

MINUTES

Wollondilly Local Recovery and Resilience Committee

Date: 21 September 2020

Time: 3.00pm till 4.30pm

Venue: Via Microsoft Teams

Present and Apologies

Attendance	Present	Apology
Sharon Robertson, Community Member		✓
Sandra Harlor, Community Member	✓	
Catherine Stuart, Wollondilly Resilience Network		✓
Brodie Pitt-Owen		✓
Kerrie O'Grady, Picton CWA		✓
Stephen Swanepoel, St Stephens Thirlmere		✓
Christine Wilesmith, Community Links Wellbeing	✓	
Tanya Smith, Community Links Wellbeing	✓	
Michele Lanigan, Community Links		✓
Greg Dobson, Rotary		✓
Steve Moxon, Rotary		✓
Barry McConville, Rotary		✓
Kelli Bennett-Smith, Angus Taylor's Office	✓	
Peter McLaughlin, Nathaniel Smith's Office		✓
Ben Brungs, Resilience NSW		✓
Alison Morgan, Resilience NSW / GSC		✓
Vanessa Nieuwenhuis, Resilience NSW	✓	
Matt McFarlane, Resilience NSW		✓
Natasha Lowe, Resilience NSW		✓
Mark McMullen, Red Cross		✓
Jessie Huard, Red Cross		✓
Karen Akehurst, Red Cross	✓	
Karen Quinn, Salvation Army		✓
Mark Pepping, Wingecarribee Shire Council		✓
Charmaine Cooper, Wingecarribee Shire Council		✓
Danielle Lidgard, Wingecarribee Shire Council		✓
Jason Mitchell, Tharawal Land Council		✓
Superintendent Paul Fuller, Commander, Camden Police		✓
Vanesa Nievas, Regional Emergency Management Officer		✓
Geoff O'Brien, Picton Chamber		✓
Karen Zelinsky, St Vincent de Paul Society		✓
Donna Rogers, Southern Highlands Homeless Service		✓
Michael McKibbin, Southern Highlands Homeless Service		✓
Mayor Cr Matthew Deeth, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Cr Judith Hannan, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Cr Michael Banasik, Wollondilly Shire Council	✓	
Ben Taylor, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Ally Dench, Wollondilly Shire Council	✓	
Toni Averay, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓

Michael Malone, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Peter Wright, Wollondilly Shire Council	✓	
Rob Moran, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Natalie McMullen, Wollondilly Shire Council	✓	
Alex Stengl, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Mandy Marino, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Kevin Abey, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Kerrie Shelton, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Brianna Murray, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Chad Neilson, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Kerry Whitehead, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Sharon O'Regan, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Kersti Martin, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓
Kim McGuinness, Wollondilly Shire Council		✓

Agenda Item	Discussion, Decision, Recommendation	Responsible
1. Welcome	Ally Dench welcomed attendees and acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land (Gundagurra and Tharawal).	
2. Present & Apologies	Apologies noted.	
3. Previous Minutes & Actions Arising	<p>Michael Banasik advised that he has just phoned Peter McLaughlin and there was money for waste but has now closed. Someone from this group may be able to speak to Peter to see if the program can be extended. There was a cap but it would still assist.</p> <p>ACTION: Peter McLaughlin has referred on and awaiting on an answer.</p> <p><i>UPDATE: It was agreed by the Committee that this is a huge problem with the cleaning up of properties and that people are cleaning up themselves and are incurring injuries.</i></p> <p>Sandra Harlor reiterated that an update from the RFS for the next meeting to see what they can do with the dollars they have received to support properties that are fire impacted.</p> <p>ACTION: Rob Moran to follow up with the RFS.</p> <p><i>UPDATE: Rob has not had a chance to speak to the RFS.</i></p>	<p>Peter McLaughlin</p> <p>Rob Moran Peter Wright</p>
4. Update – Wollondilly Recovery Support Service – Community Links Wellbeing	<p>Tanya Smith provided an update:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Still a huge problem with the clean-up of properties, many residents are still doing it themselves and it is taking its toll on residents. ▪ Liaising with Natalie McMullen at Council regarding community projects and bringing in volunteers to help clean up properties. 	

- We have made inroads with Oakdale, with referrals and this increases every week. Neighbours have been assisting.
- The Outreach Survey is continuing and consistent referrals are coming in every week from different sources.
- There have been 86 referrals that are bushfire related with about half Wollondilly and half Wingecarribee. The majority are women and over 35 years old. Two thirds are Wollondilly areas predominately Bargo and Buxton.
- There is a considerable rise in mental health referrals, the more we check in with residents the more therapeutic it is for them.

Tanya noted that the recovery support service is funded for 12 months through Resilience NSW and the implementation of the service is nearing the end of the fifth month. Recovery processes can take longer than 12 months and the COVID Challenges will also impact further upon the recovery process. The recovery service is just meeting now with people that have decided to reach out and there are more people out there needing support. It is about walking beside residents on their individual journeys.

So many people have never accessed support and it is very overwhelming and confronting, it can take a while for people to talk about all of the issues. The recovery support services across the State and in particular the community support would like to push support beyond 12 months. The service is advocating for longer term support beyond 12 months The Recovery Support service is seeking the support of the Recovery and Resilience Committee in regards to this issue and an extension of funding. Ally Dench agreed it is taking a long while for people to reconnect, particularly with COVID and the recovery process is definitely long term. Council would support the view of an extension of funding for the Recovery support service. Cr Banasik advised that this issue came up at the Bushfire Workshops that people couldn't talk about it and then COVID occurred. This came up a number of times.

Natalie McMullen advised that at the forums people are only just hearing now about services. It can be a long way between hearing about services and then accessing them. An example is someone came in regarding financial support but had no other support, needed mental health support and we were then able to refer for support.

Karen Akehurst advised that the Red Cross Program is a 3 year program, as this can often be the length of time for some to come forward. . Ally advised that we can as a committee make a recommendation to support the

	<p>request for the recovery service to be extended for another 2 years, and refer this on to Resilience NSW for advice.</p> <p>Vanessa Nieuwenhuis advised Resilience NSW is aware programs can take longer than 12 months to reach people and have impact. It is something Resilience NSW is hearing from across the state and there will be a review.</p> <p>ACTION: Vanessa will take this on notice and advise the team. It was agreed now is the time to advocate to ensure momentum is not lost.</p> <p>It was recommended supporting the ongoing work of the Recovery Support service and acknowledged that recovery goes well beyond 12 months and request Council to support the recommendation to advocate for an extension of at least another 2 years.</p> <p>Cr Banasik noted that he will talk to the Mayor to include in the Mayoral Minute.</p> <p>Tanya thanked the committee for their support.</p> <p>Peter Wright enquired in regard to the Community Recovery Officers that are funded for a year, including Natalie McMullen’s position, are we asking for too much if we request extensions of their contracts as well, as 12 months is also not enough for Council. We will need to lobby and advocate for additional funding from Resilience NSW.</p> <p>It was agreed. Ally noted Natalie McMullen’s work in the community and her efforts supporting this group and the community. This recommendation was supported by the committee. Peter noted we are going into another summer, if the provisions and services ceased we would have to go through the whole process again. We need to be prepared.</p> <p>Tanya agreed and emphasised the knowledge and expertise would be lost if everyone was stood down.</p> <p>Ally noted that this is the new norm, the recovery and unprecedented weather patterns is what we are expecting. These positions can help the community to be better prepared.</p> <p>Sue Mossman agreed that you have already established and developed a trust and it takes more than one year to build this.</p> <p>Vanessa advised the Recovery Coordinator positions are currently funded from Resilience NSW and we receive monthly reports that get assessed at senior Executive</p>	<p>Vanessa Nieuwenhuis</p>
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	<p>level, so this is definitely on our agenda and the issue is being reviewed.</p> <p>Sandra Harlor asked do we broaden the scope of what we are funding, should it be disaster in general or does it need to be specific.</p> <p>Vanessa advised the Recovery support service and recovery coordinator’s positions should be highlighted as a priority, this is specifically directly related to bush fire recovery. It is okay to ask for a broader scope, however the current funding is bush fire programs. The budget to extend this program is currently underway specifically targeted at bush fire.</p> <p>ACTION: They are separate things and I will take on notice and see what they would recommend to give additional advice.</p> <p>Ally advised that we will advocate for the extension for the bush fire recovery support service and recovery officers but put a note that there is concern and we would like to expand disaster recovery issues for the future as well.</p> <p>ACTION: Mayoral Minute to advocate for the extension of the Recovery Support Service and the Recovery Coordinator role with Council for a further 2 years.</p> <p>Karen Akehurst noted that a resilient community is a resilient community regardless of what the disaster is.</p> <p>Sue Mossman advised that the position that Natalie is doing is looking at other areas of funding and assisting the community with areas of funding.</p> <p>Tanya Smith noted that the work we are doing with Natalie has opened up more doors in the community and having someone to refer back to in Council has been great.</p>	<p>Vanessa Nieuwenhuis</p> <p>Ally Dench & Natalie McMullen</p>
<p>5. Wollondilly Council Updates</p> <p>a. Community Debriefing sessions</p> <p>b. Update on Recovery Coordinator activities</p> <p>c. Greater Sydney Region Recovery Committee</p>	<p>a. Community Debriefing sessions; and</p> <p>b. Update on Recovery Coordinator activities</p> <p>Natalie McMullen provided an update:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waste removal is a big issue and has been raised in all forums, particularly around clearing fallen trees. Most of the dangerous trees have been felled now. The issue is chopping them up and in some cases removing them. Some families are indicating they are still spending time every weekend chopping fallen and felled trees. ▪ Liaising with Resilience NSW through Vanessa Nieuwenhuis. We are looking at getting additional funding for accredited Chainsaw Operator courses. This will be for community members to begin with. I 	

	<p>have people interested in this project. There would be an expectation that people that have done the chainsaw course would assist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bargo RFS indicated that they may be willing to assist with chopping trees. However wear and tear on chainsaws is high when chopping burnt wood. I am investigating options to assist with providing chainsaw blades to the RFS.▪ Ally Dench suggested that people may want to volunteer with sharpening of the chainsaw blades.▪ I have spoken to one family at Oakdale that have been chopping their trees and they are happy to keep for firewood. I have spoken to a man at Bargo who is worried about the wood just sitting there as the upcoming fire season is approaching.▪ Currently we have held three forums with the first commencing at Oakdale with around 60 community members attending. Their main concern was regarding preparedness to prevent future fires in the area. The residents who run the Post Office have been very helpful with connecting with the community.▪ Bargo was a much smaller forum, we had some families who lost homes at Bargo. We received great feedback, people were frustrated having to share their stories multiple times. One man has not recovered at all, he feels like he has barely started.▪ Warragamba was a small group but again we received great feedback around the impact and indirect impact and again we had a man talking about a family who can now be referred for the Youth Voices project.▪ We received feedback from Cr Gould that we should connect with people at Yerranderie, so on the weekend I attended the Yerranderie Community Meeting at The Oaks. The stand out quote we received was “We weren’t impacted by the flames themselves which is probably a good thing, but it’s also a bad thing because it means you don’t get any help”.▪ Ally Dench agreed that this should be a stand out comment in the Activate 2020 Plan.▪ I will encourage him to reach out for grants as he is one of the business owners who feels like although they were impacted, other businesses were worse off so he hasn’t reached out for support.▪ National Parks and Wildlife were heavily criticised at Oakdale yet the Yerranderie community were favourable with the National Parks.▪ On 2 September we launched the Greater Sydney Outreach Survey which is a partnership between Wollondilly Shire Council, Service NSW and Resilience NSW. The survey was sent to 155 people and so far we have had 20 responses. There were similar numbers from the Wingecarribee areas in their first round. The email will get sent out multiple times. The Red Cross have contacted 5 people by telephone. 8 were flagged for follow-up with me, there were mental health	
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	<p>issues and rebuild issues and issues with clearing and fence replacement. There have been several referrals for the recovery support service. We are getting great feedback about council's support since the fires and good insight into different recovery issues. The survey will be open for another 6 weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vanessa Nieuwenhuis advised that a reminder email is going out this week and then that will stay open until after we check the surveys, so anyone who hasn't completed the survey will receive a phone call from Red Cross. ▪ September is Get Ready Month and there has been a lot of work done on social media distributing get ready information and promoting RFS Get Ready events. We are registered to become a Get Ready Council and we will have our own Get Ready Logo and we will have access to material for Rates Notices, digital resources and physical resources. ▪ Ally Dench and I met with Angus Taylor MP and he was interested to hear how the Wollondilly communities were recovering after the fires. ▪ We have concluded the Children's Voices Program. 32 children and parents attended across the 5 workshops. We received great feedback and are looking forward to the book that comes out. ▪ We have received additional grant funding from Wollondilly North Rotary for school children - late primary and high school- and we are producing a short film with the young people's stories and insights. We have spoken with Short Black Films who have a lot of experience with people with mental health, youth and indigenous communities to film and edit the video. The project will run across two Saturdays and be held at Appin Scout Park. Families have fed back that their young people need additional support and they have indicated they intend on registering their children to attend. Psychologists from SWSPHN will be involved to provide mental health support and identify children and young people who require additional follow-up. ▪ I have come up with an idea for Council's Community Nursery and have spoken to Ibrahim Muharrem, Council's Sustainability Coordinator. Residents are wanting additional plants as they are saying that their gardens are looking desolate. Ibrahim has made available an additional 20 plants for people who were impacted by fires. He is looking at the needs for each individual family. The first family collected their plants last week. ▪ Working in collaboration with the Recovery Support Service to support several families. Some families we have spoken with were initially reluctant to access services but have now agreed to be referred to services for support. Council have referred several families to the RSS for case management. 	
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	<p>c. Greater Sydney Region Recovery Committee</p> <p>Ally Dench advised there hadn't been a meeting since we last met. There is a restructure being planned for the Regional Recovery Committees and further information is yet to be received. Vanessa Nieuwenhuis agreed that there is nothing additional to report but we are expecting communication to go out this week to describe what the change will look like and Terms of Reference. Our Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee is expected to continue as it works really well and is a great sharing between all LGA's.</p>	
<p>6. Community Agency Updates as required</p>	<p><u>Sue Mossman - WReN</u></p> <p>Not much to update other than we are having consultations via Zoom with anyone who wants to input into the Wollondilly Have Your Say process. We will provide more details as we progress.</p> <p><u>Karen Akehurst, Red Cross</u></p> <p>The main message to remind people is the Red Cross Grants close at the end of this month. Anyone that has not come forward they have nine days to do so. There is a new grant under development but we don't know too much about this as yet so watch this space.</p> <p>We are now thinking about anniversaries that may be in the planning. We need to speak with Natalie McMullen at Council in regard to coming face to face in regard to preparedness.</p> <p>Red Cross have been attending all of the bush fire forums and well done Council you are doing a great job.</p> <p><u>Christine Wilesmith, Community Links Wellbeing</u></p> <p>No update at this point in time.</p> <p><u>Kelli Bennett-Smith, Angus Taylor's Office</u></p> <p>Ally Dench thanked Kelli for facilitating Angus Taylor's meeting with Natalie McMullen.</p> <p>Kelli advised that there was an announcement of funding last Friday for an additional \$145,000 in Bushfire Grant funding from the Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grants Program. Both the Thirlmere Festival of Steam and the Mermaids Pool and Tahmoor Canyon Walks secured \$72,500 for each project.</p>	

	<p>Telstra have agreed to install a tower at Yerranderie.</p> <p><u>Vanessa Nieuwenhuis, Resilience NSW</u></p> <p>Vanessa noted that we have talked about outreach and recovery support services and the committee. We are still awaiting Category D funding which we are hoping to see shortly, watch and see. There was additional funding provided to Council previously. Each Council get a sum of money, which will be offered as community grants for events in the area. Vanessa will provide a heads up when we know. Hopefully this will be timely when some areas are having their 12 month anniversary.</p> <p>Ally Dench advised we will keep the funding in mind and have some projects ready.</p>	
<p>7. COVID-19 a. Emerging Issues</p>	<p>Sandra Harlor noted that the end of the Job Seeker payment will have an impact on our bush fire affected families.</p> <p>It was agreed that this adds to the layers of complexity on how it is impacting our bushfire affected communities.</p> <p>Natalie advised that the COVID restriction impact on bushfire events planned for the end of the year and the family fun day that Council is supporting with Kim Hill at Buxton is looking at having an impact.</p> <p>Ally Dench agreed that this will be a huge impact as people are looking forward to those events. Council's Events Team are looking at creative ways so that events can still happen.</p> <p>Peter Wright agreed, they are switching the Doggy Day out event to an online format.</p> <p>Cr Banasik noted that with the 12 month anniversary, a couple at Bargo had rent through their insurance and then it will run out. We need to be wary that most insurers only give you 12 months free rent. They may be okay as they are getting that and job keeper but when this runs out, problems will occur.</p> <p>Ally Dench asked Vanessa Nieuwenhuis if she was aware of this.</p> <p>Vanessa advised that yes Resilience NSW are aware and it depends upon what insurance you had whether it was 6 months or 12 months, we are aware and we are watching. We recommend getting in contact with our recovery support services and refer people in need.</p>	

	<p>Karen Akehurst advised that there is some high level discussion around this and in particular on the south coast in tourist villages where there is no short term accommodation because of holiday lets. This could be a problem as their 12 month anniversary could fall on New Year's which is the holiday period.</p> <p>Ally asked Karen if the Red Cross could assist with extending grants.</p> <p>Karen advised there may be a hardship grant but she hadn't been briefed on it, it may have a lot of flexibility on it. Karen noted that we have used bushfire money to fund 50 pods to address this problem. There is still something like \$170million set aside, it is being strategically dispersed.</p> <p>Cr Banasik asked Peter Wright to remind the community of the Red Cross services in the next community newsletter.</p> <p>ACTION: Peter Wright to remind the community of the Red Cross services in the next community newsletter.</p> <p>Tanya Smith is working with Habitat for Humanity who have temporary housing and the reestablishment grant from the Red Cross can assist. Habitat is looking at ways of reducing costs, looking at making it more affordable. The support service is talking to a man with quite a few caravans who may be able to assist.</p> <p>Natalie McMullen advised that only one family is quite advanced with their building, other ones are awaiting DA's. Some people have bought new homes. They will run out of rental assistance soon.</p> <p>Sue Mossman advised that we don't see this as isolated to 2020, this will be a future occurrence. The things that would have assisted is if we could have people remain in their community. It would be a wise idea to look at recommendations from this group as to where can we be prepared and have pods/small houses on standby.</p> <p>Vanessa advised that the CO's will be looking at the recovery plan and that will assist with the Emergency Management Plan and that is something that we can keep on our radar for when that work commences.</p>	<p>Peter Wright</p>
<p>8. General Business</p>	<p><u>Anne Leadbeater's report</u></p> <p>Christine Wilesmith asked if Council will be looking at the recommendations from Anne Leadbeater's report.</p>	

	<p>Ally Dench advised that yes a report will be tabled at Council once Anne provides a list of recommendations and we will be putting actions against the recommendations. This will be a public document.</p> <p>Cr Banasik noted that we will get Natalie McMullen to attend a Community Forum and present the recommendations. Community Forums are currently online.</p> <p>Ally advised that we did this after the 2016 storm event with Ken Moroney and Dave Owens with around 50 recommendations being presented and acted upon.</p> <p>Natalie McMullen advised that we have the same questions that Anne has been asking at the forums on Council's "have your say" section on Council's website. This is for people who could not attend a forum to have their opportunity to complete as well. The link to this is: https://www.yoursay.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/</p>	
<p>9. Next Meeting</p>	<p>Meeting Closed 4.23pm</p> <p>The Committee agreed that meetings are to be held every 4 weeks and the next Meeting will be Monday 26 October 2020, 3.00pm via Microsoft Teams.</p>	