

Kangaroo Island Community Listening and learning sessions

Kangaroo Island Fires 2019/2020

LISTENING AND LEARNING UPDATE

What's happened to date

From November 4-8th, Facilitator Angela Hazebroek and representatives from SACFS, KI Recovery and National Parks held Listening Workshops and Listening Posts across various locations on KI.

The sessions were held at Western KI Caravan Park, Raptor Domain, Parndana Sports Club, Rock Pool Café, Junction Community Centre, Kingscote Business Hub and Penneshaw CFS Station with a total of 93 residents and 25 reps from Recovery, CFS, National Parks, Council, and mental health support. A big thank you to the venues for hosting us and to the community members who gave up their time to share their stories and ideas with us.

We listened to many stories and concerns from the KI community in person and residents also contributed through an online survey. These stories have been collated, resulting in over 100 pages describing Kangaroo Islanders' experiences, concerns and ideas about bushfire preparation, response and recovery on the Island.

What's happening now

The stories and ideas are being themed and analysed to identify the community lessons learned to inform an action plan to bring back to the KI community in late January 2021 for your input. We apologise for the delay in getting back to you, especially given that that's one of the concerns you expressed – but we are following through and intend to make sure it is done properly and meaningfully.

There are currently other reviews that are addressing some of the concerns that were raised, and we are being careful to complement, and not compete, with these processes. This includes the State response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the CFS Kangaroo Island Fires Debrief.

What we heard

During the sessions, people talked about a number of common themes, with both positive and negative community experiences shared. The following is a summary and outcomes and recommendations will be described in more detail in the draft action plan.

- The community are proud of how they have come together to respond and recover from the fires.

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- For many, the extent and ferocity of the fires was unexpected, traumatic and beyond their experience
- The rules and regulations around vegetation management on private land need to be clear, understandable and useful for fire preparations
- More work needs to be done to coordinate and implement fuel reduction and vegetation management in National parks, private land, forestry and roadsides across the island
- Local knowledge needs to be respected and reflected in decision making. Local works need to be acknowledged and supplemented, not over-ridden
- Communication needs to be improved during and after a fire with information and actions communicated in a more timely, relevant and accurate manner
- Face to face public meetings were useful during the fire with local sources of information most trusted.
- Everyone needs to know what to do and how to stay safe during a fire to reduce confusion and decrease potential for dangerous decisions
- Everyone needs to know why, when and where to evacuate to. Evacuation locations need to be pre-identified and managed and coordinated effectively and safely in consultation with the community
- Some tourists did not appreciate the threat of fire and were complacent putting themselves and others at risk.
- Managing tourism during a bushfire on the island is complex and needs pre-planning
- The work of the Farm fire Units was crucial to the success of the local firefighting effort and is valued by the community
- There needs to be better coordination and communication between private Farm Fire Units and CFS operations
- Communities actively and successfully supported the firefighting response by setting up private base camps on farms and working together to feed, care for and coordinate farm fire units
- Emergency relief needs to be better organised and resourced. Given the volume of people and the complexity of the fire, relief services were quickly overwhelmed and under-resourced, and draining community pop-up efforts
- There needs to be better structure and organisation around donations and volunteers to ensure that it is a fair, equitable and effective process

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- The recovery process since the fires has been lengthy, overwhelming and exhausting, but also greatly appreciated
- You should only need to provide your names and details once, not every time you enquire about relief or recovery assistance. It is distressing having to re-tell your story again and again.
- The assistance by the Australian Defence Force in recovery was appreciated, but needs clear and constructive planning and directives

What's happening next

By 22 January 2021

Draft action plan to be communicated for your feedback, including

- Action plan
- Implementation ideas
- Who is responsible for what by when
- Ongoing communications arrangements

Who is actioning it?

For further information,

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