

EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

PUBLIC FORUM

All members of the community who have registered have been advised that they have a **maximum of seven minutes** to put their case.

Ordinary Meeting of Council on **25 July 2023**

Name	Subject/Comments	Presentation?	Hybrid
Public Forum – 10.30am			
Trish Hellier	4.1 Ordinary Meeting held on 27 June 2023	Yes	In person
Kathryn Maxwell, President SHASA	NOM23/002 - Upgrades to Evacuation Centres	Yes	In person
Alice Ansara	NOM23/002 - Upgrades to Evacuation Centres	Yes	In person
Allan Rees	NOM23/002 - Upgrades to Evacuation Centres	Yes	In person
Brett Stevenson, A Better Eurobodalla	NOM23/002 - Upgrades to Evacuation Centres	Yes	In person
Dr Michelle Hamrosi	NOM23/002 - Upgrades to Evacuation Centres	Yes	In person

Good morning Mayor, Councillors, General Manager, Staff, Gallery and those comfortable live streaming from home my name is Patricia Hellier.

Today I would like to speak on Agenda Number 4 Confirmation of the Previous Meeting - 4.1 Ordinary Meeting held the 27th June 2023 namely GMR 23/023 Adoption of the Code of Meeting Practice 23/60 Amendment. Councillors as a long term speaker on a number of issues in Council and after watching and re watching the Live Streaming of this segment of the meeting and listening to the various statement that were made I have to wonder if the Councillors particularly the 7 new Councillors understand the process of registering to speak in Council. The facts are when you phone in you must give the item number and the topic on the Agenda you wish to speak on and for those who email in they must give the item number and the topic they wish to speak on. The staff in the office then organise the speakers according to the item the person is addressing the Councillors on. Speakers either email a copy of their statement or they hand in a copy after addressing the Councillors.

I am at a loss to understand how this relatively uncomplicated format that we follow to register to speak at a Council meeting became so very complicated at the last Council Meeting.

As we are all aware at a previous Council Meeting a resident spoke in Council in relation to having the word “encouraged” inserted in the COMP – and later in a workshop this was discussed at length along with a number of other points in the COMP.

Surely now to have to provide a “summary” of our statement will mean this will take up valuable Council Staff’s time – someone will have read to summary and be “the judge” - will they then have to have a “jury” to decide if the “summary is appropriate” and if it is not “appropriate” who will be the “executioner” to tell the person they can not speak?

In all the time I have sat in this gallery and listened to a number of speakers I have NEVER heard any bad or abusive language.

I would like to provide the new Councillors a bit of history - For years the system we had worked until a few years back a speaker who could be “witty with his words” was addressing Council it was known that amongst some he was not a favoured speaker. This speaker was addressing a finance issue – I was one of many in the Gallery, apparently “a word was used” I did not hear the word that he allegedly used, the Mayor did not hear the word and yet some Councillors apparently took offence to the word – one Councillor who was not even in the Gallery at the time rushed through the side door alleging he had heard this alleged word yet he was not even in the Gallery. This speaker was shut down and has never spoken in Council. Given what we have heard recently about some finance issues perhaps there was some merit to this speakers statement.

From that point in time there was a move to have the COMP changed – my argument was then and still is now that there should be a delay process in the Live Streaming of the meeting – also there is a process that the power to the Micro phone can be turned off and I am sure if someone is Live Streaming there would be a provision that the Live Streaming could be cut.

I would also like to make a comment I believe that there are decisions being made behind the scenes given that 3.7 was inserted into the COMP without discussion in the Gallery – that being – “If an approved speaker is unable to attend the meeting to present their address, a member of Council staff will read the presentation on their behalf”.

In relation to Public Access – I believe if someone rings in to speak in Public Access they must give the staff “the topic they wish to speak on”.

Patricia Hellier

NOM23/002 - UPGRADES TO EVACUATION CENTRES

SHASA presentation to Council on 25 July 2023.

The need to prepare for the 2023/24 bushfire and heatwave season

As mentioned in Councillor Mayne's Notice of Motion, for the last three years the Eurobodalla has experience relatively wet weather as a result of La Nina systems which bring above average rain and cooler temperatures. This has resulted in three years of prolific regrowth of vegetation since the Black Summer Bushfires.

The Bureau of Meteorology has confirmed that we are now heading into a super El Nino which means hotter and drier conditions. Eurobodalla has had the driest June on record and the vegetation and soils are rapidly drying out. We can expect much higher temperatures from the El Niño in the latter half of the year, from October/November onwards.

Bushfires

As our world heats up bushfires are more common and severe. The 2019/20 black summer bushfires burned 24 million hectares. The Canadian wildfires of 2023 have already burned 8 million hectares and blanketed Canadian and U.S. cities with smoke. Bushfires are raging in Spain, Greece and Siberia.

Air pollution from wood smoke immediately increases the risk of heart problems. For every 10 micrograms more of PM2.5 (the primary particle size in wildfire smoke) in one cubic metre of air, a person's combined odds of experiencing at least one of four heart issues is increased by 5.5%. A Monash University study of the health effects following the catastrophic New South Wales (NSW) bushfires of 2019-20 has found a significant increase in emergency department visits for respiratory and cardiovascular problems.

Pregnant women suffered more birth complications, including decreased birth weight and preterm births.

This highlights the urgency of limiting even short-term exposures to wildfire smoke to avoid smoke-related rises in both heart attacks and respiratory issues.

Heatwaves

Around the globe, temperatures are soaring as the world enters a multiyear period of intense warming, fuelled by man-made climate change and a naturally occurring El Niño weather pattern, which is releasing a gusher of heat into the atmosphere. Crippling heatwaves are currently being experienced in Asia, America and Europe. The World Meteorological Organization said that July began with the hottest week on record. The high temperatures are caused by a “heat dome” – created when an area of high pressure stays over the same place for an extended period of time, trapping hot air underneath.

Globally renowned climatologist Michael Mann last week said the impact of the coming summer’s heat on Australia is likely to be profound.

Heatwaves are Australia’s deadliest natural hazard. Our elderly population are particularly vulnerable. Doctors say the ageing process makes older bodies generally less capable of withstanding extreme heat. Older bodies tend to hold more heat than younger ones, and as people age, they produce less sweat, making it tougher to regulate body temperature and dissipate heat. It can be harder for even healthy older adults to tell if they’re dehydrated or overheated. Medical experts have advised that common health issues — including heart problems, high blood pressure and diabetes — put older people more at risk of consequences from heat stress. Pregnant women and the very young are also at higher risk of health complications.

Heatwave Havens

To assist with achieving a more resilient community, SHASA has worked hard over the last 4 years to upgrade suitable community owned facilities to operate as heatwave and bushfire havens. So far 6 community facilities have been completed:

- Red Door Hall, Anglican Parish Moruya
- The Moruya Pre School Kindergarten
- CWA Moruya
- CWA Narooma
- Narooma Men's Shed
- Uniting Church Batehaven.

SHASA in partnership with other community organisations and Council has developed a Eurobodalla Heatwave and Bushfire Haven Plan which includes businesses cases to upgrade an additional 11 community owned facilities and five Council Halls. We need just under \$2m to upgrade these facilities and have a network operating across the Eurobodalla as havens from the heat and/or wood smoke for our more vulnerable members of the community.

SHASA has also installed solar on 18 community facilities and solar and batteries on 9 community facilities to provide more energy resilience. This includes both Marine Rescue Narooma and Marine Rescue Tuross Head/Moruya so that can keep operating the radios when the power goes down.

What other Councils are doing

A number of Councils in areas impacted by the Black Summer Bushfires have collaborated with their communities to upgrade community halls in preparation for future extreme weather events.

Clarence Valley Council has upgraded community halls in Nymboida, Coaldale, Dundurrabin, Ewingar, Glenreagh, Iilarwil, Kungala Lanitza, Jackadgery, and Wooloweyah. The work included kitchen upgrades; drainage and water supply improvements; fire egress and resilience upgrades; accessibility improvements; solar power, battery system and back-up generators and air conditioning installations.

Shoalhaven City Council has set up Community Information Hubs at 25 community halls across the Shoalhaven which includes solar, batteries, back up generators, satellite communications, so that telephone and internet can operate when the power goes down.

Councils in NE Victoria have upgraded a number of halls including Tawonga Community Memorial Hall, Corryong and District Memorial Hall and Harrietville Community Hall.

Some actions that Eurobodalla Shire Council could undertake to ensure the community is better protected from the impacts of from bushfires and heatwaves

1. Upgrade the Evacuation Centre buildings to include air conditioning, and HEPA filters to provide people with refuge from heat and/or smoke during catastrophic weather events.
2. Shade Council car parks to reduce heat impacts in the middle of our towns.
3. Partner with SHASA to secure funding to implement the Eurobodalla Heatwave and Bushfire Haven Strategy. Heidi Stratford, Director Illawarra and South Coast, Reconstruction NSW, has recommended that SHASA work with Council to submit and application for funding under the second round of the Disaster Ready Fund. Reconstruction NSW sees heatwave havens as a very high priority for the Eurobodalla. Project proposals would include maintenance agreements for solar and battery systems.
4. Set up community information boards at key Council facilities to keep the community informed in the event of power and telecommunications failures.
5. Engage with the Shoalhaven City Council about its Community Information Hubs at 25 community halls across the Shoalhaven to see what could be replicated here in the Eurobodalla.
6. When Evacuation Centres are established, ensure they provide a separate area for families with babies and young children.
7. Encourage people to remove combustible materials from their yards by removing the green waste fees at the tip for all of Spring, not just for one weekend in September.
8. Allow residents to plant appropriate shade trees on verges in urban areas to reduce heat impacts in urban areas in the future.

Every dollar spent on disaster risk reduction, yields

Kathryn Maxwell

an estimated \$9.60 return on investment.

Alice Ansara on behalf of Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla would like to speak to Councillor Mayne's motion [NOM23/002 Upgrades to evacuation centres] at tomorrow's public access meeting.

We will be addressing:

1. The context of the Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla program
2. The importance of community led disaster resilience planning
3. The 4 priority areas for our community's resilience as identified by our recent community co-design workshops
4. How our learnings lead us to support Councillor Mayne's motion - with further emphasis on additional community led foci for disaster and emergency preparedness.

Our full presentation will be sent to you for publication by tomorrow morning.

Kind regards,
Alice Ansara

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Alice Ansara ([she/her](#))

Community Facilitator, Eurobodalla

On Yuin Country / Traditional Lands of the Walbunga, Brinja-Yuin and Djirringanj.

Fire to Flourish Program

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Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla

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Fire to Flourish - Presentation in Support of NOM23/002 - UPGRADES TO EVACUATION CENTRES - to Eurobodalla Shire Council on 25th July, 2023

Good morning Councillors, Council Staff and other members of our Eurobodalla community here today. I'm Alice Ansara and I am speaking in support of Councillors Mayne's motion regarding *Upgrades to Evacuation Centres*. I do this on behalf of the community-led Fire to Flourish program for which I work as a community facilitator.

That's a lot of times I've used the word Community in one paragraph - but I'm doing it to really drive home what our Fire to Flourish program is about - it's about centering our communities in our own disaster resilience planning. Who knows better than us what we experienced, what our strengths are, where are the gaps and what we need in order to be strong in the face of present and future disasters?

Briefly, some context on who we, Fire to Flourish, are in this Community. And I'll premise this by saying - we're a program that foregrounds indigenous ways of knowing and doing - and so it's important for us that I reiterate that we're on Brinja-yuin Country and give genuine thanks to the custodians of this place we all now call home.

Fire to Flourish is a community development and disaster resilience program - supported by Monash university and partnering with 4 bushfire affected LGAs across 2 states. Over the next 2 and half years in the Eurobodalla - we will test various ways of our community leading our own resilience planning - we've got 2.5 million dollars of philanthropic grant funding - on top of in-kind support from Monash university. Most importantly, we're growing connections that will strengthen our region's social capital - that is, the rich and valuable networks of relationships that are widely regarded as the key element in recovery from and resilience to disasters.



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We've just finished our first round of community participatory granting. This involved 8 diverse co-designers - ranging from a Yuin elder to a business chamber of commerce president - the manager of our region's indigenous rangers crew and one of your very own, a Shire Councillor. Diverse yes, but all deeply networked within their communities and they brought to the codesign process - the experiences, strengths, visions and resilience planning priorities of the people in their networks.

And here I'd like to directly address Councillor Mayne's motion:

Our codesigners consistently raised the strong advocacy that is needed - to ensure we are better prepared for future emergencies. Our community needs our local government representatives to tirelessly advocate to other agencies for improved emergency preparedness.

There was also much discussion of the state of the evacuation centres in the last bushfire crisis. We need upgrades of facilities which include formal evacuation centres and other community owned assets and spaces.

Our community codesigners likewise found that emergency signage and other such communication needs were lacking. To be better prepared we need significant improvements in this area - we looked to the Shoalhaven shire for that Council's work on Community information hubs and digital noticeboards.

In addition to the points that Councillor Mayne has raised - we'd like to share with you a summary of the 4 key disaster preparedness and resilience priorities identified through our community co-design process.

1. A key priority for our Eurobodalla communities is – Relationship with Place. We need access and connection to, and to care for Country. Disaster preparedness must be done in a way that centres Country (or if you'd prefer, the natural environment).

Relationship with Place - also requires having known and activated gathering spaces - places that act as 'common ground' both in and out of times of emergencies. We need to find ways to include in these places, those who are currently left out and isolated.

2. The second community priority - is around our collective health and wellbeing. To be resilient we need access to fundamental and resilient infrastructure and services - water, electricity, housing, transport, comms, food and health services. It was noted that this *must* extend beyond physical infrastructure - to the infrastructure of care - particularly mental health care and support.
3. Thirdly - it is essential to have good governance within our community. Our codesigners and their networks identified the need for transparency and communication; partnership between groups, agencies and communities; inclusion and equality of youth and elder voices and leadership succession planning.



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We want clear, honest and accessible communication - from services, from agencies, from Council, from authorities, from media and to and from each other in community.

4. And of course, for our fourth priority - we want disaster preparedness. Regenerative and evolving disaster plans - for all types and scales of our communities here in the Eurobodalla. We need to increase our region's social capital - that is, networks of relationships that foster responsibility and belonging and a generosity and reciprocity of our resources and our skills.

With the \$300 thousand dollars in funding that this community granting round has allocated - we've got 9 projects funded and we've tabled these project summaries today. We look forward to collaborating and sharing our learnings with Council and all agencies as we progress.

Thank you for giving us the time to speak today and again, we are eager to share our work within the community, so that we can better understand our own priorities and advocate for ourselves at all levels of government.



Community Granting in the Eurobodalla

Round 1 Summary



The Fire to Flourish work of testing and learning community led resilience building is done on Walbunja, Brinja-Yuin and Djirringanj Country. We aim to benefit Country and give thanks to the Yuin Nation for their long standing custodianship of these lands and waterways.

Introduction

In December of 2022, 8 Eurobodalla community co-designers met to begin the first round process of testing community-led participatory granting. That is, to feed into a shared understanding of our communities experiences in disaster, obstacles we face and visions for our future. Guided by this, the co-designers were to make decisions on how \$300k of funding would be granted to community projects.

The co-designers were recruited by the Fire to Flourish Community Team based on the characteristics of their diversity, their networks in grassroots organisations, their understanding of community strengths and challenges and their willingness and ability to collaborate in a group learning process.

Over 9 workshops, guided by Fire to Flourish staff, the co-designers



The **projects** funded are:

- 1 Right Fire Education For Youth** - An educational program for young people and their families focussing on Right Fire/Cultural Burning
- 2 Community Cooking and Sharing** - Resourcing and event coordination for an existing volunteer run food relief organisation
- 3 Community Governance Facilitation Training** - A training program for people involved in community governance
- 4 Repurposing for Resilience (RfR) Trailer** - A solar generated emergency trailer which is also to be used for community events
- 5 Native Foods and Farming** - A series of networking and educational events bringing together native food knowledge holders and farmers
- 6 Responsible and Positive Reporting** - Engagement with and research into how communities disproportionately affected by disasters receive emergency information
- 7 Community Owned Assets** - A report into the utilisation, accessibility and disaster readiness of community owned assets across the Eurobodalla.
- 8 Community Composting** - A feasibility study for large scale community composting
- 9 Community Team (Wreck Bay Model)** - A report into the unique fire brigade model of the Wreck Bay community and its relevance to isolated communities in the Eurobodalla

Over the course of the project's implementation - the evaluation of their benefit to our community will be guided by a series of **learning circles** that will serve to **network the projects and share the learnings** more broadly.

The projects will be implemented over late 2023 and into 2024. While they are all at different stages of maturity, they aim to have **long lasting benefits to our community** and can be built upon to **further develop our resilience to future disasters**. A more detailed outline of the projects are below.

For more detail on any of the projects, please contact the **Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla Team**

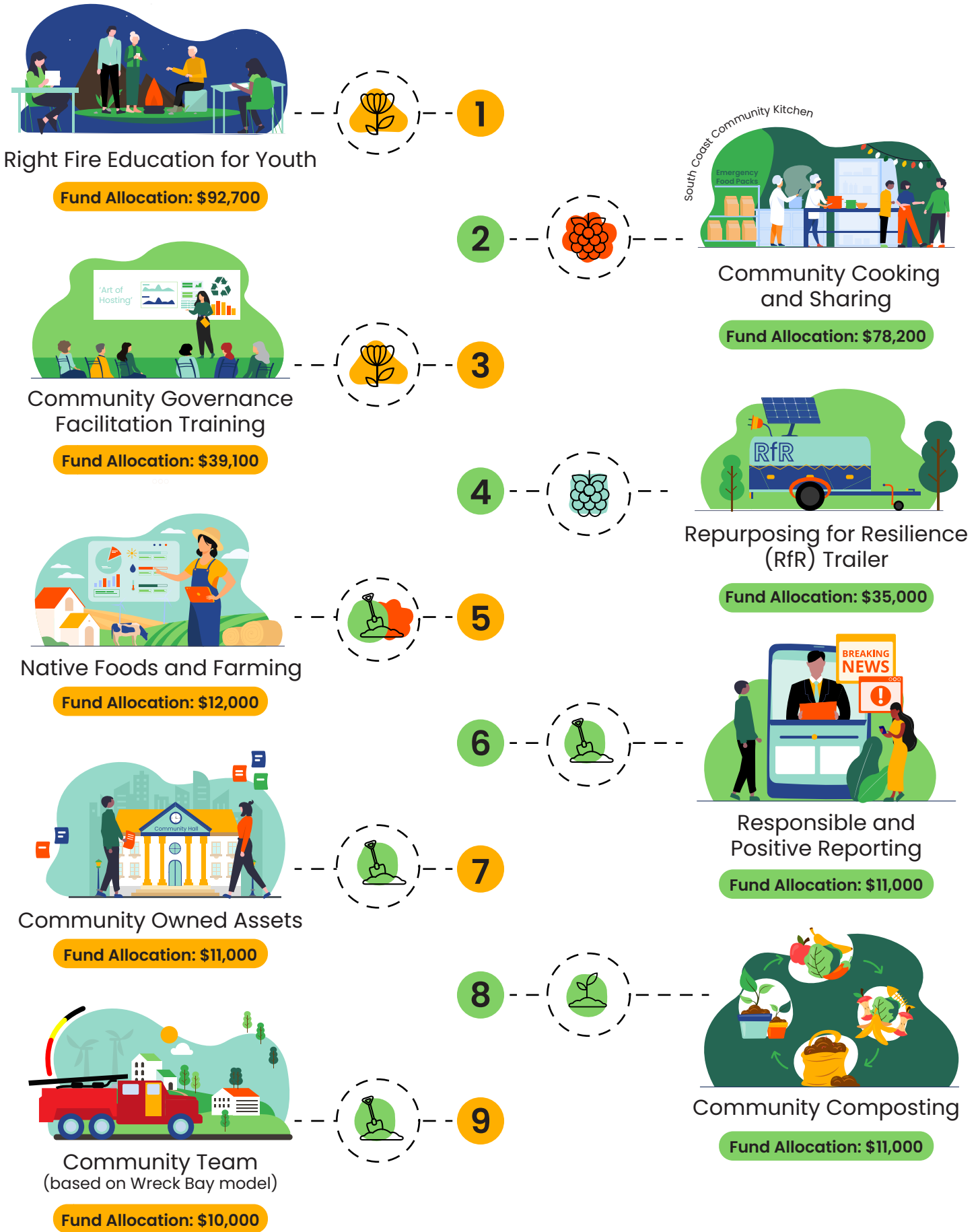
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Funded Projects



Maturity stages of the projects



Categories of the projects



I wish to present to Council in support of

NOM23/002 UPGRADES TO EVACUATION CENTRES

Firstly, 350 Eurobodalla wishes to express our gratitude for the tremendous efforts made by emergency workers and volunteers and council staff during the 2019/2020 bushfires.

It was an unprecedented situation and people did their very best in very difficult circumstances.

Tragically lives were lost, directly through fire and from the fires exacerbating medical causes like heart problems and lung conditions.

As a climate action group 350 Eurobodalla knew that we faced worsening bushfires, but we were shocked by the extent and ferocity of the fires.

It is very clear that carbon and methane pollution in the atmosphere is driving extreme weather events around the world.

The Emergency Leaders for Climate Action warn that the last three years of heavy rainfall have caused prolific growth of grass and bush lands, including in areas scorched in 2019/2020.

They call for governments at all levels to prepare for a dangerous fire season later in 2023.

After every emergency it is necessary to make a complete assessment of events and the responses made. It is always necessary to plan and prepare for future similar or even worse events.

350 Eurobodalla supports the recommendations of the BiBS study to upgrade emergency shelter preparedness in order to properly care for babies, infants and their families.

We also support the work of SHASA in upgrading community owned buildings so that they can serve as bushfire and heatwave havens.

These havens have solar power, backup generation and reverse cycle air conditioning with HEPA filters which creates a safe environment in a bushfire or heatwave emergency.

Every emergency shelter in Eurobodalla should be upgraded to this standard.

This is urgent and Council should drive the change. We will need state government assistance, but Council must make sure that it happens.

Allan Rees

ABE Public Forum Presentation to Council 25 July 2023 - NoM 23/02 Upgrades to Evacuation Centres

Good Morning,

I am presenting today as the Co-convenor of A Better Eurobodalla (ABE), a community forum working to achieve open, accountable and responsive government in Eurobodalla.

ABE has applied our principles of good governance to today's agenda, with specific reference to NoM 23/02 Upgrades to Evacuation Centres. ABE has taken a close interest in disaster preparedness and recovery in the wake of the catastrophic Black Summer bushfires, which have had major impacts on the Eurobodalla community and environment.

When ABE presented to the previous Council in June 2021 (copy attached to this presentation FYI) regarding disaster preparedness and recovery, it was clear that both our neighbouring LGAs of Shoalhaven & Bega Valley were significantly more advanced than the Eurobodalla Shire in their recovery and emergency preparedness planning. It is therefore timely to review the situation after the passage of another two years, and ascertain whether the situation has changed.

As part of responsibilities designated under the *NSW Emergency Services & Rescue Act 1989*, the General Manager of the relevant Council (or their staff nominee) chair the relevant Local Emergency Management Committee, which is responsible for producing the Local Emergency Management Plan in each area. It is therefore of note that the current edition of Eurobodalla Emergency Plan was created in 2016, with minor changes and updates to ABS statistics in 2019, and has not been reviewed in wake of the Black Summer fires, and nor does it contain a single mention of the word "pandemic". The plan also indicates it is required to be reviewed every 3 years, meaning it is already overdue for renewal. It therefore is an outdated, insubstantial generic document which continues to maintain anomalously low rankings for Eurobodalla bushfire risk and hazard compared to neighbouring LGAs, despite the catastrophic conditions and damage experienced in our region in the Black Summer fires.

In contrast, our northern neighbour's current Shoalhaven Emergency Management Plan was signed off in 2021, and has been updated to take account of lessons learnt in the Black Summer bushfire season, as well as recognising the potential for occurrence of pandemics. To our south, the current Bega Valley Emergency Plan was last updated in April 2021, and includes consideration of the implications of a pandemic.

Furthermore, given that the then Director Infrastructure's Resilience report to Council last September referenced nine natural disaster flood events since the Black Summer bushfires, it would be expected that the current Eurobodalla Shire Emergency Flood Plan would be a priority document for emergency preparedness in the shire. Such expectations are immediately dashed when the current plan is consulted, as it turns out that Volume 1 was prepared in 2013, with volumes 2 and 3 each being prepared in 2006. It is notable that Eurobodalla Emergency Flood Plan states that "*the plan is to be reviewed no less frequently than every 5 years*", so the plan has clearly failed its own benchmark. In the climate change-driven world we all now find ourselves, this an unacceptable situation and reflects poor governance of emergency preparedness.

Once again, our LGA neighbours Shoalhaven and Bega Valley have found it within their capacities to produce current flood management plans, a task which seems beyond governance capabilities in the Eurobodalla. The current volumes of the Bega Valley Flood Management Plan were signed off in March 2021, while the Shoalhaven plan is even more recent, with both its volumes having been authorised in October 2022.

So it doesn't seem to matter whether it is fire, flood or pandemic, the Eurobodalla's current emergency management documentation lags our neighbouring LGAs, and is significantly out of date in many respects. This apparent inability to regularly update current emergency management planning tools in the Eurobodalla is a critical governance issue which needs to be promptly addressed in order to both discharge legislative responsibilities and contribute to community confidence, well-being and resilience.

As outlined in ABE's June 2021 presentation to ESC, community involvement in disaster recovery and preparedness is a key objective of the overarching NSW Recovery Plan meant to guide efforts in the Eurobodalla and across the state. The following extract from the NSW Recovery Plan clearly embodies this aspect :

"Supporting self-help and strengthening the resources, capacity and resiliency already present within individuals and communities are the keys to successful recovery. Empowering communities to create their own solutions can improve overall social cohesion, and this is critical to sustainable recovery outcomes."(NSW Recovery Plan, page 14).

Despite this clearly articulated objective, little of substance has been achieved in disaster recovery planning in the Eurobodalla over the last 2 years. ESC has only prepared one Bushfire Action Recovery Plan in April 2020, which failed to explain how it was actually planning to achieve its stated objective to "*Build community resilience and capability*". The Eurobodalla Bushfire

Recovery Plan has never been updated, despite page 6 proclaiming “*This is a working document and is updated regularly*”.

In contrast to Eurobodalla’s internally focussed approach, Shoalhaven and Bega Valley Shires have continued to pursue their community focussed disaster recovery and preparedness processes outlined in ABE’s June 2021 presentation to Council. The intervening two years has seen significant progress in delivery of comprehensive and resilient disaster preparation, management and information tools, particularly in the Shoalhaven, where Shoalhaven Council’s decision to invest \$2 million of BLER funding into their Recovery into Resilience (RiR) project is delivering significant dividends.

The RiR project benefits the community by helping residents and visitors get better prepared for emergencies, be more resilient and have better access to accurate, timely and authoritative information in times of crisis. A key practical component is the provision of Local Information Hubs where communications and energy technology have been installed at 19 Council-owned halls and community centres across the Shoalhaven. The Hubs are linked to the Shoalhaven Emergency Operations Centre via satellite internet connection and powered via backup power from solar panels and batteries. This ensures the Hubs are not reliant on mobile phone towers or the power grid, which were major points of vulnerability in both Shoalhaven and Eurobodalla during the Black Summer Fires. The project made use of commercially available technology fitted and installed by local providers, thereby enhancing local business opportunities.

The Shoalhaven Council website also provides extensive and current emergency information, with comprehensive details of what needs to be done under various scenarios. It also includes a “Disaster Dashboard” which is updated in near real time to display the current status of potential emergency situations across the entire Shoalhaven. In contrast, emergency management pages on the ESC website are a very modest affair, essentially consisting of a series of links to external home pages of agencies such as the RFS and the SES, with no substantive indication of any Council involvement in emergency issues. It would be a trivial matter for ESC to at least provide direct links to Eurobodalla-relevant web pages on these external sites (such as the Community Protection Plans for Broulee and Guerilla Bay on the RFS website), making it so much easier for the community to access this information rather than having to trawl through the entire RFS website.

There are multiple opportunities currently available for Council to rectify the issues identified in this presentation, with interested and skilled local stakeholders having already done much of the groundwork necessary to facilitate realistic and achievable projects to boost community emergency preparation and resilience across the Eurobodalla. There is also a ready source of Federal funding available to undertake these projects as well as

other relevant initiatives via means of the Commonwealth Disaster Ready Fund, which is proving up to \$200 million per year for 5 years for funding relevant projects commencing in 2023. Round 2 funding applications will open in early next year, and ESC needs to ensure it takes advantage of this program.

Councillor Mayne's NoM today is a modest but welcome step in the right direction for Eurobodalla Council to address significant long running deficiencies in emergency preparedness and building community resilience, but much more remains to be done if we are to bring our shire's level of emergency preparation and community resilience up to a standard commensurate with the escalating hazards and risks posed to our community in the 21st century. Our neighbouring Councils have provided valuable templates of what can be achieved in this regard, and the Eurobodalla community looks to our Council to fulfil its legislated governance responsibilities and moral obligations to help us achieve these objectives.

Dr Brett Stevenson

Co-Convenor, A Better Eurobodalla

A Better Eurobodalla (ABE) presentation to the Eurobodalla Shire Council Public Access Session on Tuesday 1st June 2021

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address Council. I am presenting as Co-Convenor of A Better Eurobodalla (ABE), a community forum dedicated to having open and inclusive government in our region. Over the last few months, ABE has attended markets and other community gatherings across the shire which has given us the opportunity to talk to the community about what is important to them.

This presentation focuses on the issue of disaster preparedness and recovery and the role of the community in these activities after the 2019-2020 bushfires.

Council's response to the impacts of the "black summer" bushfires is outlined in the Eurobodalla Bushfire Recovery Action Plan April 2020. The Plan states that Eurobodalla recovery actions should be consistent with the NSW Recovery Plan, which promotes a community-led recovery approach as outlined in the following statement :

"Supporting self-help and strengthening the resources, capacity and resiliency already present within individuals and communities are the keys to successful recovery. Empowering communities to create their own solutions can improve overall social cohesion, and this is critical to sustainable recovery outcomes."(NSW Recovery Plan, page 14).

With this in mind, it is notable that the Eurobodalla Local Recovery Action Committee does not include any community members, instead consisting of 16 members drawn exclusively from government agencies, businesses and Council staff.

The NSW Recovery Plan also states that a Local Recovery Action Committee can establish Local Community Consultation Groups to enable members of the community, including people affected by the event and representatives from local organisations, to provide input to the recovery process. However, the Eurobodalla Recovery Plan makes no mention of any Community Consultation Groups. Indeed, the word "consultation" occurs only once in the Eurobodalla Plan, in relation to business. In addition, the words "community input" and "partnership" are also absent from the Eurobodalla Recovery Plan. How can the Eurobodalla community have a direct voice in the recovery process within such a structure?

The neighbouring Shoalhaven and Bega Valley areas were also badly impacted by the 2019-20 fires and have developed their own recovery plans. In contrast to the Eurobodalla, the Shoalhaven Recovery Action Plan emphasises "community input", stating that: *"Community input is the best way to inform Council and is the foundation of the Recovery Committee information flow.* In fact, the term "community input" is mentioned 4 times in the Shoalhaven Recovery Action Plan, but nowhere in the Eurobodalla Plan. Shoalhaven Council has also invited community members to join a working

ATTACHMENT

group to develop a Community-led Resilience Plan for the Shoalhaven, noting that *“Community-led planning enables local residents to create stronger, more vibrant and resilient communities, better able to respond to local challenges and opportunities.”*

In October 2020 the Shoalhaven Community Recovery Into Resilience Project (RRP) was initiated. This is Shoalhaven Council’s organizational response to the *Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements* and the *NSW Independent Inquiry into the 2020 Bushfires*. It also identifies community-led resilience as the foundation of a communities’ preparation for, response to, and recovery from, disasters and environmental challenges.

Through the Shoalhaven Community RRP, Council aims to develop partnerships with research and commercial providers to grow community resilience. Shoalhaven Council plans to coordinate the growth of community-led resilience and establish ‘Information Hubs’ by upgrading power and communication reliability of facilities across the Shoalhaven. The plan is being driven by Shoalhaven Council’s use of \$2 million in BLER funding to improve the resilience of power and communications infrastructure by the development of micro-grids in place of existing and fire-damaged power infrastructure, and delivering back-up communication connectivity through satellite digital communication.

The Bega Valley Local Recovery Action Plan is also focussed on community-led recovery, and features a Communications and Community Engagement Sub-committee as part of the Local Recovery Committee. This subcommittee developed the Bega Valley Together (BVT) framework aimed at creating a *“go to” space and network for bushfire recovery, news, information and community support. “BVT is our commitment to community-led recovery; to inform, assist, support and empower residents.”* Bega Valley ran town-hall-style community meetings in all impacted localities, with meetings streamed live online. This helped community members to engage on projects of high community value and interest such as community hall rebuilds and the greengroves program to revegetate environmentally significant areas. Opportunities for collaborative projects were identified and supported, and Bega Valley Council staff were upskilled in community engagement and collaboration within a recovery context. These projects were given practical support by Bega Valley Council using \$3 million in BLER funding to rebuild and retrofit community halls in Kiah, Wandella and Tumbarumba impacted by the Black Summer bushfires.

In contrast to these community-led and supported BLER projects, Eurobodalla Council has chosen to allocate \$5.25 million of BLER funding to a 10 year old walking trail concept plan which has never been formally endorsed by Council, and about which there has been no public consultation. This large allocation ignores telecommunication weaknesses in the Eurobodalla (e.g. South Durras) and significant emergency transportation and communication issues (e.g. Araluen Road). While Shoalhaven and Bega Valley are allocating

ATTACHMENT

their resources into building back better to enhance resilience after the fires, Eurobodalla continues with a “Business As Usual” tourism development.

In addition, Bega Valley Shire has community involvement embedded in its Disaster Relief Fund, established by means of an MOU in partnership with the local community group Social Justice Advocates of the Sapphire Coast (SJA). The Bega Fund has tax deductibility status, and is managed by a Committee co-chaired by Council and SJA. The management committee consists of 3 SJA representatives, 3 Bega Valley Council reps and 2 independent community reps. This community-focussed management committee contrasts with the Eurobodalla Shire Council Disaster Relief Fund, which is run in-house by Council and managed by a committee composed of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, General Manager and 2 community representatives.

Another area of contrast between the recovery practices of this council and our neighbouring councils is in the treatment of development fees for people rebuilding their homes destroyed by the fires. Both Shoalhaven and Bega Valley waive all Council development application fees, whereas Eurobodalla Council requires applicants to pay their fees in full, after which they are eligible for a rebate of “up to \$1,000”, leaving many of these applicants significantly out of pocket by thousands of dollars.

Today’s presentation by ABE has outlined several community-led approaches that are being employed by neighbouring councils to facilitate community engagement in developing and implementing disaster recovery and resilience solutions. These are helping to deliver tangible community benefits in the recovery process for our neighbouring shires. They are readily adaptable to the Eurobodalla, and could be applied in our Shire to ensure that our disaster preparedness and local recovery outcomes truly reflect the needs of our community.

Thank you for your attention.

Dr Brett Stevenson

Co-Convenor ABE

Presentation in Support of NOM23/002 - UPGRADES TO EVACUATION CENTRES - to Eurobodalla Shire Council on 25th July, 2023

Australian Breastfeeding Association's Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfire Project - BiBS study recommendations

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Good morning Mayor, Councillors, General manager and executive members of council. Thank you to Councillor Mayne for inviting me to speak today. I have some important research findings to share with you today, that if implemented will help families be better prepared and supported in the event of disaster in Eurobodalla Shire.

My name is Michelle Hamrosi. I am a GP, and the Community Engagement Officer for the Australian Breastfeeding Association's Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfire Project (we call it ABA's Bushfire Project for short). This project is funded by a federal government grant and was supported by the previous GM as well as the mayor and many councillors. Thank you for your support and for the councillors who have been part of our project so far.

ABA's Bushfire Project was set up after it was identified emergency planning in Australia for families with babies and toddlers in disasters was lacking. As a mum with three kids, I witnessed firsthand how challenging it was to evacuate on my own during the 2019-20 bushfires. I remember thinking 'What do I need to bring, where do we go that's safe and how are we going to get there together?' My youngest was just learning to walk. My head was foggy from stress and sleep deprivation. I had never been through anything like this, most of us hadn't.

Forming the first part of ABA's Bushfire Project, the Babies and Young Children in Black Summer Bushfires (or BiBS) study identified the challenges faced by the parents of very young children in emergencies, and what can be done to improve emergency responses in future to better support families.

In the BiBS study, we surveyed and interviewed 256 parents of children from newborn to four years old at the time of the Black Summer bushfires, and 63 emergency responders. Specifically, 23 of the interviews were focused on families in our shire.

The study revealed that caring for infants and young children during the bushfires had a profound effect on caregivers' experiences. Preparing to evacuate became more complex and logistically challenging, leaving many caregivers underprepared. The lack of evacuation plans and difficulties in packing essentials resulted in delayed evacuations and insufficient resources to care for children. Mothers, in particular, often found themselves alone with multiple small children and elderly family members during evacuations, while partners stayed behind to protect property or engage in emergency response activities.

Families that attended large evacuation centres faced challenges of keeping their children safe due to overcrowding, the presence of strangers and animals, and because there were limited resources for caring for children. Mothers prioritised their children's wellbeing over their own and often did not eat or drink properly. This was particularly concerning for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Two of the five pregnant women we interviewed fainted while queuing for food and assistance.

The BiBS Study Report makes 16 recommendations to improve emergency response, including evaluating existing plans through a 'young child lens' to see how they can be improved, creating emergency preparedness resources targeted at parents, and having a separate and supportive space in evacuation centres for families with very young children.

Particularly relevant recommendations to council include:

- The needs of very young children should be considered in evaluation of venues for suitability as evacuation centres. Based on our findings, council may wish to consider making available a number of smaller centres, with rooms or separate spaces for families with very young children.

Making large evacuation centres more child friendly

Caregivers of babies and toddlers should be prioritised for proactive assistance.

- Evacuation centres should provide a space for parents and caregivers of very young children separate from the general population.

- Child Friendly Spaces should also be provided so that children of all ages can be cared for and play safely while parents and caregivers attend to important needs and conversations on their own.

Clear communication prior to disaster

- Emergency preparedness materials and initiatives for families with very young children should be developed with detailed information on what to pack, and emphasis on early evacuation and prioritisation of evacuation to homes of family and friends rather than evacuation centres.
- Parents should be informed about which evacuation centres are more suitable for families with very young children.
- Social media messaging addressing the broad spectrum of possible emergency related issues for families of very young children should be prepared and shared via council social media channels.
- Communicating the above information prior/during disasters with parents/caregivers via social media as well as other avenues including council related newsletters, parent groups and other child-related organisations such as playgroups and preschools/childcare centres will assist in maximising parental engagement.

Note: as part of the project we are creating resources such as evacuation centre check lists, walk through safety checklists, evacuation kit checklists for families, relevant emergency messaging for families with infants etc

We need to do better in future emergencies

Our study highlights how it takes a village to care for each other during and after major disasters. It also highlights the importance of individual and community preparedness.

Now the BiBS Study has been completed, the second part of ABA's Bushfire Project is underway, that is working to implement the findings in Eurobodalla to increase community resilience. We have already connected with SHASA, the Red Cross, CWA, family support organisations, preschools and parents and have commenced discussions with them about how we can support them to improve their emergency planning and response. Given the central and vital role of local government in emergencies, we would very much like to work with the Eurobodalla Council also.

As we move forward in the Community Protection for Infants and Young children in Bushfire Emergencies project, I welcome continued collaboration with council and organisations working in disaster preparedness and

management. We will be running some workshops in the coming months and we welcome your involvement. I believe, with some relatively small changes, a large improvement in emergency response to the very young and their caregivers can be achieved.

Thank you