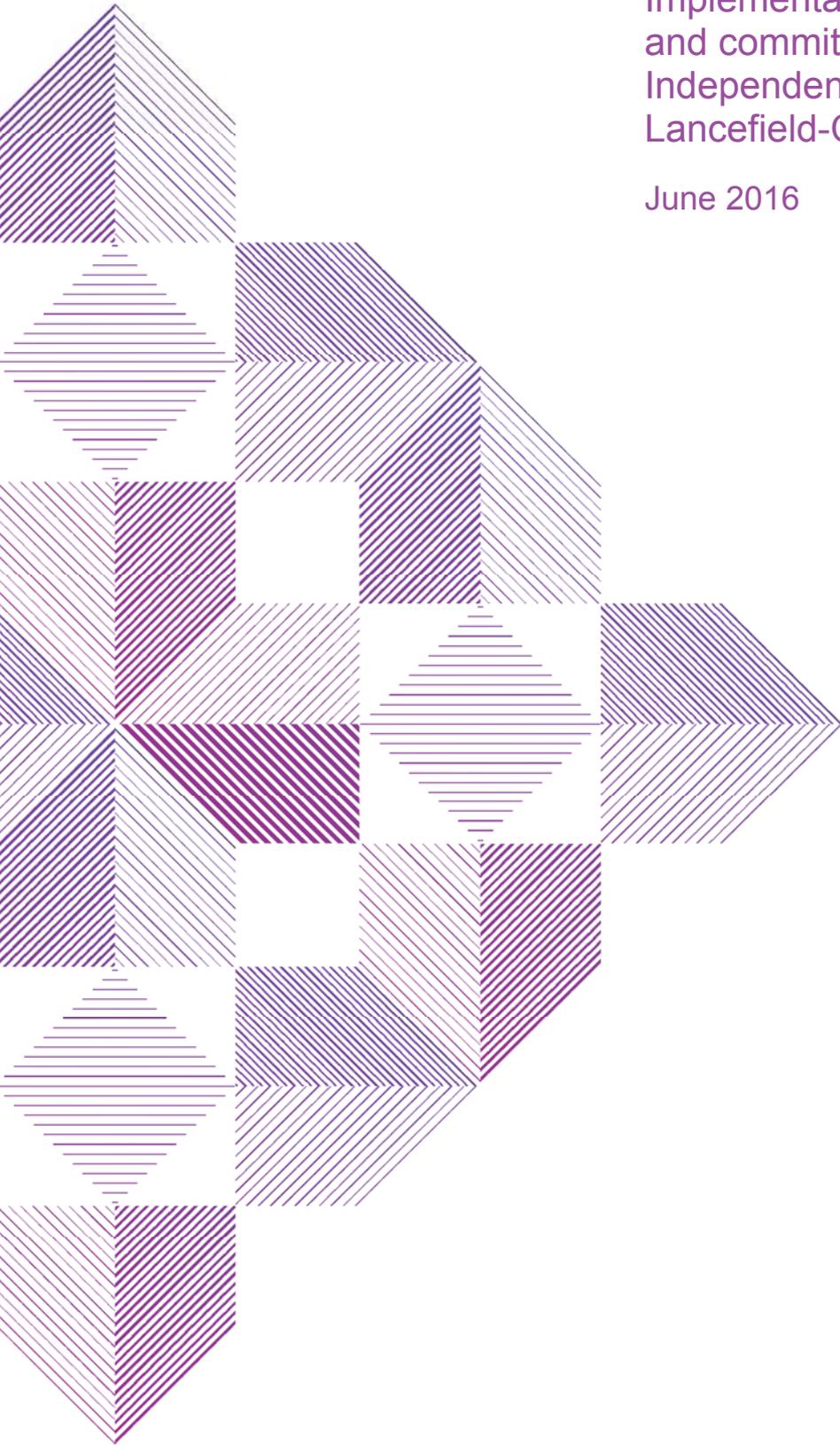


Progress Report

Implementation of recommendations
and commitments following the
Independent Investigation of the
Lancefield-Cobaw Fire

June 2016



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Preface

On 30 September 2015, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) conducted a planned burn at Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track in the Macedon Ranges – a standard practice in DELWP’s Bushfire Fuel Management Program.

While planned burning is considered an efficient and effective approach for managing bushfire fuel hazards over large areas, regrettably the burn later breached containment lines and, until contained on 13 October 2015, burned over 3,000 hectares, destroying a number of dwellings, sheds, and many kilometres of fencing, and causing significant disruption for local communities.

At the Victorian Government’s request, the *Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire* (the Investigation) was carried out by independent expert Mr Murray Carter, Director of Western Australia’s Office of Bushfire Risk Management, and recommended improvements to the systems and processes of DELWP that are crucial to the delivery of planned burning throughout Victoria.

All 22 of the recommendations in the Investigation report were accepted by DELWP, as well as a commitment to make changes to the way it operates across the state, to improve delivery of Victoria’s planned burning program.

At the request of the Victorian Government, and in line with Section 64(1)(ca) of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) is providing independent oversight to ensure all recommendations from the Investigation report are implemented and progress is publicly reported.

This is IGEM’s second report on DELWP’s implementation of recommendations and additional 10 commitments, in response to the *Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire*. The Interim Progress Report was published in February 2016.

In relation to Victoria’s Bushfire Fuel Management Program, IGEM is also monitoring the Victorian Government’s implementation of recommendations from the review of performance targets through delivery of *Safer Together*, in addition to managing the investigation and reporting of any future breaches of containment lines by a planned burn.

Through our implementation monitoring activities, IGEM is helping to ensure that delivery of the State’s Bushfire Fuel Management Program is effective in reducing the risk of bushfire to protect people, communities, jobs and the environment.

Tony Pearce

Inspector-General for Emergency Management

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Common terms

DELWP response	<i>Response to the recommendations of the independent investigation into the Lancefield-Cobaw fire, November 2015</i>
the Department	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
the Investigation	<i>Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire, November 2015</i>
<i>Safer Together</i>	<i>Safer Together: A new approach to reducing the risk of bushfire in Victoria, November 2015</i>

Acronyms

CFA	Country Fire Authority
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
IGEM	Inspector-General for Emergency Management
LFRSG	Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report Steering Group
MERI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement
OIC	Officer-in-Charge
RPA	Remotely Piloted Aircraft
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

Executive Summary

The *Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire* (the Investigation) report was released in October 2015 and comprises 22 recommendations to improve the management of planned burns in Victoria. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) accepted all of the recommendations.

Ten additional commitments were made by DELWP to improve the delivery of the Bushfire Fuel Management Program as described in the *Response to the recommendations of the independent investigation into the Lancefield-Cobaw fire*.

Summary of implementation progress

As of 6 May 2016, IGEM found that DELWP had satisfactorily completed 13 of the 22 recommendations (see Table i) and nine of the 10 commitments (see Table iv).

There are nine recommendations and one commitment still in progress.

Three of those recommendations (R1, R2 and R3) will be implemented as part of *Safer Together*, the government's new approach to bushfire management (see Table ii). IGEM will report further on their progress in the *Safer Together* Progress Report scheduled for October 2016.

IGEM found that the remaining six recommendations and one commitment are progressing satisfactorily and due for completion in July 2016. They will be revisited in IGEM's next Progress Report, scheduled for the end of August 2016 (see Table iii and Table v).

Overall, IGEM found that DELWP has acted swiftly to respond to the Investigation findings and rebuild community trust.

The DELWP Secretary announced the 'Forest Fire Management' brand in December 2015 to help the community better identify those who manage fires on public land and the work they do. A visual identity for Forest Fire Management was developed and formally released on 4 March 2016.

A community charter was developed through community consultation sessions that identified community values and outcomes the community is seeking from interaction with DELWP. Consultation with DELWP staff focused particularly on regional and district staff to ensure the charter supports their frontline role in working with rural and regional communities.

Launched at Benloch on 11 April 2016 by the (then) Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville, the charter describes how DELWP will partner with – and involve local communities in – all aspects of its work. This includes decision-making about public land and bushfire management.

DELWP introduced a Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool on 1 March 2016 for all planned burns (see Section 5.2). On 6 April 2016, an updated version of the tool was implemented.

DELWP invited IGEM to observe the use of the updated tool and associated processes at the State Control Centre and on-site at a planned burn in the Warby Ranges near Wangaratta in May 2016. This provided IGEM with first-hand evidence of the changes DELWP is introducing to its risk management and approvals processes.

The following tables provide a summary of the recommendations and commitments grouped in accordance with IGEM's findings.

Table i: Recommendations considered by IGEM to be complete

REF	RECOMMENDATION
R5 (3.1.2.8)	The risk assessment processes and its outputs should be clear and comprehensible, able to be understood, reviewed and challenged by operational practitioners, and senior managers without fire backgrounds, as well as technical burn planners
R6 (3.1.2.9)	Context setting and contingency planning should be specifically included within the reformed risk management processes
R7 (3.1.2.10)	Clear rules and triggers should be established to ensure that burn plans are reviewed whenever the risk profile changes due to circumstances such as significant changes to boundaries, abnormal seasonal conditions, adjoining development or land use changes
R8 (3.1.2.11)	A burn scheduled for ignition must have a current and useful risk assessment
R10 (3.1.3.7)	A review of the organisation's structures and processes at state, regional and district levels should be undertaken to better integrate operational burn planning and operational implementation and to provide sound governance, risk management and quality control
R12 (3.1.3.9)	To the maximum extent possible given numbers and availability of suitable staff across partner agencies, there should be a single Burn OIC to provide operational continuity across days of ignition and burn management
R14 (3.1.4.6)	Planning for resources must include any works necessary for the preparation of burns prior to the main ignition
R15 (3.1.4.7)	Indicative resourcing of burns must take account of the risk assessment and also provide for operational contingency planning
R16 (3.1.4.8)	Burn OICs must be fully involved in determining appropriate levels of resourcing for different operational phases and shifts

R18 (3.2.8)	The requirement for obtaining spot forecasts for planned burning should be linked to complexity and risk with appropriate oversight in place
R19 (3.4.7)	Greater consideration should be given to using aircraft for burn security surveillance as well as ignition and burning out operations, in addition to aerial observation and the suppression of bushfires
R20 (3.5.8)	Planning processes should be reviewed to ensure that stakeholders beyond the immediate burn area are clearly identified, prioritised and targeted with appropriate communication
R22 (3.5.10)	The Department should consider branding the component of its portfolio dealing with fire management and planned burning on public lands so that there is an enduring entity for building stronger and more sustainable relationships with the community

Table ii: Recommendations considered by IGEM to be progressing satisfactorily and to be revisited in the *Safer Together Progress Report* in October 2016

REF	RECOMMENDATION
R1 (3.1.1.5)	The Department must adopt a tenure-blind approach to the management of bushfire risk including the planning of burns
R2 (3.1.1.6)	In broadening its focus the Department should consider planned burning as just one of many options in managing fuels, landscape risk, multiple tenures, diverse land uses and must incorporate community perspectives
R3 (3.1.1.7)	The Department should engage with EMV in seeking and implementing solutions to improving landscape scale bushfire risk management

Table iii: Recommendations considered by IGEM to be progressing satisfactorily and to be revisited in IGEM's August 2016 Progress Report

REF	RECOMMENDATION
R4 (3.1.2.7)	The Department should undertake a thorough review of the risk management and approvals processes
R9 (3.1.2.12)	The approach to audits of hazardous tree assessments and associated works should be extended to other aspects of burn planning, preparation and implementation
R11 (3.1.3.8)	Burn OICs with appropriate knowledge and experience commensurate with the nature and complexity of the fuels and planned burn operations should be actively involved from the beginning of the planning process
R13 (3.1.3.10)	An audit and quality assurance function should be established to maintain standards, facilitate continual improvement and to manage risk at all levels of the organisation
R17 (3.2.7)	Greater attention to drought factors and their interactions with forest fuels and forecast weather needs to be made when conducting planned burns
R21 (3.5.9)	Communication and engagement processes should be reviewed with an emphasis placed on developing and applying active and meaningful approaches rather than passive methods only

Table iv: Commitments considered by IGEM to be complete

REF	COMMITMENT
C1	Develop and publish a community service charter
C2	Build a 'brand' for forest firefighters
C3	Engage with staff, CFA and EMV to ensure that the best operational practices that exist in regions and districts are identified and applied statewide
C4	Look for opportunities to make firewood that is produced during fire response and fuel management operations available to local communities

C5	Investigate the conduct of the approvals and oversight process for the Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track planned burn
C6	Conduct a statewide audit of compliance with current standards, directions, instructions and guidelines
C7	Conduct a statewide audit into the implementation of recommendations arising from past examinations, investigations or audits of planned burns
C9	Request the IGEM to monitor and report on progress in implementation
C10	Ask the IGEM to manage the prompt investigation and reporting of any future breaches of containment lines by a planned burn, drawing on relevant independent experts as required

Table v: Commitment considered by IGEM to be progressing satisfactorily and to be revisited in IGEM's August 2016 Progress Report

REF	COMMITMENT
C8	Commission regular, independent auditing of the planned burning program

1 Introduction

The *Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire* (the Investigation) report was released in November 2015 and comprised 22 recommendations to improve the management of planned burns in Victoria.

Ten additional commitments were made by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to improve the delivery of the Bushfire Fuel Management Program as described in the *Response to the recommendations of the independent investigation into the Lancefield-Cobaw fire*.

At the request of the Victorian Government, and in line with Section 64(1)(ca) of the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (the Act), the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) is providing independent oversight to ensure all recommendations from the Investigation report are implemented and progress is publicly reported.

IGEM committed to providing an Interim Progress Report to the Secretary, DELWP by 5 February 2016, an update report in June 2016, and quarterly reports thereafter until all recommendations and commitments have been implemented.

2 Background

Independent investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw fire

On 30 September 2015, DELWP conducted a planned burn at Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track in the Macedon Ranges. Three days later, the burn breached containment lines and burned for a further 10 days. The fire was contained on 13 October 2015 after burning over 3000 hectares, destroying a number of dwellings, sheds, and many kilometres of fencing.

On 8 October 2015, the Victorian Government announced an independent investigation to be led by Mr Murray Carter, Director of the Office of Bushfire Risk Management in Western Australia.

The Terms of Reference stated that the investigation was to focus on:

- *The adequacy of planning and resourcing of the 'Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track' planned burn (the planned burn)*
- *The appropriateness of the weather and other conditions for conduct of the planned burn on 30 September 2015*
- *What caused the planned burn to break containment lines on 3 October 2015 and on 6 October 2015*
- *Decision-making, management and control of the planned burn, including the adequacy of the patrol strategy adopted following its ignition*

- *The adequacy of communication with the community in the lead up to the planned burn and after it broke containment lines.*

Recommendations made as part of the Investigation were to be directed at DELWP.

The Investigation report, released by DELWP on 19 November 2015, contained 22 recommendations for improvements to the delivery of planned burning in Victoria.

DELWP response

DELWP accepted all 22 of the recommendations in the Investigation report.

DELWP's *Response to the recommendations of the independent investigation into the Lancefield-Cobaw fire* also outlined additional commitments to improve the delivery of the Bushfire Fuel Management Program.

Broadly, these additional commitments include:

- rebuilding community trust
- making it clear who is in charge of the planned burning program
- implementing improved systems and processes
- addressing other issues in the planned burning program
- building on the positives
- independent oversight of the monitoring and reporting of the implementation of recommendations.

The response also stated that IGEM would be requested to conduct independent monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations from the Investigation.

DELWP developed a program of work to implement the 22 recommendations and 10 commitments that were grouped under seven themes:

- Implementation of *Safer Together*
- Implementing improved systems and processes
- Audit and Quality Assurance Framework
- Organisation structure
- Operational improvements
- Community engagement
- Independent oversight.

DELWP developed project plans for each of the themes, with the exception of 'Organisational structure' and 'Independent oversight' for which project plans were not required.

Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report Steering Group

The Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report Steering Group (LFRSG) was established in November 2015 by the Secretary of DELWP to oversee the implementation of DELWP's response to the Investigation.

The LFRSG was chaired by the then Executive Director, Fire and Emergency Management Division, Land, Fire and Environment within DELWP. Since the organisation structure changes were implemented in March 2016, the LFRSG is chaired by the Deputy Secretary, Forest, Fire and Regions Group. The LFRSG is comprised of project managers and senior executives from across DELWP with responsibility for leading the implementation of recommendations.

The LFRSG reports weekly via the Chair to the Senior Executive Team and the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

At the invitation of DELWP, IGEM attends the LFRSG meetings as an observer.

Inspector-General for Emergency Management

The IGEM is a legislated appointment established under the Act to:

- provide assurance to government and the community in respect of emergency management arrangements in Victoria
- foster continuous improvement of emergency management in Victoria.

The Act requires IGEM to develop and maintain a monitoring and assurance framework for emergency management, against which the capacity, capability and performance of the emergency management sector is to be assessed.

Implementation monitoring is a key element of the *Monitoring and Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*¹.

On 8 December 2015, the Victorian Government requested that IGEM monitor and report on progress in making changes to how DELWP operates and in implementing the response to recommendations from the Investigation. This is in accordance with Section 64(1)(ca) of the Act.

IGEM formally accepted this role on 29 December 2015 and provided the first report, the Interim Progress Report, to the Secretary of DELWP on 5 February 2016.

This is IGEM's second report and the next report will be delivered to the Secretary of DELWP at the end of August 2016. IGEM's reports are made publicly available.

On 20 January 2016, the Inspector-General met with community representatives and local emergency

management personnel, to discuss his role and intended approach in providing independent oversight to ensure all recommendations from the Investigation are implemented and progress is publicly reported.

IGEM's Review of Performance Targets for Bushfire Fuel Management on Public Land

The Victorian Government released IGEM's *Review of Performance Targets for the Bushfire Fuel Management Program on Public Land* in May 2015.

In the report, IGEM made four recommendations relating to the Bushfire Fuel Management Program, including a shift away from a hectare-based fuel reduction target and a move toward a risk-reduction approach where the most at-risk areas are prioritised for fuel reduction.

The government released *Safer Together: A new approach to reducing the risk of bushfire in Victoria (Safer Together)* in November 2015, accepting all of IGEM's recommendations.

Safer Together is a five-year plan for a broader approach to bushfire management that considers the full range of options to manage bushfire risk across public and private land, and across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

IGEM will monitor government's implementation of recommendations from its review and deliver an annual Progress Report in October 2016 and each year thereafter, until all recommendations have been implemented.

3 Methodology

This report provides IGEM's assessment and findings for progress of implementation of:

- the 22 recommendations from the Investigation
- the 10 additional commitments that DELWP has made to improve the delivery of the Bushfire Fuel Management Program as described in the *Response to the recommendations of the independent investigation into the Lancefield-Cobaw fire*.

DELWP has grouped and reported on the recommendations and commitments under the seven themes described in Section 2.

IGEM has aligned with DELWP's approach by, as far as possible, reporting progress of the recommendations and commitments by theme, rather than in numerical order.

Information collection

DELWP collated and consolidated progress reports for each of the recommendations and commitments for the period ending 6 May 2016.

¹ Inspector-General for Emergency Management 2015, *Monitoring and Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*.

IGEM reviewed and assessed information from the following sources:

- *Weekly summary reports – Lancefield report recommendations* provided by DELWP
- project plans and other relevant documentation provided by DELWP to support reported progress.

Where possible, IGEM also sought opportunities to observe changes in practice.

This included:

- observing state level approval processes for several planned burns, which included use of the recently implemented Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool, as detailed in the reporting for Recommendation R4.
- attending a planned burn.

IGEM consulted with DELWP for clarification, or to request additional information, where necessary.

IGEM made findings for each of the 22 recommendations and 10 commitments through its reporting.

Reporting

IGEM committed to providing:

- the Interim Progress Report to the Secretary, DELWP by 5 February 2016
- quarterly reports thereafter until all recommendations and commitments have been implemented.

IGEM will provide a further Progress Report at the end of August 2016.

4 Progress summary of implementation of Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report recommendations and commitments

The Investigation report contains 22 recommendations, directed at DELWP, to improve the management of planned burns in Victoria.

DELWP accepted all of the recommendations and made 10 additional commitments to improve delivery of the Bushfire Fuel Management Program.

As of 6 May 2016, IGEM found that DELWP had satisfactorily completed 13 of the 22 recommendations and nine of the 10 commitments.

There are nine recommendations and one commitment still in progress.

Three of those recommendations (R1, R2 and R3) will be implemented as part of *Safer Together*, the government's new approach to bushfire management. IGEM will report further on their progress in the *Safer Together* Progress Report, scheduled for October 2016.

IGEM found that the remaining six recommendations and commitment still in progress are progressing satisfactorily and due for completion in July 2016. They will be revisited in IGEM's next Progress Report on the implementation of Investigation report recommendations and commitments, scheduled for the end of August 2016.

Overall, IGEM found that DELWP has acted swiftly to respond to the Investigation findings and rebuild community trust.

The DELWP Secretary announced the 'Forest Fire Management' brand in December 2015 to help the public better identify those who manage fires on public land and the work they do. A visual identity for Forest Fire Management was developed and formally released on 4 March 2016.

A community charter was developed through community consultation sessions that identified

community values and outcomes the community is seeking from interaction with DELWP. Consultation with DELWP staff focused particularly on regional and district staff to ensure the charter supports their frontline role in working with rural and regional communities.

Launched at Benloch on 11 April 2016 by the (then) Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville, the charter describes how DELWP will partner with – and involve local communities in – all aspects of its work. This includes decision-making about public land and bushfire management.

Work has been undertaken to understand and improve the way DELWP engages around planned burning, and a series of community engagement effectiveness measures have been developed for assessing the quality of engagement and interactions with community stakeholders before, during and after the conduct of planned burning.

Building on this work, DELWP is currently investigating best practice methods and tools to raise community awareness and obtain community feedback in the delivery of the planned burning program.

DELWP introduced a Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool on 1 March 2016 for all planned burns (see Section 5.2). On 6 April 2016, an updated version of the tool was implemented.

DELWP invited IGEM to observe the use of the updated tool and associated processes at the State Control Centre and on-site at a planned burn in the Warby Ranges near Wangaratta in May 2016. This provided IGEM with first-hand evidence of the changes DELWP is introducing to its risk management and approvals processes.

The following tables provide a summary of IGEM's findings for each of the recommendations (see Table 1) and commitments (see Table 2), in numerical order.

The sections that follow provide progress updates on each of the individual recommendations and commitments, grouped by theme.

Table 1: Progress summary of Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report recommendations

REF	RECOMMENDATION	DELWP STATUS	IGEM FINDING	REPORT SECTION
R1 (3.1.1.5)	The Department must adopt a tenure-blind approach to the management of bushfire risk including the planning of burns	On track		
R2 (3.1.1.6)	In broadening its focus the Department should consider planned burning as just one of many options in managing fuels, landscape risk, multiple tenures, diverse land uses and must incorporate community perspectives	On track	IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendations R1, R2 and R3 is progressing satisfactorily and will revisit in its <i>Safer Together</i> Progress Report, October 2016.	5.1
R3 (3.1.1.7)	The Department should engage with EMV in seeking and implementing solutions to improving landscape scale bushfire risk management	On track		
R4 (3.1.2.7)	The Department should undertake a thorough review of the risk management and approvals processes	Review complete Training On track	IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R4 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.2
R5 (3.1.2.8)	The risk assessment processes and its outputs should be clear and comprehensible, able to be understood, reviewed and challenged by operational practitioners, and senior managers without fire backgrounds, as well as technical burn planners	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R5 is complete.	5.2
R6 (3.1.2.9)	Context setting and contingency planning should be specifically included within the reformed risk management processes	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R6 is complete.	5.2
R7 (3.1.2.10)	Clear rules and triggers should be established to ensure that burn plans are reviewed whenever the risk profile changes due to circumstances such as significant changes to boundaries, abnormal seasonal conditions, adjoining development or land use changes	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R7 is complete.	5.2
R8 (3.1.2.11)	A burn scheduled for ignition must have a current and useful risk assessment	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R8 is complete.	5.2
R9 (3.1.2.12)	The approach to audits of hazardous tree assessments and associated works should be extended to other aspects of burn planning, preparation and implementation	On track	IGEM considers that Recommendation R9 is linked to Recommendation R13 and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.3
R10 (3.1.3.7)	A review of the organisation's structures and processes at state, regional and district levels should be undertaken to better integrate operational burn planning and operational implementation and to provide sound governance, risk management and quality control	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R10 is complete.	5.4
R11 (3.1.3.8)	Burn OICs with appropriate knowledge and experience commensurate with the nature and complexity of the fuels and planned burn operations should be actively involved from the beginning of the planning process	On track	IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R11 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.5

R12 (3.1.3.9)	To the maximum extent possible given numbers and availability of suitable staff across partner agencies, there should be a single Burn OIC to provide operational continuity across days of ignition and burn management	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R12 is complete.	5.5
R13 (3.1.3.10)	An audit and quality assurance function should be established to maintain standards, facilitate continual improvement and to manage risk at all levels of the organisation	On track	IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R13 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.3
R14 (3.1.4.6)	Planning for resources must include any works necessary for the preparation of burns prior to the main ignition	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R14 is complete.	5.2
R15 (3.1.4.7)	Indicative resourcing of burns must take account of the risk assessment and also provide for operational contingency planning	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R15 is complete.	5.2
R16 (3.1.4.8)	Burn OICs must be fully involved in determining appropriate levels of resourcing for different operational phases and shifts	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R16 is complete.	5.5
R17 (3.2.7)	Greater attention to drought factors and their interactions with forest fuels and forecast weather needs to be made when conducting planned burns	On track	IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R17 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.2
R18 (3.2.8)	The requirement for obtaining spot forecasts for planned burning should be linked to complexity and risk with appropriate oversight in place	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R18 is complete.	5.2
R19 (3.4.7)	Greater consideration should be given to using aircraft for burn security surveillance as well as ignition and burning out operations, in addition to aerial observation and the suppression of bushfires	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R19 is complete.	5.5
R20 (3.5.8)	Planning processes should be reviewed to ensure that stakeholders beyond the immediate burn area are clearly identified, prioritised and targeted with appropriate communication	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R20 is complete.	5.6
R21 (3.5.9)	Communication and engagement processes should be reviewed with an emphasis placed on developing and applying active and meaningful approaches rather than passive methods only	On track	IGEM considers that implementation of actions for Recommendation R21 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.6
R22 (3.5.10)	The Department should consider branding the component of its portfolio dealing with fire management and planned burning on public lands so that there is an enduring entity for building stronger and more sustainable relationships with the community	Complete	IGEM considers that Recommendation R22 is complete.	5.6

Table 2: Progress summary of Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report additional commitments

REF	COMMITMENT	DELWP STATUS	IGEM FINDING	REPORT SECTION
C1	Develop and publish a community service charter	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C1 is complete.	5.6
C2	Build a 'brand' for forest firefighters	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C2 is complete.	5.6
C3	Engage with staff, CFA and EMV to ensure that the best operational practices that exist in regions and districts are identified and applied statewide	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C3 is complete.	5.2
C4	Look for opportunities to make firewood that is produced during fire response and fuel management operations available to local communities	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C4 is complete.	5.5
C5	Investigate the conduct of the approvals and oversight process for the Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track planned burn	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C5 is complete.	5.3
C6	Conduct a statewide audit of compliance with current standards, directions, instructions and guidelines	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C6 is complete.	5.3
C7	Conduct a statewide audit into the implementation of recommendations arising from past examinations, investigations or audits of planned burns	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C7 is complete.	5.3
C8	Commission regular, independent auditing of the planned burning program	On track	IGEM considers that Commitment C8 is linked to Recommendation R13 and will revisit in the August 2016 report.	5.3
C9	Request the IGEM to monitor and report on progress in implementation	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C9 is complete.	5.7
C10	Ask the IGEM to manage the prompt investigation and reporting of any future breaches of containment lines by a planned burn, drawing on relevant independent experts as required	Complete	IGEM considers that Commitment C10 is complete.	5.7

5 Progress of Lancefield-Cobaw Fire Report recommendations and commitments

Progress updates for the recommendations and commitments in the following sections are grouped in accordance with themes developed by DELWP, rather than numerically.

The themes are described in the following order:

- Implementation of *Safer Together*
- Implementing improved systems and processes
- Audit and Quality Assurance Framework
- Organisation structure
- Operational improvements
- Community engagement
- Independent oversight

5.1 Implementation of *Safer Together*

Safer Together is the Victorian Government’s response to IGEM’s *Review of Performance Targets for Bushfire Fuel Management on Public Land*.

Safer Together recognises the need for a broader approach to bushfire management that considers the full range of options to manage bushfire risk across public and private land, and across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

Following is a progress update for Recommendations R1, R2 and R3, which will be addressed more fully in IGEM’s annual Progress Report on *Safer Together*, scheduled for October 2016.

RECOMMENDATION R1 (3.1.1.5)

The Department must adopt a tenure-blind approach to the management of bushfire risk including the planning of burns

Planned completion	Immediate plus annual reviews
Reported status	Ongoing and on track

RECOMMENDATION R2 (3.1.1.6)

In broadening its focus the Department should consider planned burning as just one of many options in managing fuels, landscape risk, multiple tenures, diverse land uses and must incorporate community perspectives

Planned completion	Immediate plus annual reviews
Reported status	Ongoing and on track

RECOMMENDATION R3 (3.1.1.7)

The Department should engage with EMV in seeking and implementing solutions to improving landscape scale bushfire risk management

Planned completion	Immediate plus annual reviews
Reported status	Ongoing and on track

Summary of progress

The Country Fire Authority (CFA)/DELWP *Safer Together* Implementation Leadership Group has been established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations outlined in *Safer Together*.

The leadership group has developed a plan that includes priority programs of work to be delivered jointly by the two organisations.

Priority programs include:

- development of cross-tenure fuel management strategies
- working with communities to collectively build an understanding of bushfire risk and identify the right mix of strategies to mitigate this risk.

The leadership group is also holding discussions with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) to identify opportunities for landscape-scale risk management, and to establish governance arrangements for cross-agency activities.

DELWP, in collaboration with CFA, conducted multi-tenure burns in nine locations during 2015–16, with the Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool applied to the entire burn area². Other multi-tenure burns did not proceed due to unsuitable conditions.

Planned actions

- DELWP is drafting a discussion paper on cross-tenure planning for fuel management. This will guide consultation across the sector to identify the approach for implementing planned burning across land tenures.
- CFA and DELWP have committed to the development of statewide risk assessments to identify Victorian communities at high risk from bushfire. DELWP and CFA will work with these communities to identify preferred strategies for reducing risk across land tenures, and incorporating government, business and community action. Engagement has commenced with some high risk communities including Benloch, Wye River and Strathbogie.

² See Section 5.2 for details of the Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendations R1, R2 and R3 is progressing satisfactorily and will revisit in its *Safer Together* Progress Report, October 2016.

5.2 Implementing improved systems and processes

The Investigation found some significant shortcomings in DELWP's planning, processes and systems, as well as their application to risk assessment. The Investigation also identified that fire weather tools, processes and training in use, did not adequately address the risk assessment needs of planned burning.

DELWP reports that the objectives of the Implementing Improved Systems and Processes project are to ensure that:

- policy, procedures and guidelines give proper consideration to risk management
- approvals and resourcing are commensurate with the level of risk and the best available weather products are used
- best operational practices can be applied statewide
- staff are appropriately trained in the application and use of the procedures, tools and process and use of weather products.

The project is being delivered through the following program of sub-projects:

- Review and update standards, directions, instructions and guidelines.
(Refer to Recommendations R4 - R8, R11³, R14, R15, R17, R18)
- Engage an independent risk management expert to review these new processes, prior to incorporating them into an updated Fuel Management Manual.
(Refer to Recommendation R4)
- Risk management training
(Refer to Recommendation R4)
- Weather information made available to staff undertaking a planned burn.
(Refer to Recommendation R17)
- Engage with staff, CFA and EMV to ensure that the best operational practices that exist in regions and districts are identified and applied statewide.
(Refer to Recommendation C3)
- Review staff training in the interpretation and use of fire weather information.
(Refer to Recommendation R17)

- Ensure that the appropriate resources are allocated to a planned burn⁴.

(Refer to Recommendation R19)

Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool

DELWP has introduced a Planned Burn Risk Assessment Tool (risk assessment tool) to support decision-making through a robust, peer-reviewed, risk-based approach.

The tool records risk management actions in the days prior to ignition and subsequent days, through to the burn being declared safe. This includes an approval process at local, district, regional and state level prior to ignition.

The new risk assessment tool is based on an approach developed by the Australian Capital Territory which is being considered for use by all bushfire agencies across Australia.

DELWP introduced the risk assessment tool in Victoria on 1 March 2016 for all planned burns. Following its introduction, a workshop with key regional planned burning staff was held to review the tool and associated processes. Modifications were made to improve the usability of the tool and streamline the approvals process.

On 6 April 2016, an updated version of the tool and a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was issued by the Chief Fire Officer.

DELWP invited IGEM to observe the use of the updated tool and associated processes at the State Control Centre and on-site at a planned burn in the Warby Ranges near Wangaratta. This provided IGEM with first-hand evidence of the changes DELWP is introducing to its risk management and approvals processes.

RECOMMENDATION R4 (3.1.2.7)

The Department should undertake a thorough review of the risk management and approvals processes

Planned completion	Review – March 2016 Training – July 2016
Reported status	Review – complete Training – on track

Summary of progress

An independent consultant completed a review and gap analysis of DELWP's processes against international risk management standards and the recommendations of the Investigation.

This work has been delivered in three phases:

Phase 1

DELWP's draft Fuel Management Manual and documented risk management processes were assessed for consistency with the ISO standards for quality (ISO9001) and risk management (ISO31000).

³ Refer to Section 5.5 Operational improvements for an update on Recommendation R11.

⁴ DELWP has noted that this action is currently aligned with the Operational Improvements project but believes it to be more of a procedural matter than operational. Refer to Section 5.5 Operational Improvements for an update on Recommendation R19.

Recommendations included:

- a staged revision process to make the manual more transparent and user-friendly, and to clarify processes which are inadequately mapped out
- an in-depth review of risk management processes with a view to implementing integrated risk management across all stages of strategic, operational and tactical planning and delivery.

Phase 2

The draft Fuel Management Manual was assessed against the findings and relevant recommendations from the Investigation to determine the extent to which the manual aligns with the recommendations, and to provide options for closing identified gaps.

Phase 3

The risk assessment tool was reviewed before its implementation in Victoria. The consultant described the tool as a substantial step toward providing a meaningful assessment of the risk of escape at the time of ignition, and in subsequent days.

Planned actions

- DELWP is working through the Phase 1 and 2 recommendations, and determining how these will be adopted as part of the further review of procedures and work instructions.
- DELWP is developing risk management training for all staff involved in the planned burning process. The aim is to develop greater understanding of best practice risk management and build capability to improve decision-making. An online course is scheduled for development and pilot by July 2016 before the broader roll-out to staff.

IGEM comment

IGEM notes that the review of the risk management and approvals processes has been completed, with risk management training scheduled for development and pilot by July 2016.

This work also relates to Recommendations R5 to R8, R14, R15, R17, and R18.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R4 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

RECOMMENDATION R5 (3.1.2.8)

The risk assessment processes and its outputs should be clear and comprehensible, able to be understood, reviewed and challenged by operational practitioners, and senior managers without fire backgrounds, as well as technical burn planners

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

The review commissioned in response to Recommendation R4 analysed risk assessment processes and outputs and provided recommendations for improvements. The review also examined the draft Fuel Management Manual, documented risk management processes and the new risk assessment tool.

The review recommended a staged revision process to make the manual more transparent and user-friendly, and to clarify processes which were inadequately mapped out.

Following the introduction of the risk assessment tool on 1 March 2016, a workshop with key regional planned burning staff was held to review the tool and associated processes. Modifications were made to improve the usability of the tool and streamline the approvals process.

On 6 April 2016, an updated version of the tool and an SOP was issued by the Chief Fire Officer.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R5 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R6 (3.1.2.9)

Context setting and contingency planning should be specifically included within the reformed risk management processes

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

The burn context and contingency planning are key components of the risk assessment tool.

The context includes fire history for the burn area and surrounding areas, fuel hazard and technical challenges, distance to nearest assets and private property, as well as identifying significant cultural and environmental values.

In terms of contingency planning, the tool seeks confirmation that a contingency plan has been developed and requires details of any elements of the contingency plan that would create significant issues or require regional or state support, aviation resources or inter-agency cooperation.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R6 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R7 (3.1.2.10)

Clear rules and triggers should be established to ensure that burn plans are reviewed whenever the risk profile changes due to circumstances such as significant changes to boundaries, abnormal seasonal conditions, adjoining development or land use changes

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

The new risk assessment process requires additional assessment points throughout the burn process, including approval of the risk assessment at local, district, regional and state level. In particular, pre-ignition assessment and daily assessment post-ignition are required to identify and mitigate any risk profile changes.

The Burns Controller must update the risk assessment tool until the burn is declared safe.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R7 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R8 (3.1.2.11)

A burn scheduled for ignition must have a current and useful risk assessment

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

A Chief Fire Officer Direction was issued on 29 February 2016, which requires the use of the new risk assessment tool and approvals process for planned burning. This process requires all planned burns that are being scheduled for ignition to have a current and useful risk assessment. Approval of the risk assessment now occurs at local, district, regional and state level.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R8 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R14 (3.1.4.6)

Planning for resources must include any works necessary for the preparation of burns prior to the main ignition

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

As part of the new risk assessment process, new classes for planned burn control lines were released. These new classes describe the standard associated with each class of control line and the associated level of risk. This informs the level of work and resources required to achieve the standard. The higher class of control line required, the higher the level of resources needed.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R14 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R15 (3.1.4.7)

Indicative resourcing of burns must take account of the risk assessment and also provide for operational contingency planning

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

District Managers are required to ensure that burn teams and on-ground operations are adequately resourced.

Contingency planning for potential escapes is a key component of the new risk assessment tool. The tool requires confirmation that a contingency plan has been developed and requires details of any elements of the contingency plan that would create significant issues or require regional or state support, aviation resources or inter-agency cooperation.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R15 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R17 (3.2.7)

Greater attention to drought factors and their interactions with forest fuels and forecast weather needs to be made when conducting planned burns

Planned completion	July 2016
Reported status	On track

Summary of progress

DELWP completed a stocktake of weather products and developed a user guide of weather and Fire Behaviour Analyst products for planned burning.

The user guide provides general guidance for managers and planned burning staff on weather and fire behaviour products that are available to support planned burning. It also provides guidance for regional staff on how to obtain further information on weather and fire behaviour products.

In addition, the guide details what can be accessed through the FireWeb⁵ weather page and the Bureau of Meteorology website.

Regional fuel profiles have been developed and district profiling of fuel condition is underway.

The new risk assessment tool and approvals process requires consideration of longer-term weather factors such as rainfall deficiencies and drought index.

Planned actions

- An assessment of new equipment requirements is underway.
- A project plan for the review of fire weather training has been developed in consultation with CFA and the Bureau of Meteorology.
This will include a review of existing training programs against required fire weather products and services (including smoke dispersion modelling).
The review will also focus on delivery methods and frequency of training required.
A process is underway to map the range of weather products against operational roles to determine which roles require an ability to access, use and interpret the various products. This will then support a gap analysis.
DELWP advises that an implementation plan with recommendations will be prepared by the end of July 2016.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R17 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

RECOMMENDATION R18 (3.2.8)

The requirement for obtaining spot forecasts for planned burning should be linked to complexity and risk with appropriate oversight in place

Planned completion	March 2016
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Reported status	Complete
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⁵ Information website managed by DELWP for the management of fire prevention and suppression on public land in Victoria. FireWeb is DELWP's primary source of integrated fire management information.

Summary of progress

The user guide, described in the previous section, includes advice on spot weather forecasts.

In particular, the guide provides advice on when to obtain a spot weather forecast, detailing a list of considerations including the overall risk value in the risk assessment tool.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R18 is complete.

COMMITMENT C3

Engage with staff, CFA and EMV to ensure that the best operational practices that exist in regions and districts are identified and applied statewide

Planned completion	March 2016
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Reported status	Complete
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Summary of progress

DELWP advises that the EM-LEARN Framework was approved by all agencies and released by EMV in January 2016. This is the primary process for lesson sharing across all agencies in the Victorian emergency management sector.

An implementation proposal is being developed for planned burning lesson sharing under this framework.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C3 is complete.

5.3 Audit and Quality Assurance Framework

DELWP's Audit and Quality Assurance Framework project aims to enhance DELWP's audit and quality assurance and deliver robust processes and supporting systems for planned burning. The project comprises six discrete pieces of work:

- Conduct a statewide audit into the implementation of recommendations arising from past examinations, investigations or audits of planned burns that have breached containment lines since 2003.

(Refer to Commitment C7)

- Conduct a statewide audit of compliance with current standards, directions, instructions and guidelines issued by the Chief Fire Officer for the approval and oversight of a planned burn.

(Refer to Commitment C6)

- Investigate the conduct of the approvals and oversight process for the Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers

Track planned burn, building on and consistent with the independent investigation.

(Refer to Commitment C5)

- Developing an Audit and Quality Assurance Framework for the planned burning program, which will include independent auditing. The framework will be designed to facilitate the maintenance of standards, continuous improvement and the management of risks at all levels of DELWP. The framework will include all stages of a planned burn, including planning, preparation and implementation and will consider the approach to audits of hazardous tree assessments in the design of the framework.

(Refer to Recommendations R9 and R13)

- Adopt a “Lessons Learnt” initiative, and will build on its current scenario based and experiential learning to cover all stages of a planned burn, including planning, preparation and implementation.
- Commission regular, independent auditing of the planned burning program. These reports will be made public.

(Refer to Commitment C8)

RECOMMENDATION R9 (3.1.2.12)

The approach to audits of hazardous tree assessments and associated works should be extended to other aspects of burn planning, preparation and implementation

Planned completion	July 2016
Reported status	On track

Summary of progress

The approach to audits of hazardous trees is being analysed for its suitability to planned burning more broadly. Key principles have been identified that can be applied in the Audit and Quality Assurance Framework.

Planned action

The analysis is in the final stages and will be considered in the design of the Audit and Quality Assurance Framework, which is scheduled for completion by the end of June 2016.

IGEM comment

IGEM notes that implementation of this recommendation is linked to Recommendation R13.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R9 is linked to Recommendation R13 and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

RECOMMENDATION R13 (3.1.3.10)

An audit and quality assurance function should be established to maintain standards, facilitate continual improvement and to manage risk at all levels of the organisation

Planned completion	July 2016
Reported status	On track

Summary of progress

The Audit and Quality Assurance Framework is being developed and designed to facilitate the maintenance of standards, continuous improvement and the management of risks at all levels of DELWP.

The framework will include all stages of a planned burn, including planning, preparation and implementation. The approach to audits of hazardous trees will be considered in the design of the framework, as proposed in Recommendation R9.

The gap analysis has been completed, identifying gaps or omissions in DELWP’s current processes against the ISO Quality Principles and the ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System. Key audit and quality gaps identified will be incorporated into the proposed framework.

Eleven best practice principles have been identified, that will serve as the foundation for the framework:

- **Collaboration and coordination** – shared understanding of how strategies and objectives will be achieved within the department, other agencies and the community. Effective and meaningful communication amongst all stakeholders to better manage bushfire on public land.
- **Continuous improvement** – analyse and evaluate outputs and incorporate learnings into future processes to ensure that the organisation is more efficient and effective in achieving quality outcomes.
- **Outcomes focused** – focus on the delivery of effective and consistent methods of bushfire management techniques that benefit human life, communities, community infrastructure, industries, the economy and the environment, rather than simply a set of internal processes, documentation requirements and targets.
- **Risk-based approach** – risks will be identified, assessed, prioritised and managed to ensure that the uncertainty of the organisation meeting its objectives will be avoided, reduced, removed or altered to align with the organisation’s risk appetite. The prioritisation of bushfire management activities will be based on the collection and analysis of data.
- **Leadership and behaviours** – leaders at all levels create a culture of unity, encouragement and recognition that empower.
- **Transparency** – openness and disclosure of bushfire management activities accompanied by the availability of all relevant information.
- **Accountability** – a clear organisational structure that enables an individual or an area within DELWP to account for bushfire management activities and

accept responsibility to the government and the community.

- **Compliance focused** – a focus on meeting regulatory obligations, industry codes, organisational standards, ethics and community expectations in all bushfire management activities to reduce the risk of non-compliance.
- **Evidence-based decision making** – decisions made based on the analysis and evaluation of data and information to produce consistent and desired results.
- **Community focused** – protection of human life (primary) and the community to drive all bushfire management activities.
- **Capability and capacity** – staff have the ability to develop competence to effectively achieve bushfire management objectives and have the capability to perform.

Planned action

DELWP advises that initial drafts of the framework and audit plan, described in Commitment C8, have been prepared and are on track for completion by 28 June 2016.

IGEM comment

IGEM notes that implementation of this recommendation is linked to the implementation of Recommendation R9 and Commitment C8.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R13 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

COMMITMENT C5

Investigate the conduct of the approvals and oversight process for the Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track planned burn

Planned completion	December 2015
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

As reported in IGEM’s Interim Progress Report, February 2016, the investigation into the conduct of the approvals and oversight process for the Lancefield-Cobaw Croziers Track planned burn has been completed.

The report was released on the DELWP website on 14 January 2016.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C5 is complete.

COMMITMENT C6

Conduct a statewide audit of compliance with current standards, directions, instructions and guidelines

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

DELWP commissioned a statewide compliance audit for the approval and oversight of planned burns.

The audit focused on four themes:

- approval of key stages (33 planned burns audited)
- approval of burn checklists (33 planned burns audited)
- preparation of Burn Plan (33 planned burns audited)
- accreditation of the Burn Officer-in-Charge (OIC) and Burns Controller (48 planned burns audited).

The audit recommended that DELWP:

- improve its documentation of formal delegation of approvals
- standardise its burn plan document formats
- review its burn approval checklists
- review its list of burn controllers and Burn OICs after finding some burns had been approved by a controller or officer whose accreditation had expired.

The final report is available on the DELWP website.

DELWP advises that implementation of all the audit recommendations will be completed by 30 June 2017.

Implementation will be monitored by DELWP’s Risk and Audit Committee.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C6 is complete.

COMMITMENT C7

Conduct a statewide audit into the implementation of recommendations arising from past examinations, investigations or audits of planned burns

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

DELWP’s Risk and Audit Committee commissioned a statewide audit into the implementation of recommendations arising from prior reports into escaped planned burns.

The scope of the internal audit was to:

- consider DELWP’s processes and controls in respect of the identification, recording and tracking of actions

arising from past examinations, investigations and audits of planned burns that have breached containment lines since 2003

- consider documentation provided by the DELWP Fire Performance Unit to support the status of all actions identified by DELWP as complete
- consider DELWP's processes and controls in place to monitor use of the Business Improvement Recommendations Database, specifically access controls (for example, new starters and leavers), maintenance (periodic confirmation that access levels are appropriate) and related audit trails (to review appropriate access/use of records).

The audit found that during the period 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2015, DELWP identified and recorded 105 escaped planned burns. Of these, DELWP identified 31 internal or external examinations, investigations and audits relating to 23 escaped planned burns.

For the 31 internal or external examinations, investigations and audits, DELWP identified 189 recommendations/management actions.

Of the 189 recommendations, 56 are in progress and 23 had not been actioned.

The internal audit made the following findings:

- The DELWP Fire Management Manual requires strengthening and compliance with requirements in respect to investigation, and documentation of suspected escaped planned burns requires improvement.
- Processes and documentation to support the implementation of recommendations/management actions in relation to escaped planned burns requires strengthening.
- Lack of consistent process and a statewide system for the identification, recording and tracking of actions arising from past examinations, investigations, audits and debriefs of escaped planned burns.

The final report is available on the DELWP website.

DELWP advises that all actions will be implemented by 30 September 2016.

Implementation will be monitored by DELWP's Risk and Audit Committee.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C7 is complete.

COMMITMENT C8

Commission regular, independent auditing of the planned burning program

Planned completion	July 2016
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Reported status	On track
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Summary of progress

DELWP advises that an audit plan is being developed as part of the Audit and Quality Assurance Framework.

Independent external resources with specialist skills and knowledge will be used to undertake audits and develop aspects of the framework.

The planned burning audit plan is being developed to ensure that there is a sufficient level of independent oversight to maintain standards, facilitate continuous improvement, and the management of risks at all levels.

Planned action

- As stated in the summary for Recommendation R13, DELWP advises that initial drafts of the audit plan and framework have been prepared. The final audit plan and the framework are on track for completion by 28 June 2016.

IGEM comment

IGEM notes that implementation of this commitment is linked to the implementation of Recommendation R13.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C8 is linked to Recommendation R13 and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

5.4 Organisation structure

The Investigation made one recommendation relating to DELWP's organisational structure.

RECOMMENDATION R10 (3.1.3.7)

A review of the organisation's structures and processes at state, regional and district levels should be undertaken to better integrate operational burn planning and operational implementation and to provide sound governance, risk management and quality control

Planned completion	March 2016
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Reported status	Complete
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Summary of progress

On 14 December 2015, the Secretary, DELWP released proposed organisation changes, intended to improve delivery of the planned burn program and to position the department to implement the government's new approach to bushfire management, outlined in *Safer Together*.

The final structure was implemented following a period of staff consultation and analysis of feedback.

The new structure establishes the new Forest, Fire and Regions Group. It recognises the Chief Fire Officer as DELWP's senior technical specialist in fire prevention and suppression operations. During fire response and planned burning operations, the Chief Fire Officer reports directly to the Secretary, DELWP.

The new structure aims to address key findings of the Investigation through the following:

- Strengthened quality control, assurance and approvals processes over the planned burning program, through an enhanced quality management function in the Office of the Chief Fire Officer, including three new regionally-based Audit and Performance Officers.
- Under new arrangements, there is a new role of Assistant Chief Fire Officer reporting directly to the Chief Fire Officer during planned burning operations. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer carries out the agreed responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer in the region.
- Integration of strategic, operational and tactical planning for planned burning fire management under the Assistant Chief Fire Officer. It also brings together responsibility for planned burning at the district level under a District Planned Burning Manager.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R10 is complete.

5.5 Operational improvements

The following actions are included in the operational improvements project:

- Work with VicRoads and local government to support better management of roadside vegetation.
- Look for opportunities to make firewood that is produced during fire response and fuel management operations available to local communities.

(Refer to Commitment C4)

- DELWP will ensure that the appropriate resources are allocated to a planned burn so that it is undertaken successfully and that the security of a planned burn can be monitored and maintained. This includes the allocation and use of aircraft, and reinforcing the importance of post-ignition risk assessment so that resource requirements are continually reviewed throughout the conduct of a planned burn.

(Refer to Recommendation R19)

- DELWP is currently investigating the increased use of emerging technologies such as forward-looking infra-red and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of planned burn surveillance.

(Refer to Recommendation R19)

- DELWP will review and strengthen its current accreditation system for the role of Burn OIC, considering the approach that is used for Incident Management Teams in bushfire and emergency response.

(Refer to Recommendation R11)

- DELWP will work with partner agencies, including CFA, to build the number of highly-skilled personnel that can fill the role of Burn OIC.

(Refer to Recommendation R11)

RECOMMENDATION R11 (3.1.3.8)

Burn Officers-in-Charge (OICs) with appropriate knowledge and experience commensurate with the nature and complexity of the fuels and planned burn operations should be actively involved from the beginning of the planning process

Planned completion	July 2016
Reported status	On track

Summary of progress

The Direction issued by the Chief Fire Officer on 29 February 2016 requires that the Burn OIC must be involved in the conduct of the risk assessment pre-ignition and post-ignition.

Until new Burn OIC accreditation levels are established, the new risk assessment tool is being utilised to ensure appropriate resources are allocated at all levels of the burn. The risk assessment for each burn is reviewed by the District Manager, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Chief Fire Officer to ensure all risks are appropriately mitigated.

Planned action

- DELWP advises that an options analysis for Burn OIC accreditation levels has been drafted for consultation with regions and partner agencies. This will be followed by a review of national competencies and classifications for Burn OIC accreditation to determine the extent of alignment with Victorian requirements.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that the implementation of actions for Recommendation R11 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

RECOMMENDATION R12 (3.1.3.9)

To the maximum extent possible given numbers and availability of suitable staff across partner agencies, there should be a single Burn OIC to provide operational continuity across days of ignition and burn management

Planned completion	Immediate and ongoing
Reported status	Complete and ongoing

Summary of progress

A Direction was issued by the Chief Fire Officer on 18 November 2015 stating that, to the extent possible, a single Burn OIC is to be allocated to a burn and, where it is not possible, then an appropriate alternative must be in place. This requirement has been reinforced in the Direction issued by the Chief Fire Officer on 29 February 2016.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R12 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R16 (3.1.4.8)

Burn OICs must be fully involved in determining appropriate levels of resourcing for different operational phases and shifts

Planned completion	Immediate and ongoing
Reported status	Complete and ongoing

Summary of progress

A Direction was issued by the Chief Fire Officer on 18 November 2015 stating that the Burn OIC is to be fully involved in determining the appropriate levels of resourcing for all operational phases and shifts of a burn.

Resource requirements are also to be documented and requested through the Burns Controller. This requirement has been reinforced in the Direction by the Chief Fire Officer on 29 February 2016.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R16 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R19 (3.4.7)

Greater consideration should be given to using aircraft for burn security surveillance as well as ignition and burning out operations, in addition to aerial observation and the suppression of bushfires

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

The Chief Fire Officer issued a Direction on 18 November 2015 stating that there is to be regular sharing of information on changing risks at all levels of the management structure for the conduct of a planned burn (Burn OIC, Burn Controller, Regional Agency Commander and State Agency Commander).

This is intended to improve the oversight of planned burns to ensure that mitigation actions are taken, resourcing is reviewed, and timely and relevant communication is provided to local communities on changed circumstances.

DELWP is investigating the increased use of emerging technologies, such as Forward-Looking Infra-Red and Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of planned burn surveillance.

A 12-week trial of RPAs is underway for fire and land management operations. This includes undertaking a pre-planned burn assessment, with during- and after-burn monitoring and assessment where possible. Once the concept has been proven in planned burning operations, the potential to employ RPAs in suppression monitoring activity will be investigated.

This will inform work by EMV to establish a sector-wide project for remotely piloted aircraft during the autumn planned burning program and for other land management practices.

DELWP reports that Airborne Information Gathering technology, such as Forward-Looking Infra-Red, continues to be used for aerial burn surveillance, as well as conventional aircraft.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R19 is complete.

COMMITMENT C4

Look for opportunities to make firewood that is produced during fire response and fuel management operations available to local communities

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

DELWP has identified opportunities to make firewood available from planned burning preparation works.

Suitable firewood collected from a number of properties during the Lancefield recovery work has been made available to fire-affected residents in the Lancefield area, through the generosity of landholders.

Timber from suitable burns on the Fire Operations Plan will be made available for firewood collection prior to burning.

Hazardous trees felled to increase burn security and improve firefighter safety will be made available in appropriate areas.

DELWP is reviewing its planning processes to assist in identifying potential firewood production during the preparation of future planned burns.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C4 is complete.

5.6 Community engagement

DELWP advises that improving community engagement and rebuilding community trust is a key priority in responding to the findings and recommendations of the Investigation. The objectives are as follows:

- Develop a charter that articulates how DELWP will deliver upon its commitment to building stronger and more sustainable relationships with the community.

(Refer to Commitment C1)

- Review engagement practices regarding planned burning that meet legislative obligations, government directions of intent, current guidance, supports regional delivery and better meet the needs of communities and key stakeholders.

(Refer to Recommendation R21)

- Define best practice forms of localised, active and meaningful communications and engagement processes, with an emphasis on local relationships so that the community feel engaged and informed.

(Refer to Recommendation R21)

- Identify key capabilities required for DELWP staff in customer service.

(Refer to Recommendation R21)

- Review and finalise the bushfire management engagement Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework.

(Refer to Recommendation R20)

- Develop a 'brand' for forest fighters.

(Refer to Commitment C2)

RECOMMENDATION R20 (3.5.8)

Planning processes should be reviewed to ensure that stakeholders beyond the immediate burn area are clearly identified, prioritised and targeted with appropriate communication

Planned completion	March 2016
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

DELWP has developed a series of community engagement effectiveness measures for assessing the quality of engagement and interactions with community stakeholders before, during and after the conduct of planned burning.

The measures recognise that community perception of bushfire risk and the risk of planned burns breaching containment lines should be assessed by the community and managed in a way that responds appropriately to that community.

The effectiveness measures will be incorporated into a revised bushfire management engagement MERI framework developed by DELWP and Parks Victoria.

The aim is to develop ongoing capacity and capability to:

- ensure all activities before, during and after planned burns are conducted in a transparent and accountable manner
- incorporate community values into planned burning policy and planning
- build the understanding and awareness of stakeholders and communities about planned burning

- enhance methods for the conduct of planned burning based on continuous learning. This approach was trialled during the autumn 2016 planned burn program.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R20 is complete.

RECOMMENDATION R21 (3.5.9)

Communication and engagement processes should be reviewed with an emphasis placed on developing and applying active and meaningful approaches rather than passive methods only

Planned completion	July 2016
Reported status	On track

Summary of progress

As reported in IGEM's Interim Progress Report, February 2016, a working group has undertaken the *Review of Community Engagement for Planned Burning*.

The objective of the review was to understand and improve the way DELWP engages around planned burning to meet legislative obligations and current guidance, support regional delivery and better meet the needs of communities and stakeholders.

The outcomes of the review have resulted in a new engagement approach to support the building of local relationships and effectively engage with the broader community. This approach was implemented during the autumn 2016 planned burning season and will be evaluated to inform future longer-term developments.

DELWP engaged a social researcher who conducted focus group discussions with four high-risk communities across Victoria, to explore the community definition and expectations for 'active and meaningful' communication.

The communities interviewed had strong preferences for how they would like to be engaged. These included early discussion, valuing their knowledge and experience and allowing them more say about how and when planned burns are conducted. It was also recognised that engagement needs to be tailored to the level of experience that different communities have of fire.

Planned actions

Building on the development of a community charter and the communication and engagement work described earlier, DELWP will investigate best practice methods and tools to raise community awareness and obtain community feedback in the delivery of the planned burning program. This work is scheduled for completion by 1 July 2016.

Implementation of a Community Service and Interaction Module training program for all DELWP staff commenced in April 2016.

It is intended that most staff will have undertaken the course by the end of June 2016, with additional courses to be scheduled post-June for any staff who were unable to attend.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that implementation of actions for Recommendation R21 is proceeding satisfactorily and will revisit in the August 2016 report.

RECOMMENDATION R22 (3.5.10)

The Department should consider branding the component of its portfolio dealing with fire management and planned burning on public lands so that there is an enduring entity for building stronger and more sustainable relationships with the community

Planned completion	March 2016
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Reported status	Complete
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Summary of progress

The brand 'Forest Fire Management' was announced by the Secretary, DELWP on 14 December 2015.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Recommendation R22 is complete, as reported in February 2016.

COMMITMENT C1

Develop and publish a community service charter

Planned completion	March 2016
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Reported status	Complete
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Summary of progress

DELWP has developed a community charter that describes how DELWP will partner with and involve local communities in all aspects of its work. This includes decision-making about public land and bushfire management.

The charter was developed through community consultation sessions that identified community values and outcomes the community is seeking from interaction with DELWP. Consultation with DELWP staff focused particularly on regional and district staff to ensure the charter supports their frontline role in working with rural and regional communities.

Launched at Benloch on 11 April 2016 by the Minister, the charter also provides indicators of successful engagement between the community and DELWP.

The charter is available online at www.delwp.vic.gov.au

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C1 is complete.

COMMITMENT C2

Build a 'brand' for forest firefighters

Planned completion	March 2016
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Reported status	Complete
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Summary of progress

Implementation of Commitment C2 has included the development of a visual identity for the Forest Fire Management brand, which was formally released on 4 March 2016. New branding guidelines have been developed and the brand has been applied to uniforms, personal protective equipment, vehicles, plant, and email signature blocks for field-based fire services staff.

Forest Fire Management is not a separate organisation or entity; it is a name that is intended to help the public better identify the people that manage fires on public land and the work they do.

The Forest Fire Management team includes DELWP, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water staff who have a field-based forest fire role.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C2 is complete.

5.7 Independent oversight

Following the Investigation, DELWP announced there would be independent monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations and the changes DELWP had committed to making.

DELWP committed to:

- Request IGEM to monitor and publicly report on progress in making these changes and in implementing the response to the Investigation recommendations.
(Refer to Commitment C9)
- Ask IGEM to manage the prompt investigation and reporting of any future breaches of containment lines by a planned burn.
(Refer to Commitment C10)
- Commission regular, independent auditing of the planned burning program.
(Refer to Commitment C8 in Section 5.3: Audit and Quality Assurance Framework)

COMMITMENT C9

Request the IGEM to monitor and report on progress in implementation

Planned completion	December 2015
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water and the Minister for Emergency Services wrote to the IGEM on 8 December 2015 requesting he monitor and report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Investigation.

The IGEM wrote to both ministers formally accepting this role on 29 December 2015.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C9 is complete, as reported in February 2016.

COMMITMENT C10

Ask the IGEM to manage the prompt investigation and reporting of any future breaches of containment lines by a planned burn, drawing on relevant independent experts as required

Planned completion	December 2015
Reported status	Complete

Summary of progress

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water and the Minister for Emergency Services wrote to the IGEM on 8 December 2015 requesting that he manage the prompt investigation and reporting on any future breaches of containment lines by a planned burn. Any such report was to be made available to the public.

The IGEM wrote to both ministers formally accepting this role on 29 December 2015.

IGEM, in consultation with DELWP, developed a procedure for the notification, investigation and reporting of any escape of containment lines. The objective for IGEM is to assess DELWP’s management of the planned burn in the context of the risk to people, the environment, property, infrastructure, the Government and the economy.

IGEM finding

IGEM considers that Commitment C10 is complete, as reported in February 2016.

6 Concluding remarks

Overall, IGEM found that implementation of the Investigation recommendations and additional commitments made by DELWP in relation to the planned burn program are making good progress.

IGEM also wishes to acknowledge the support and cooperation of DELWP in preparing this report.

At the invitation of DELWP, IGEM attended as an observer at meetings of the LFRSG. The LFRSG was established by the Secretary of DELWP to oversee the implementation of DELWP's response to the Investigation.

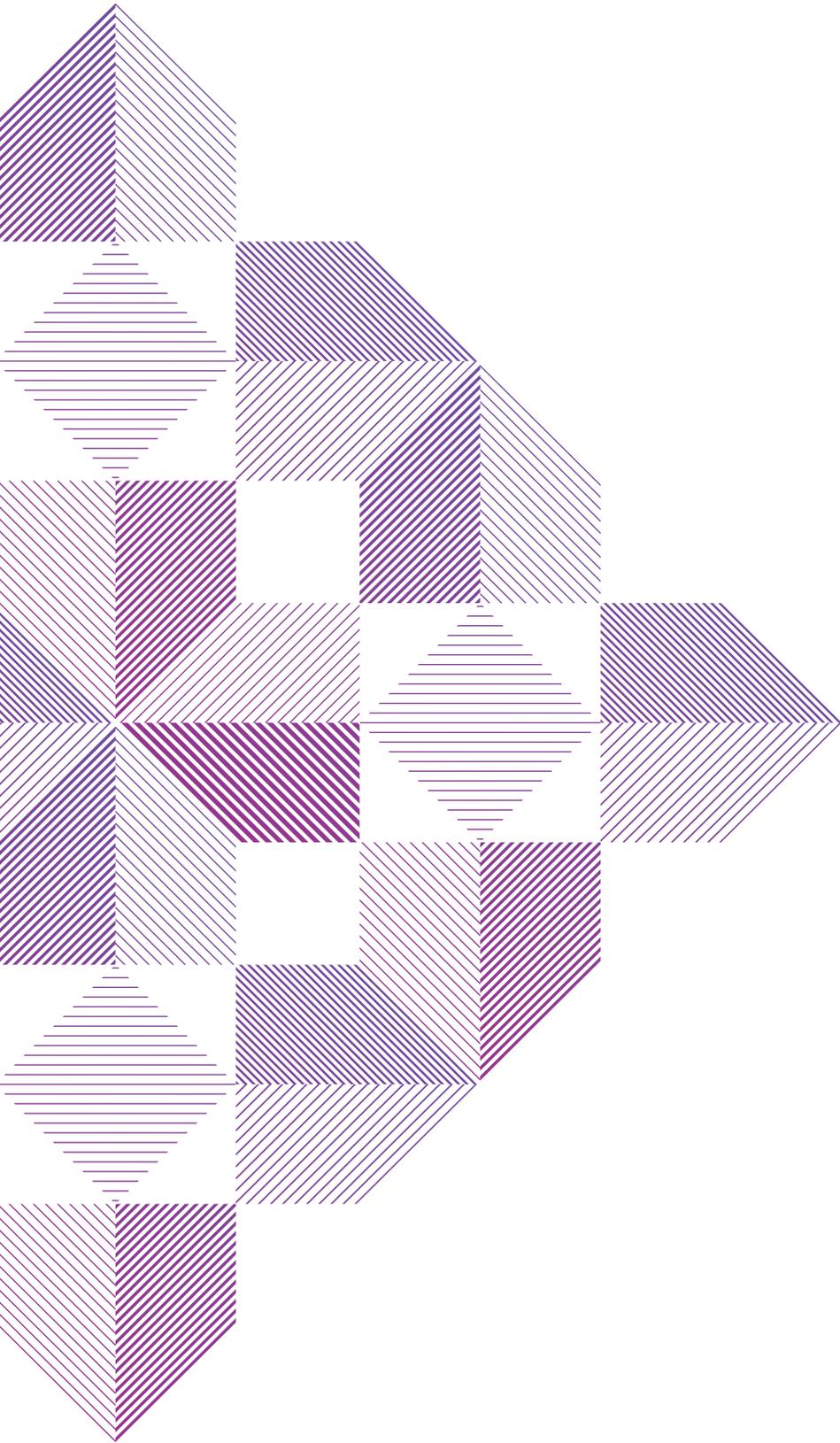
DELWP also provided IGEM with the opportunity to observe the use of the updated planned burning risk assessment tool and associated processes at the State Control Centre and to attend a planned burn in the Warby Ranges near Wangaratta in May 2016.

Nine recommendations and one commitment remain in progress. Three recommendations will be rolled into IGEM's *Safer Together* Progress Report, due in October 2016.

The other six recommendations and one commitment are on track for completion in July 2016.

IGEM will provide a further Progress Report at the end of August 2016.

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Inspector-General for
Emergency Management

