&E. 1	Love Local Campaign and business community outreach	\$34,000	Council Local Community	Profile Businesses and Villages in a strategic manner Shop local social media campaign utilising existing and available social media channels such as council, chambers of commerce, local social groups etc		12-18 months	February 2020		20%
TLB&E. 2	Town Activation Project	\$76,000	Council Chambers of Commerce Local Businesses Local Community	Locals stimulation of the economy campaign (short/medium term) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local activation events, live music, shop local events Internal promotion (staff) - buy local to support local business message 		12 months			20%
TLB&E. 3	Refund of footpath dining and storage fees for 6 months	\$22,000	Council	Businesses that have already paid their annual footpath dining fees to Council will be reimbursed for 6 months		6 months	February 2020	June 2020	100%
TLB&E. 4	Refund 50% commercial property fees	\$75,000	Council	Refund 50% of commercial property fees for up to 3 months dated back to December 2019 for Council owned properties		6 months	February 2020	June 2020	100%
TLB&E. 5	Destination Marketing Campaign	\$100,000	Council, Local tourism operator groups,	Develop a positioning statement that differentiates the Blue Mountains and encourages visitors back to the region.		12 months			10%

Action N°	Projects	Funding	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
			Blue Mountains Tourism, NP&WS	Engage an agency to provide leverage and partner with local tourism operator groups, Blue Mountains Tourism and National Parks & Wildlife. In market social media based campaign showing the key experiences the Blue Mountains has to offer and messaged that the Blue Mountains are open for visitors.					
TLB&E. 6	Commercial Tourism Operators Assistance Scheme	\$100,000	Council, local commercial tour operators	To undertake activities on Council managed land. The Commercial Tourism Operators (CTOs) are licensed under Council's Eco-tourism Licensing Scheme and pay a license and usage fee. The CTO rely heavily on a shared, casual pool of qualified guides that have experience significantly reduced employment as a result of tourism downturn. There is a genuine risk the guides will change location or vocation if employment within the CTO is not available. Loss of the Labour pool will impede future recovery of the industry when the market recovers. This CTO Assistance scheme would see Council engage the CTOs to do track maintenance and		6 months	May 2020		10%

Action N°	Projects	Funding	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
				construction under Council supervision, thus providing a means to supplement the employment and viability of the industry.					
TLB&E. 7	Wollemi Market and Laneway Activation Project	\$20,500	Council	National Bushfire Recovery Agency grant to host a Wollemi market with Blue Mountains stall holders at the Cultural Centre while at the same time undertaking an urban art mural event in the laneway adjacent to the Centre.		12 months	1 June 2020	30 December 2020	10%
	TOTAL	\$427,500							

Action 7: Mayoral Relief Fund

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- Finalise the Mayoral Reference Group for individuals and Business.

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Expend all donated amounts to affected community

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
MRF.1	<p>Mayoral Relief Fund Committee</p> <p>Overview:</p> <p>\$93,418 Received</p> <p>\$73,000 Paid out</p> <p>\$8,000 Awaiting resident response</p> <p>Remaining - \$12,418</p>		Council, Mayoral Relief Fund Committee members	<p>Committee to meet regularly</p> <p>Funds given out as per the Criteria for Funding document:</p> <p>Phase 1 – Initial relief of \$1,500 for 17 residential dwellings destroyed</p> <p>Phase 2 – When funds are available, \$1,000 for 5 residential dwellings damaged</p> <p>Phase 3 – When funds are available, \$500 for 51 properties impacted (gardens, trees, other structures)</p> <p>Phase 4 – If funds become available, assessment by the committee using the extended criteria from clause 2 of the Fund Rules for ‘relief of residents who are in financial hardship as a direct result of a State Declared Natural Disaster’.</p>		6 months	February 2020	June 2020	90%

Action 8: Financial and Grant Reporting

State and Regional Activity

- NSW grants still being announced

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- Report on expenditure for the initial \$1.3 million allocated to BMCC for recovery initiatives
- Report on the expenditure of the \$250,000 NSW Community Resilience & Economic recovery grant projects
- Report on the expenditure of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency grant project

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Expend all grant funding and complete grant acquittals and reporting
- Submit funding applications for the restoration of essential public assets under the NSW State Government's Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
F&GR.1	Identify relevant disaster recovery grants		Council	Continue to identify and apply for Disaster Recovery grants to assist with the Recovery process		12 months	February 2020		ongoing
F&GR.2	Continue to advocate for financial assistance & training packages		Council	Advocate for further financial assistance packages for Council recovery, site cleanup, local business, visitor campaigns and funds to assist with activation of worst hit town centres. Advocate for relevant training needs e.g. how to develop a disaster plan for your business		12 months	February 2020		ongoing

Action 9: Communications

State and Regional Activity

- Escalate to Regional Recovery Committee(s) for resolution in extreme cases

Desired Outcomes to be achieved over the next 6 months (December 2020)

- Continue to advocate for reinstallation of telecommunications, towers, Internet access etc for affected community

Desired longer term actions (6 months to 2 years)

- Reinstalled full telecommunications, mobile phone towers, home Internet access with disaster recovery in mind

Action N°	Projects	Funds	Responsibility	Actions	Status Rating	Duration	Start	Finish	% Complete
COMM S.1	<p>Advocate on behalf of residents to restore essential services to properties and businesses etc</p> <p>-Telecommunications</p> <p>Make safe access to essential services</p> <p>-Inspect and repair telecommunication assets</p>	N/A	<p>Endeavour</p> <p>Energy</p> <p>Telstra</p> <p>Other NBN and mobile providers</p>	<p>As of March 2020, still liaising with NBN providers. Make safe to telecommunications assets completed. Reconnection of telecommunications in some areas dependent upon tree removals and clean-up.</p>		6 weeks	February 2020		TBC

Appendix B: Distribution List

Blue Mountains City Council Elected Councillors
General Manager
Executive Leadership Team