

**Strategic Policy Paper**  
**Empowering ‘Stay or Go’**

**Consideration of the Welfare of the Community  
during Bushfire in Western Australia**

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for the

**2001**

Executive Leadership Program

of the

Australasian Fire Authorities Council

Australian Institute of Police Management

This assignment is a requirement for the Australasian Fire Authorities Council and the Australian Institute of Police Management Executive Leadership Program 2001. The views and opinions interpreted or expressed by the author are not those of the organisations described or that of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia.

# Note

## This is PART A

### of a two Part Document

#### **Important Footnote :**

This report has been updated in view of the recent **New South Wales wildfires of December 2001 and January 2002**. The intentions of the policy and process have been tested against the protocols adopted by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales Police Service and the challenges that these organisations faced. (Brinkworth & Sullivan pers comms). This policy review and accompanying documents have been tested in desktop against these wildfire events. I am grateful to officers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service for his input to enable closure of this review.

## □ **Executive Summary**

Within Western Australia, no clearly defined policy or legislation exists for the management of communities threatened by natural and technical disasters. For fire, provisions for the removal of persons exist under the Bush Fires Act (1954) and Fire Brigades Act (1942) but with intention related to internal structural fires. Other emergency service workers have no authority and no dedicated emergency service legislation exists in Western Australia.

Currently, Policy Statement Number 5 of the State emergency Advisory Committee (SEMAC) on Bush Fire Evacuation (1995) is under review. A position paper on community safety and evacuation during wildfires has been published by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC 2001) and descriptor legislation is being considered for the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia.

The Office of the Crown Solicitor of Western Australia has also commented on the requirement for clear policy and legal support out of concerns for liability should authority be used or not be used.

Additionally, the continued adoption of forced or directed evacuation and relocation, or the adoption of informed choice by individuals, in threatened communities, continues to be applied inconsistently within services, yet in similar situations.

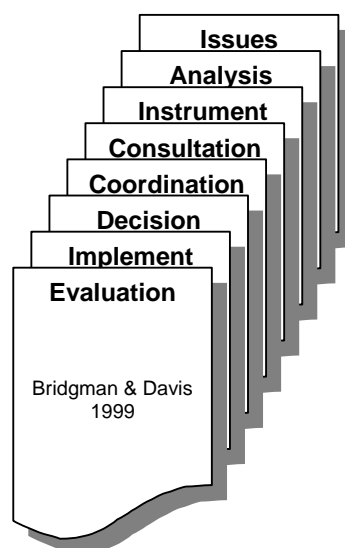
An environmental scan reveals that across Australia, a number of agencies have intended to empower the community through informed choice, however practice, policy and legislation remains dictatorial rather than addressing community and service needs. In the United States, the implementation of well developed and practiced evacuation strategies is often the norm during wildfire and is considered as best possible practice during situations of doubt, which is the case most of the time. The debate of personal responsibility

versus liability in a diverse and unpredictable environment suggest that policy needs to be duty orientated but flexible.

The Strategic Policy Paper explores the pathways from an autocratic, high risk approach to community management to that of informed choice with low risk and determines the requirements to achieve this. The policy review has indicated that acceptable community management cannot be achieved through legislation or a single empowered individual or agency alone, and requires full consultation, agreement, identification of responsibility, marketing and project management to be successful. This has not been achieved in Australian mainland states to date and the concept of using 'force' to remove those perceived to be at risk, so successfully adopted in the United States, appears to be the focus of debate amongst emergency services and communities within Western Australia.

With the suggested policy identified, the beneficial pathways have been developed to provide guidance in legislative descriptors as well as enabling the adoption of operating procedures by responsible agencies in the field.

*Bridgman and Davis (1999) describe an 'Australian Policy Cycle' that describes the processes of policy development within the Australian political landscape. This paper has paralleled the steps of the cycle to ensure that the best possible practice in policy development is explored.*



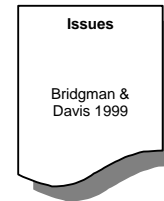
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B	AFAC Position Paper : Community Safety and Evacuation During Bushfires
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# 1. Identification of Key Issues and Problems



## 1.1 Policy Background

The emergency management arrangements across Australia differ in intention, definition and process (Pobar 2000). The demand from communities however, to ensure awareness, preparation, survivability and recovery from incidents, without community discrimination is the same (De Marchi 1995).

In Australian states, legislative descriptors outline management arrangements that describe and empower public safety agencies to plan, determine and implement community well-being, specifically community information, evacuation and relocation (Emergency Management Act VIC 1996, State Counter Disaster Act QLD 1975, State Disaster Act SA 1980 and State Emergency and Rescue Management Act NSW 1989).

### 1.1.1 Legislation

Within Western Australia, the only guiding legislative principle in relation to community welfare refers to evacuation and exists within the Bush Fires Act (1954) and Fire Brigades Act (1942). This authority is granted to individual officers who utilise the powers if it is believed that individuals were at life risk as a result of fire.

The original intention of these powers however related directly to residents who were identified within the enclosure of the structure with the origin of the hazard and did not fully consider the procedures should they be applied to wildfire incidents.

No other emergency service legislation exists in relation to community management during disaster in Western Australia.

After major incidents, when community confusion, confrontation and personal risk is experienced, debate often ensures that the 'evacuate or stay' arguments involve Ministerial interests and can result in informal (Neerabup Fire, Fire and Emergency Services Authority 2001) and formal investigation (Bellevue Chemical Fire, Parliamentary Enquiry in progress).

Recent opinion from the Crown Solicitors Office of Western Australia (2000) debates the definitions described under the acts and concludes that the powers to evacuate are present, however, question liability should the powers be used or not be used within a range of hazards and circumstances.

### **1.1.2 Existing Policy**

As a result of these concerns, the State Emergency Management Advisory Committee (SEMAC) tasked the Fire and Emergency Services Authority to review the Bush Fire Evacuation Policy (SEMAC 1985, Appendix 1) and subsequently, the representative body of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) published its position paper on 'Community Safety and Evacuation During Bush Fires', in 2001 (Appendix 2). More recently, a formal paper, reflecting the position of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council has recently been endorsed by the joint Police Commissioners forum (AFAC, Gledhill 2001).

The West Australian Policy has not fully considered an environmental scan, benchmarking of best practice and the requirement for drafting instructions for proposed legislative authority to manage the community in emergency incidents in the future.

Additionally, the present policy appears to be 'authoritarian', that is they describe direction and do not adequately consider the complex planning and provision of information and choice, particularly by those with pecuniary interests, a practice legally defined in some Australia states with respect to

natural events such as wildfire and cyclones. This evolution of this approach however has been as a result of considered research in Australia, particularly in wildfire (Petris and Potter, 1995). The present policy also does not fully consider the studies of human behavioral needs when threatened by industrial and natural hazards.

### 1.1.3 Problem Statement

**The policy guiding Police, Emergency Services and Community in their actions including evacuation and relocation during wildfire in Western Australia is inadequate.**

## 1.2 Impact on Organisational Performance

### 1.2.1 Community Needs

De Marchi (1995) describes a diagnostic tool in identifying uncertainty in environmental emergencies. His checklist (Table 1) describes types of uncertainty that create an awareness of the multi faceted reality of contingencies and crisis allowing for focus on policy development. These types of uncertainty are :

<b>Uncertainty</b>	<b>Legal</b> <b>Moral</b> <b>Societal</b> <b>Institutional</b> <b>Proprietary</b> <b>Situational</b>
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**Table 1 : De Marchi's types of uncertainty (1995)**

The requirements of the community during natural disasters are well researched. Most studies are inconclusive and describe extremes of public behavior whether prepared or not prepared for threat (Massood 1995, Milne 1977, Quarantelli 1980). In a study on human behavior in disaster in Australia, (Abrahams and Price 1984) determined that regardless of the levels of preparedness or understanding individuals often fantasise about their survivability in bush fire until directly threatened. Once threatened, the reality of loss of property or even life is immediate and often confusion results in irrational actions, often increasing the risk.

Stallings (1991) argues that with clear and concise information prior to disaster, adequate community warnings and the philosophy that residents must stay, defend and survive the attack on themselves and property, a community will develop hardiness and resistance with increased preparation and that this will grow and ultimately end the need for evacuations.

Table 2 describes the identified community needs from these readings and their level of development within Western Australia.

<p><b>Community Needs</b></p> <p>(Bush Fire Service 1954, State Emergency Management Advisory committee 1985, Various Authors, references)</p>	
Safe Havens and Refuges	Not Identifiable
Community information	Well Established
Community Warning Systems	Not Established
Community behavior and needs	Well Researched

**Table 2 : Addressing Community Needs**

### 1.2.2 Emergency Service Needs

Clearly, emergency services require a comprehensive process that identify operational procedures, backed by policy, supported by legislation.

Fire, Police and Emergency Services require a 'field tool' that allows incident controllers to readily identify communities at risk, warn them and then propagate procedures and advice across agencies and communities.

In order to do this, the decision to adopt broad statements such as ...*'People protect houses and houses protect people'*.. and ...*'communities at risk from bush fires should be allowed and encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety'*... (AFAC 2001) require careful consideration against the responsibilities of the services as described in legislation.

These policy statements should be clear and concise to allow for the development of the field tools.

The legislative descriptors for evacuation during fire in Western Australia have been described in Section 1.1.1. The Office of the Crown Solicitor of western Australia however has raised concerns regarding liability should the authority be enacted, or not enacted resulting in loss of life.

In his review of Western Australian Legislation, Bowden (2001) identified that emergency services personnel operating in the field under the Fire and Emergency services Act (1997) are to exercise their powers and in turn mitigate their liability by recognizing their duty under the legislative descriptor of the Act.

This duty is described in Table 3.

## **FESA's Legislative Duty**

(Bowden 2001)

**Duty to respond to an emergency call.**

**Duty to fight a fire in a reasonably competent manner.**

**Duty to take all reasonable care not to create any additional danger.**

### **Table 3 : Legislative Duty of emergency responders in Western Australia**

The challenge to the services is to describe legislation that further defines these principles or alternatively, not describe the legislation any further.

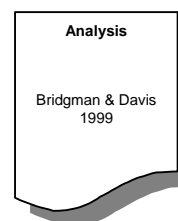
Table 4 describes the present status of Procedures, Policy and legislation in Western Australia.

<b>Fire Service Procedures</b>	
Field Procedures	Not Developed
<b>Policy</b> (State Emergency Management Advisory Committee 1985,)	
Reference to Planning	Planning Strategy confused
Defined Responsibility	Not Defined
Defined Resources	Not Identified
Performance Measures	Not Identified

<b>Legislation</b> (Fire Brigades Act 1942, Bush Fires Act 1954, Office of the Crown Solicitor 2000, Australasian Fire Authority Council 2001 )	
Empowering Legislation  Liability Terminology	Limited Powers, Umbrella Legislation does not Exist Crown Law Concerns Defined, not adopted

**Table 4 : Addressing Service Needs**

## 2. Environmental Analysis



### 2.1 National and International trends

Camp (1989) in Kouzmin et al. (1999) defines bench marking as ‘ the continuous process of measuring products, services and practices against the toughest competitors or those companies recognised as industry leaders, (that is)... the search for industry best practice that will lead to superior performance.

Critical components (2.1.3) were identified as a result of the review of community and service needs that reflected ‘best practice’ in managing communities under threat. A study was conducted of the arrangement of the mainland states of Australia with similar wildfire threat. The study involved scanning each state for reference to the critical components. This comparative benchmarking was used to identify the performance of Western Australia and other states. Comparative benchmarking and investigation of these policies, plans and strategies is likely to facilitate the identification of pathways required to achieve the stated strategic intention.

The available information identifying the arrangements in various local government agencies across the world is diverse. The adoption of the principles of community welfare management arrangements in the United States was also investigated with the State of California being chosen (Office of Emergency Services 1998), not only for its exposure in earthquake preparation and response management but having recently developed support arrangements with Australian firefighting agencies for wildfire.

### **2.1.1 Pecuniary Interest**

Specific legislative description exists within the Country Fire Authorities Act (1958) that prohibits the removing of any person having a pecuniary interest in, or in any goods or valuables on, any land, building or premises (CFA Act S31(4)). Similar wording is found in the Metropolitan Fire Brigades act (1958).

'Pecuniary' is not defined in the legislation however is defined by the concise Macquarie Dictionary (1992) to mean .... *'consisted of or given or exacted in money or pertaining to money'*.

As a result, any person who has claim to any item or property through monetary ownership at a location cannot be forcibly removed. The legislation however does not describe the prohibition of a person moving into a hazardous environment that is the location of their pecuniary interest.

The freedom of choice described by this legislation could be detrimental to the role and duty of fire and emergency services. In fact, there is some concern that accepting pecuniary interest can impede the basic principles of 'duty of care' expected of the emergency services (Holt 2000).

The Victorian State Emergency Act (1986) however has recently been amended to allow for these interests to be over ruled once a 'State of Disaster' has formally been declared (Section 24).

Within Western Australia, the expected duties of fire and emergency services workers as legally interpreted in the FESA Act may be in direct conflict with the formal recognition of pecuniary interest and adoption of procedures that allow for residents to possibly endanger themselves.

### **2.1.2 Authority, Direction and Individual Choice**

The expectations of government service from the community are apparent in community counseling after threatening incidents. While the ideal strategy is that communities themselves take responsibility for their well being, post incident analysis often show that the community in reality expect that all possible preparation, warning and welfare be provided by the relevant agencies, in particular local government.

In his report to the executive director of local government in Western Australia, on the role of local government in cyclone and flood events, Vickery (2000) identified deficiencies in the functions of emergency management arrangements particularly in respect to local government. He noted that the community turned to the representatives of local government first for advice and support.

Vickery (2000) also identified the lack of appropriate emergency management legislation within Western Australia and noted its failing was in the immediate assistance in resources to ensure the welfare of the survivors immediately after the event and the delay in identifying funding sources for recovery.

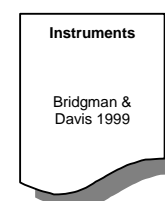
The report also identified the outcomes of a cyclone event (Cyclone Vance March 2000) where 116 homes were destroyed, 320 severely damaged with

only minor injuries and no lives lost. It is debatable as to whether this is a measure of the community's preparedness.

Of further significance was a presentation by the executive officer of the Mackay Local Government Counter disaster Committee (Preston 2000). He identified 'the key to successful counter disaster management' when describing the local community's response and recovery from severe flood events in 1998.

His report identifies the extent that the local government was committed. In fact, the local government had identified the risks faced by the community and not only prepared the community but had informed the community of the emergency management arrangements to allay any apprehension. He cited the Queensland Counter Disaster Act (1975) as providing the basis for planning arrangements that were integrated at local, district and state level. He welcomed the fact that the District and State Counter Disaster Committees assisted and supported the local authority but at no time assumed 'control' of the community. Further In measuring the performance, the Queensland Government has described a number of measurable outputs and include the extent that the dedicated Department of Emergency Services has assisted local government in their preparations (Dept. of Emergency Services 1999).

### 2.1.3 Determining Best Practice



While organisations describe the intent of their policy and legislation, their effectiveness and efficiency is not easily interpreted. In many cases, hazard management agencies attempt to develop performance indicators for the particular hazard of their agencies expertise, however the approach is inconsistent even amongst like agencies. Table 6 details the extent the identified critical components of managing community welfare during wildfire

might be indicative of best practice. It is reflective of Community and Service needs described in Table 2 and 4.

<b>Critical Component</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
<b>Risk Management Program</b>	Adoption of Risk Management Standard Diversity in Programs Programs available across the community Programs resourced and supported Performance of programs measured
<b>Communication Plan</b>	Plans incorporating : Community Warnings and alerts Information Lines
<b>Welfare Plan</b>	Local Emergency Management Plans Identified Refuges Community Support Arrangements Fiscal Support
<b>Legislation</b>	Umbrella legislation across services Duty of Care and negligence defined Power of agencies and officers defined
<b>Clear Policy</b>	Reflects legislation Describes responsible agencies Identifies resources Defines decision making structures Falls within State and or Federal Policy Positions
<b>Field Procedures</b>	Allow for clear determination by Incident Controller Describe actions to be taken Identify responsible agencies/persons Identify resources
<b>Performance Measures of a prepared community</b>	The extent that the community are : Aware of the risks Taken action to minimise the risks Are prepared fro the hazard Know how to react to the Hazard Know how to recover

**Table 5 : Critical Components of Best Practice**

#### **2.1.4 Comparative Benchmarking : Initial findings**

##### **a) National**

Preliminary comparative benchmarking across Australia indicates that the umbrella legislative drivers (emergency legislation) exist to enable directed

(forced) evacuation in all states other than Western Australia. Identified policy statements have been drafted similarly to Policy Statement Number 5 of Western Australia (1985) and the Position Paper of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (2001), that describe well considered decision with preference to allow the community to have choice. There is also the extreme where pecuniary interests are observed in legislation in Victoria as described in 2.1.1.

The Tasmanian Government through partnership with the Police and Fire Services have developed a sound policy and procedural document upon which to initiate community welfare during wildfire (Tasmanian Fire service 2001, Appendix 3). This document describes intention while recognizing the authority of an incident controller and the powers of a fire and police officer within their relevant legislation.

The South Australian and New South Wales Governments and Emergency services appear to be at policy stages similar to that of Western Australia although there has been considerable development in emergency legislation in these states. The Victorian and Queensland Governments on the other hand have developed complex policy and legislation with substantive funding and resource support, particularly as a result of notable and historical community impacts from wildfire and cyclone. Only Queensland formally measures the performance of its emergency service policy and reports annually on community preparedness.

The extent that local governments have worked with emergency services in developing community welfare plans and identifying refuges, resources and responsibility, appears to rest with local governments within committee structures established under emergency service legislation. Considering the diversity of local governments and their interpretation of role, it has been difficult to identify whether these considered critical components are actually

being addressed. Examples of these extremes of opinion have already been discussed (Vickery 2000 and Preston 2000).

## **b) International**

In the State of California, the Governors Office of Emergency Services in their State Emergency Management Plan includes the assumption that 'Emergency Response is best coordinated at the lowest level of government involved in the emergency (Office of Emergency Services 1998). The plan describes the processes for preparing and recovering from emergencies as required by the Californian Emergency Services Act (#8578). There is also Federal Legislation developed in support of the State in the form of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act as administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This Act also describes the measures of performance required in reporting.

Of direct interest to policy development however is the 'authoritative approach' adopted by hazard management agencies in California, that is, that the determination to evacuate is made by the incident controller in consultation with the local emergency management committee and once determined, full evacuation is directed. This model, although authoritative, satisfied most of the identified critical components used to identify best practice.

Table 6 outlines the results of the comparative benchmarking.

BENCHMARK MEASURES	WA	SA	VIC	TAS	NSW	QLD	CAL
RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
COMMUNICATION PLAN	✗	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓
WELFARE PLAN	?	?	✓	?	?	✓	✓
LEGISLATION	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
POLICY	✓?	?	✓	✓	?	✓	✓
FIELD PROCEDURES	✗	?	✗	✓	?	✓	✓
MEASURED PERFORMANCE	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓

**Table 6 : Comparative Analysis**

Footnote : Data compilation, Qld : State counter Disaster Organisation Act (1975) & State Counter Disaster Plan (1996), NSW : State Emergency and Rescue Management Act (1989) & State Disaster Plan, VIC : Emergency Management Act (1996) & DISPLAN, SA : State Disaster Act & State Disaster Plan, WA : Policy Statement Number 5& 7, Western Australian Emergency Management Arrangements (1998) FESA Act 1997 : Tasmania ; Tasmania Fire Services Act 1979, Emergency Services Act 1976 ; USA : Robert T Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Services Assistance Act.

### 3.0 Policy Proposals

#### 3.1 Evaluation of Policy Proposals

##### 3.1.1 Progressing the reform

The fundamental approach of this policy review is to move from a model of authoritative direction during crisis being of high risk, confusion and uncertainty to one, in defined circumstances, of well informed choice providing reduced risk, reduced confusion and reduced confrontation (Table 7).

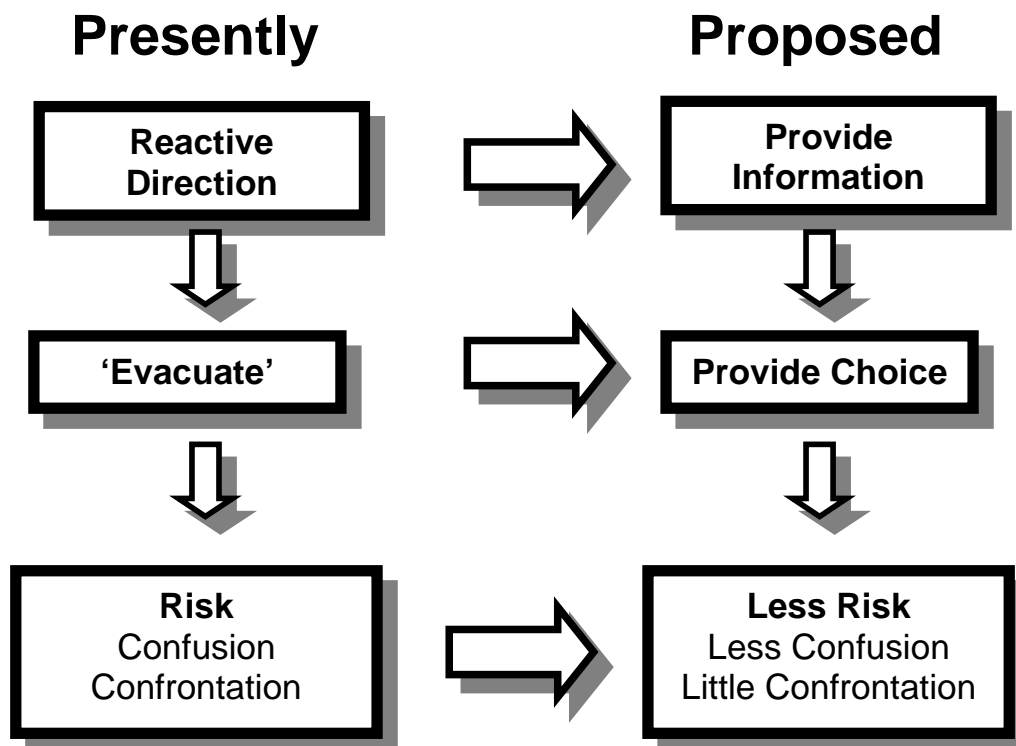


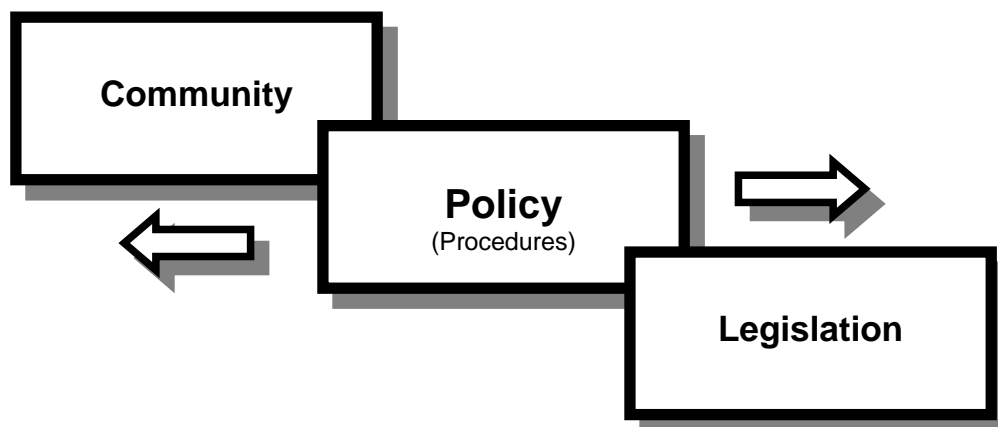
Table 7 : Proposed policy development pathway.

### 3.1.2 Strategic Direction

The strategic intention of the final paper is to develop community welfare policy, for wildfire only, in the first instance, for Western Australians that allows for the provision of quality information and thorough planning resulting in, in defined circumstances, well considered behavioural based choice for those present during the hazard with pecuniary interest in their circumstance.

This policy will be developed for the Western Australian fire services under the intentions of the umbrella policy statements of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (2001) and the State Emergency Management Advisory Committee Policy Number 5 (1995).

The development of a well considered policy will provide beneficial pathways and will facilitate the development of legislation and operational procedures by identified organisations as outlined in Table 8 and may have some transferability to other hazards.



**Table 8 : Beneficial Pathways**

### 3.2 Policy Recommendation

The development of policy for the Fire Services of Western Australia to this stage of presentation has required intense and diverse consultation with a range of stakeholders within emergency services, local government, police and communities.

Consultation

Bridgman &  
Davis 1999

The opinions are varied, diverse and opposing within agencies and are best represented in Table 9, describing outcome variables.

Firefighters	Residents	Homes	Situation	Opinion
Firefighters can attend  Fire fighters are prepared to offer choice	Residents are home  Residents can cope  Residents are prepared	Homes are prepared	There is time to relocate  The fire is not life destructive	<b>Given Choice</b>
Firefighters cannot attend  Firefighters are not prepared to offer choice	Residents are not home  Residents cannot cope  Residents are not prepared	Homes are not prepared	The fire is life destructive  There is time to relocate	<b>Directed to Relocate</b>
There is no time to relocate				<b>Must Stay</b>

**Table 9 : Outcomes of Opinion**

The policy has been recently tested in exercise (Exercise Capricorn, 2001) and in fire incidents in the Perth North Region of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority.

### 3.2.1 Underlying Principles of the draft policy

#### a. Introduce Certainties

There are certainties that will, regardless of the best developed programs, policy and orientation by emergency services and community, continue to influence and challenge outcomes. These are listed in table 10.

<p><b>A Community will exhibit the extremes in bush fire preparation at any one time. Firefighters and emergency services will be unable to determine who is prepared for wildfire and who is not.</b></p>
<p><b>Many people, even those prepared, will be severely distressed and confused with the onset of a bush fire and on many occasions, not be at home.</b></p>
<p><b>Despite best efforts, the fire services will be unable to attend every property when threatened by bushfire.</b></p>
<p><b>Families will be separated during bushfire.</b></p>
<p><b>Despite best efforts, not everyone will receive advice or warning.</b></p>
<p><b>Firefighters and Police, as individuals and regardless of direction, will continue to exercise their independence of authority based on their own interpretations and force evacuation on occasion.</b></p>

**Table 10 : Certainties that influence policy development**

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## **b. State the Intention**

Within the Fire Services of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, there continues to be no clear statement of intention regarding the evacuation, relocation or acceptance of residents staying with their property. Recent presentations to the Fire Services Executive have focussed on the following statement :

**Within Western Australia, the community may choose to stay with their properties if they are threatened by bushfire and if they are prepared for bushfire within the advice described by FESA.**

**If safe to do so the community should also have the option to relocate to a safe haven.**

**There are circumstances when the community may be directed to evacuate.**

**There is no desire to force evacuations during a bushfire but this may occur depending on circumstances.**

Of issue is the debate over the '**use of force**'. There is legislation that allows individual fire and police officers to use force. There is a desire by the collective executive of emergency services to avoid the use of force but individual opinion remains arguing the maintenance of the option (Brown 2001).

## **c. Commit to providing information**

The Fire Services, in identifying the principles of informed choice must identify a communication protocol and procedure that considers and informs a concerned community whether a community is at risk or not.

These community information/warning systems are not yet established within the fire services.

**d. Commit to an informed choice**

There has been some discussion regarding the independence of fire and police officers in using their powers based on their personal definition or interpretation of risk.

The foundation of this policy, informed choice, involves all firefighters and police recognising the intention that the community have a right to choose their circumstance, unless otherwise directed by an Incident Controller.

**e. Describe what the community can expect from the emergency services**

The community must know what they can expect from the emergency services, when threatened or when impacted by a wildfire.

**f. Describe Authority and responsibility**

The description of authority and responsibility as outlined in Policy Statement Number 5 (1995) is lacking. It must be clearly documented as to which agencies have responsibility for each of these underlying principles as described.

**g. Describe what happens if the community has no choice**

The policy must outline the circumstance in which the concept of 'informed choice' could be challenged. These procedures must provide the incident managers with the tools to impose direction and advice. They should also

ensure the communities that live with wildfire risk are aware of the directions likely to be expected in these circumstances.

#### **h. Describe Recovery**

The responsibility of Recovery, as described in the recently reviewed Policy Number 7 (2001), West Australian Emergency Management Arrangements, describes the various fire services as the hazard management agencies responsible for the Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery to Wildfires. This is clearly not the case and in times of community emergency, the local authority have been proven to be best placed in the direct management of an impacted community (Vickery 2000).

Recovery includes arrangements that identify Safe Havens, register and care for those displaced, provision of support and information and post incident counselling. This falls well within the expected responsibilities of the Local Emergency Management Committees established under Policy 7 (2001) but has not been adequately managed or achieved within local government for almost three decades.

#### **3.2.2 Policy, Operational Plans and Legislation**

The suggested Policy Statement for the Fire services of Western Australia, the Operational Plan for Incident Controllers and the brief for Legislative consideration is outlined in Part B of this document.

There continues to be some debate regarding the need for legislation and the advantages and disadvantages of legal empowerment to either the community or incident controllers. To date, lack of legislation has allowed for the debate of the application of the policy in each circumstance while it is

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more difficult to argue the application of legislation, particularly if it has not been very carefully considered.

The suggested Fire Services Policy can stand alone without emergency service legislation however it is the intention of this review that carefully considered legislation support the suggested policy and Community welfare control Plan. The brief requiring careful consideration in drafting future legislation is in Section 2.

## 4.0 Implementation strategy

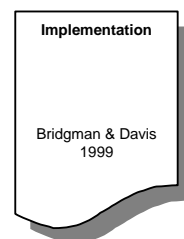
### 4.1 Implementation process

#### 4.1.1 Key Actions and Considerations

FESA has a requirement within its proposed emergency service legislation and strategic planning process to immediately address the identified issues regarding community welfare during wildfire. While focusing on the requirements of FESA however, full consultation with other stakeholders and the progressive involvement of FESA divisions and other agencies is critical to its success.

This implementation plan is based on the following foundations (after Evans 1994) :

**Full Consultation and Negotiation**  
**Cross Functional/Agency Teams**  
**Problem Solving**  
**Ownership**  
**Improving on Best Practice**  
**Innovative Thinking**  
**Monitoring of Performance**  
**Organisational Leadership**



The plan has two parts and are not necessarily inter dependant, only suggested. Part A of the plan is concerned with the development, adoption, performance measures and implementation of FESA's preferred policy while Part B focuses on the integration of this policy with the diverse and the broad opinions of stakeholders.

The actions to date and components and timeline for the implementation of Part A and B is suggested.

Actions occurred during the development of this strategic policy 2001	Full discussion within FESA divisions View point of WA Police Commissioner sought External Consultation with WA Police National Viewpoint (AFAC) agreed to by Nations Police Commissioners Draft position tabled and discussed by FESA Executive Project teams developing Community Warning Systems paper Field procedures tested in exercise and at incidents Seminar scheduled for industry by WA Emergency Management Services WA 2002 NSW Bush Fire Emergency					
	Jan 2002	March 2002	May 2002	Nov. 2002	March 2003	June 2004
<b>A</b> 1. Workshop the proposal.	2. Establish Project Team	3. Promote Outcomes	4. Test in field	5. Review Strategic Plan	6. Implement and Monitor	
<b>B</b>		1. Promote policy and procedures to agencies	2. Develop agency procedures	3. Develop formal alliance with Police	4. Establish legislation	

**Table 11 : Implementation plan timelines**

#### 4.1.2 Part A : Within FESA

##### 1<sup>st</sup> Action : Workshop the proposal.

There are a number of interested stakeholders within and external to FESA who have a direct interest in this proposal. The recommendation that a Cross

Functional Action Team be established to further the exploration of the policy and its adoption.

Should any of these identified bodies challenge the proposal, advice will be sought as to the presented options or modifications required to achieve the stated goal.

<b>Internal and Multi Agency Committee Presentations</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fire Services Executive Management Team</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Office of the CEO : FESA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">State Emergency Management Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Emergency Management Services Seminar</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Interagency Operations Group</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fire Services Managers Forum</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WA Police Emergency Operations Group</p>

**Table 12 : First Action Presentation and Consultation**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Action** : Develop a cross functional management team

Spendolini (1992) has discussed the benefits of cross functional action teams in best practice organisations. The development of this program will require input from operational, planning and business services personnel within FESA with representation from the Police Services, Welfare Agencies and local Government.

There will be required tasking as described in the policy which reflects the conduct of agencies coordinated by the policy to provide the best practice (Table 13).

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority in partnership with the Police and Local Governments will develop operational procedures that allow for :

- a) Informing the community whenever possible of likely threat (FESA)
- b) On assessing the communities survivability, contacting residents in the predicted fireground whenever possible and providing additional information, advice and direction (FESA/Police)
- c) Identification and provision of the use of refuges from bushfire should residents decide to relocate (Local Government, Local Emergency Management Committee)
- d) Providing welfare and information to the community (Local Government, Local Emergency Management Committee)
- e) Assessing the communities short term vulnerability once the fire has passed (Local Government, Local Emergency Management Committee)
- f) Developing safe access corridors and community security plans for the community to return as soon as possible (FESA / Local Government)

**Table 13 : Suggested Operational responsibility Matrix** (extract from policy Section 2)

It is important that the Action Team coordinated these changes to procedures carefully in consideration of the key issues.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Action** : Inform the organisation of outcomes

There is a real ability for clear and concise policy to actually focus and add a sense of purpose to the activities within an organisation. This value adding to existing services is secondary to the real objective of keeping firefighters informed. Further, it is likely that the policy will require a cultural change in the way decisions are made in the field and acted upon, both within the Fire and Emergency Services and Police Services.

**4<sup>th</sup> Action** : Test in the field

It has already been shown that decisions in the field are made at the last moment with little forwards planning or systems in place to support that planning.

It is most likely that the existing procedures will continue for some time until a full understanding and experience is promulgated with respect to managing communities and this must be accepted and considered in the implementation plan.

**5<sup>th</sup> Action** : Review the Strategic Plan

The present strategic objectives of FESA's Strategic Plan and forwarded to the divisions of FESA including the fire services, are classified as Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery, Customer Focus, Motivated and Productive People, Quality Business Management and Quality Information Management (FESA 2000).

The adoption of performance indicators reflecting community welfare during incidents may not integrate well within the existing objectives of the plan.

Ideally, agreed performance indicators for wildfire can be carried from district, to region to service (and hopefully to a National level) that will allow for a greater integration of planning objectives and output descriptions.

**6<sup>th</sup> Action** : Implement and Monitor the Indicators

The implementation of the policy performance indicators, a result of this plan, will need to be introduced with the establishment of stakeholder awareness. There will be a need to ensure that there is an ability to modify or review these indicators, particularly when reporting although this has been difficult to

achieve in the past due to the need to maintain comparative measures over time. Performance indicators should parallel the life of the strategic plan and mimic agency direction and change.

The Key performance indicators should reflect community actions and operational performance and not be orientated directly towards loss or injury statements. While the policy has as its goal the welfare of the community, Table 2 identifies the needs of the community which are in effect 'socio/political indicators' that have and will continue to drive policy development and review. It is suggested that meeting these identified community needs, becomes the real indicators of performance.

#### **4.1.3 Part B : Stakeholder Partnerships**

It is the intention of this presentation that FESA proceeds with the review and implementation of the suggested policy.

##### **1<sup>st</sup> Action : Promote the policy**

The reviewed policy as suggested falls within the intentions of the State emergency Management Committee Policy Number 5 (1995) and the Australasian Fire Authorities Council Position (2001).

It further interprets these documents for field managers and is intended to apply across all agencies working with communities at wildfire incidents. The responsible combat and support agencies are diverse and they are integral in the successful implementation and review of the policy.

A strategic marketing/orientation program will be required to successfully convey the intentions of the policy across these organisations. Additionally, many of these organisations may have a greater role and responsibility in

community welfare as described in this policy than has been previously realised.

This stage of the implementation plan is likely to incur some costs as staff are directed from normal duties to present and receive the determinations, outcomes and performance expectations required.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Action** : Develop Procedures and Tools

Within the Community Welfare Control Plan, (Part B), is a number of tasks and tools required in field operations. Collectively referred to 'response planning', these tools need to be developed and refined within the intentions of the policy.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Action** : Formerly document alliances

Presently, the formal agreements demonstrated in the State of Tasmania between Emergency Services and Police, exhibit best practice, commitment and promotion of understanding between the relevant agencies and community. This policy review, has as its goal, a similar and agreed joint statement regarding the intended management of communities during wildfire.

More recently, a formal paper, reflecting the position of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC, Gledhill 2001) has been endorsed by the joint Police Commissioners forum.

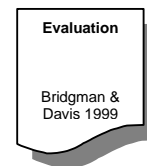
**4<sup>th</sup> Action** : Draft Legislation

With the absence of Emergency Service legislation, the legislative support for actions taken or not taken is unclear. Within the suggested drafting instructions as described in Part B, any consideration of emergency service

legislation should include the descriptions of directed relocation and circumstances where force may be considered (but not the norm).

### 4.3 Review and Evaluation

#### 4.3.1 Plan Implementation Monitoring



The review of this policy will be ongoing and tested against the timelines (Table 11). All aspects of performance will be monitored during implementation by the cross functional action team described in Part A : 2<sup>nd</sup> Action. This team will have the responsibility to determine and review the performance of implementation.

As stated, the Key performance indicators should reflect community actions and operational performance and not be orientated directly towards loss or injury statements. While the policy has as its goal the welfare of the community, Table 2 identifies the needs of the community which are in effect 'socio/political indicators' that have, and will continue to drive policy development and review. It is suggested that meeting these identified community needs, become the real indicators of performance.

<p><b>Provision of Safe Havens and Refuges</b></p> <p><b>Provision of Community information</b></p> <p><b>Warning Communities</b></p> <p><b>Allowing Community Choice whenever possible</b></p>
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**Table 14 : Suggested Key Performance Indicators**

#### 4.1.4 Next steps

The implementation of a policy of this kind, culminating in legislative descriptors is likely to be a five year project.

Within the first year it is proposed that the findings of this research and policy review should be incorporated into the following forums

- Fire Services Executive
- FESA Executive
- State Emergency Management Committee
- Emergency Management Services Seminar and Workshop

and tested at wildfire incident in the field when the opportunity arises.

## 5.0 Conclusion

It is apparent that both models of *'informed choice'* and *'forced evacuation'* satisfy the 'critical components' used to benchmark best practice, although measures of performance provide no real evidence of practice.

Within Australia, and particularly Western Australia, the historical and cultural development of the societal attitude to threats to the community continue to focus on that of choice and participation in support of neighbors and community. By recognizing this cultural development and providing a sound policy that defines and describes the legislative and procedural requirements, it is highly likely that best practice in community welfare management during wildfire will be achieved in Western Australia.

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# Appendices