

Bushfire Preparedness

Berringa Peninsula Community Survey Report

JUNE 20

Berringa Peninsula Community Network



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Preface:

The Berringa Peninsula Community Network was formed in 2020 under the auspices of Bushfire Recovery Victoria. The role of the Network is to give a voice to the broad views and aspirations of Berringa community members and liaise between the community, governments, community service organisations and other agencies to address and pursue advancement and resilience for our communities.

In December 2020, the newly formed Berringa Peninsula Community Network released a survey for completion by residents of the Berringa Peninsula. The survey aimed to discover local residents' priorities with regard to bushfire recovery and preparedness.

The survey was distributed to properties in the Bethanga, Talgarno, Granya, Bellbridge and Bungil locales in the form of a postcard. The survey was also available online. The following report outlines the findings of that survey. It is hoped the findings will help inform emergency service organisations and council as to the priorities of local community members.

Questions Asked

The survey posed the following questions:

Question 1: What would make you feel better prepared for a bushfire emergency?

Residents were given the option of ticking any of the four following options, or providing their own answer:

- A fire plan check list;
- An emergency information hub for the Peninsula;
- Emergency evacuation site/community safe place;
- Extra community water storage.

Question 2: What bushfire resources could you have used last summer? (referring to the Black Summer fires of 2019-2020).

Residents provided a written answer to this question.

Question 3: Residents were asked to indicate the town they were nearest to from the following five options:

- Bellbridge
- Bethanga
- Talgarno
- Granya
- Bungil

Responses

A total of 35 responses were received. The number of respondents have been broken down by locale in the following graph (Figure A):

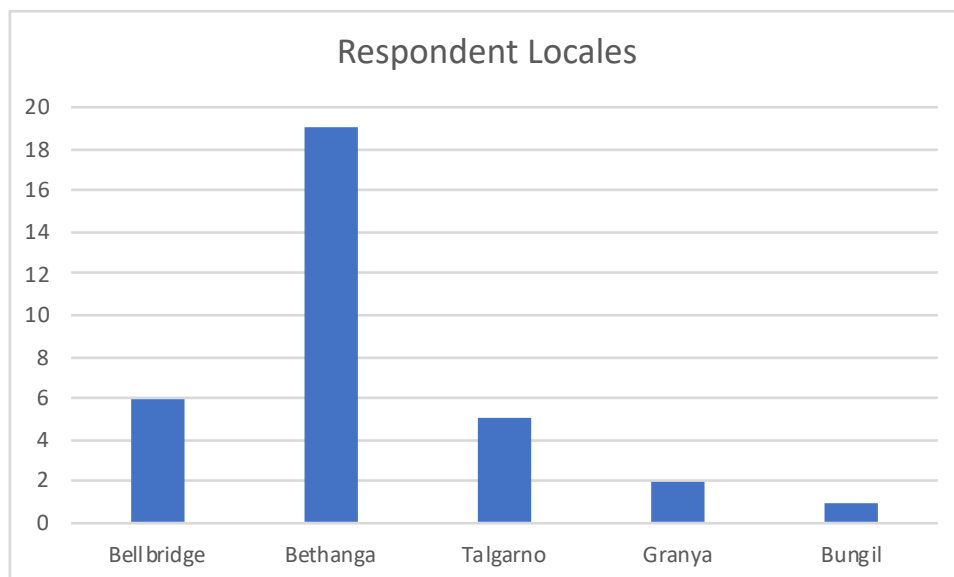


Figure A: Respondent locale

In response to the question *What would make you feel better prepared for a bushfire emergency (responses to the option "OR tick the boxes below" in which four options were presented)*, the issue of a safe place was most selected (refer Figure B). On inspection, responses to these options may be dependent on locale (refer Figure C).

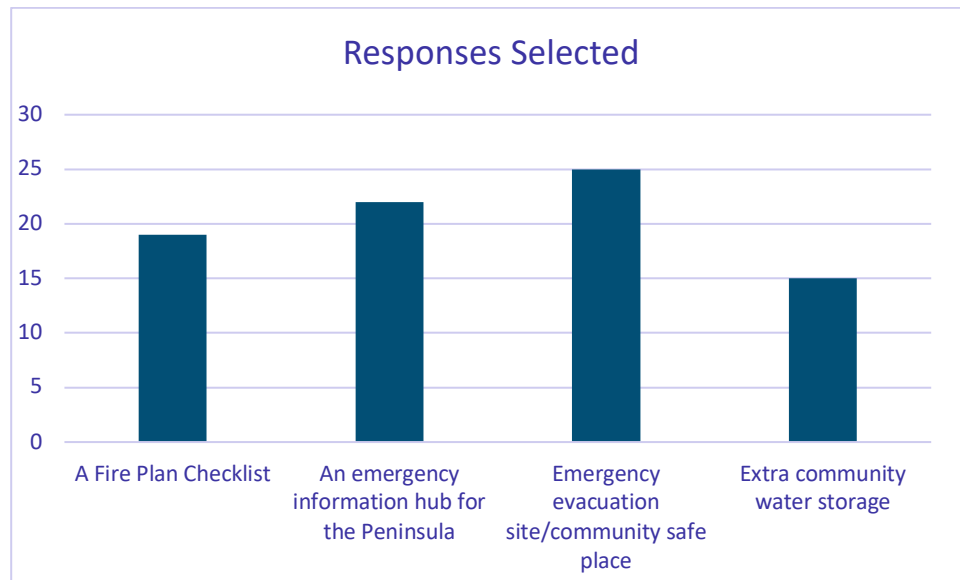


Figure B: Responses selected to the question What would make you feel better prepared for a bushfire emergency?

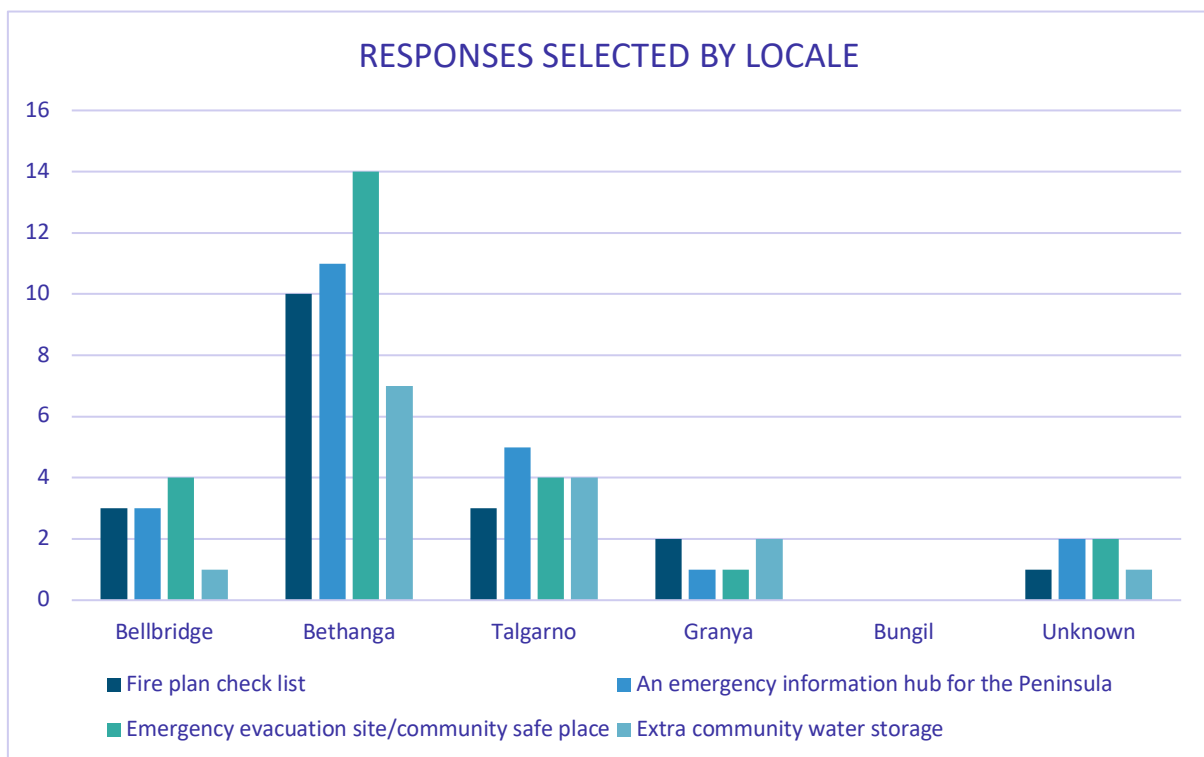
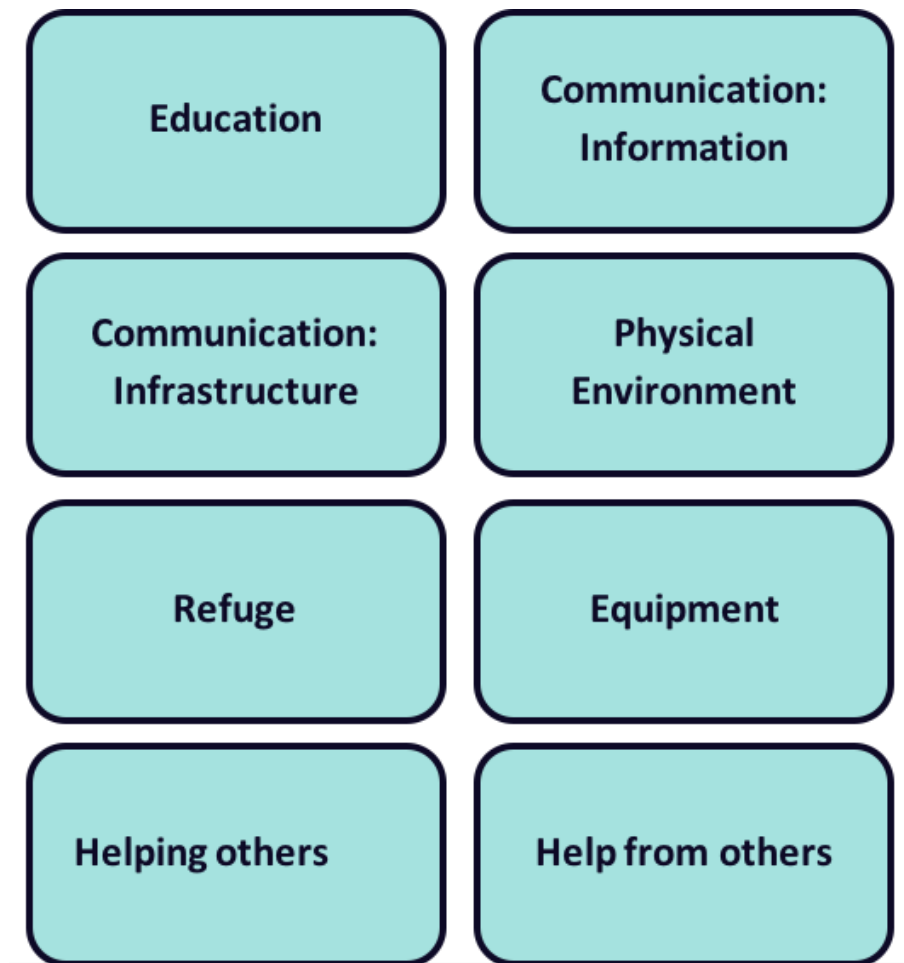


Figure C: Responses selected to the question What would make you feel better prepared for a bushfire emergency? Broken down by locale.

When broken down by locale, the issue of a safe place appears to be more important than the other available options to people in both Bellbridge and Bethanga. However, an emergency information hub was favoured more by respondents from Talgarno. The issue of water storage was least important to Bellbridge and Bethanga respondents, however it does still appear to rate highly for Bethanga with 7 respondents indicating it would be of benefit.

While the response numbers are low, the information in Figure C may indicate that the issues facing the 5 communities differ, and a broad brush approach to problem solving may not be appropriate.

Two questions were posed to respondents that allowed for written answers not collected by the 4 tick box options. These answers have been broken down into 8 main themes as follows:



A breakdown of the responses identified within the 8 main themes can be found in Table A below.

Table A: Responses related to the 8 main themes

Theme	Participant response and location
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More community bushfire preparedness workshops - <i>Talgarno</i> • Technical advice and help from CFA to install fire hydrants, pumps etc - <i>Bethanga</i> • Preparedness information sessions - <i>Bellbridge</i> • Community awareness videos. - <i>Bethanga</i> • Personalised list of actions/suggestions for bushfire preparedness - <i>Bethanga</i> • training for key community members (see ¹) - <i>Bethanga</i> • Demonstration fire pumps – <i>Granya</i> • Escape plan for us on dead-end roads (eg Flagstaff). - <i>Bethanga</i>
Communication: Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local bushfire community meetings when there is large long term fires in the region. – <i>Talgarno</i> • sms saying how close any danger is – <i>Bellbridge</i> • Need for more specific local info ie. Internet, phone number. Make people more aware of how close a fire could come – <i>Bellbridge</i> • A website or some other online communication for the peninsula that provides information during bushfires. Something that only shows accurate, essential and up to date information. - <i>Bethanga</i> • Communication: the CFA website is not up to date and not relevant enough for our locale. – <i>Bungil</i> • Local and relevant information- <i>Bethanga</i> • A place to obtain reliable, up to date information, relevant to our area and the surrounding region. This place should ideally have an online information page as well being a place to find out more if mobile communication systems fail.- <i>Bethanga</i> • More communication within the community as to what is going on - <i>Unknown</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to hold community meetings when fires start. Awareness is key, the community stresses if they aren't informed – <i>Unknown</i> • Communication is out biggest issue if site goes down – <i>Unknown</i> • Communication between non CFA members and the CFA community – <i>Bethanga</i> • More community meetings. – <i>Bethanga</i> • I think the main resource we could have done with was local meetings to discuss the threat to our community from the large fire and a better community understanding of the threat of new fires starting and how we would as a community deal with this when our resources were elsewhere. – <i>Talgarno</i> • Better communication – <i>Granya</i> • Information targeting more specific local areas as per the above point re information hub. – <i>Talgarno</i> • More frequent communication regarding the actual fire site and wind direction – <i>Bethanga</i> • Better information re local conditions and threats – <i>Bungil</i> • More relevant information. – <i>Bethanga</i> • A single place for local info. Knowledge of who and how to get access to the community halls/rec reserves. – <i>Bethanga</i> • An effective way of communicating with the entire area in a short time frame. - <i>Bethanga</i>
Communication: Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communications mobile phone and broadband internet – <i>Granya</i> • More reliable mobile phone and internet coverage. – <i>Talgarno</i> • At the time we had no land line (out of order for 5 weeks!) we have no mobile service an the UHFis very limited. The first days of the road block at Granya the police told me if I went through I would not be let back. No contact with our CFA -<i>Bungil</i> • Hunters Hill generator filled so that phone reception works. Repeater for Walwa, Granya, Corryong. – <i>Unknown</i> • Wireless broadband internet – <i>Granya</i> • Mobile phone service – <i>Bugil</i>

<p>Physical Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More roadside grazing or slashing. – <i>Bellbridge</i> • More fuel load reduction both private & public - T • Grass maintained at roadsides especially near township on main artery – <i>Bethanga</i> • The row of pine trees in Hollow Street Bethanga and the thick undergrowth under them are a big fire hazard close to our house. If the oval becomes a safe place , if they catch alight people would have trouble getting there - <i>Bethanga</i> • If roadsides were cleared of long grass heading into Bethanga. – <i>Bethanga</i> • Clean up roadsides - <i>Talgarno</i>
<p>Refuge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We suggest the Hume Boat Club, Bellbridge could be an evacuation site. – <i>Bellbridge</i> • Some graded refuge areas on the exposed drawdown areas of Lake Hume. – <i>Bellbridge</i> • Emergency evacuation site on lake front opposite Eucalypt Drive with toilets. We need toilets here all year round. This can service Bethanga residents as the rec reserve in the valley during a fire is not safe. - <i>Bellbridge & Bethanga</i> • The rec reserve has always been considered the community safe place but it has only one vehicle single lane in/out and pine trees in poor condition to the North. Not safe at all! – <i>Bethanga</i> • Meeting place is currently at the hall - consideration of school or rec reserve as a better/more suitable site? – <i>Bethanga</i> • A safe place of refuge for vulnerable residents, with power and water and heating/cooling and kitchen facilities that have an off-grid solution as the power so often goes down during bushfires. – <i>Bethanga</i> • Evacuation site/community safe place for Bethanga - the rec reserve- needs a second access/entry point for this? – <i>Bethanga</i> • A place to go if fire in downhill to Bellbridge and coming from Tallangatta - <i>Bethanga</i>
<p>Equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would feel much better if we had an evacuation area that did not rely on an electric pump. -<i>Bethanga</i> • Ways for our region to be as self-sufficient as possible, such as water storage, emergency lighting, medical and food supplies, radio comm equipment¹... - <i>Bethanga</i> • I have 1,000L IBC water tank with pump – <i>Bellbridge</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery backup power at Granya Hall New Fire Station at Granya with toilet and shower facilities – <i>Granya</i> • More water storage – <i>Bethanga</i> • Water available stored nearby that you could pump to a furphy would have been reassuring. – <i>Bethanga</i> • An off-grid cool place for organising recovery tools and relief packages – <i>Bethanga</i>
Helping Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fire telephone tree -<i>Talgarno</i> • A system that can stay informed by the CFA and other services, so that community efforts are a help rather than a hindrance. – <i>Bethanga</i> • Awareness of elderly without the usual lines of communication. – <i>Bethanga</i> • Checklist of residents. – <i>Bethanga</i> • Phone tree to check on people similar to old fire call system. – <i>Bethanga</i>
Help from Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community animal transport – <i>Bethanga</i> • Local firefighters for local fires. Increased resources to allow for situation where our CFA is out on call and there are fires at home – <i>Bethanga</i> • People put in charge of things to do. – <i>Bethanga</i> • There were worried people that there were no resources if trucks are elsewhere.- <i>Bethanga</i> • There wasn't enough quick response govt fire fighters and air support. - <i>Bellbridge</i>
Miscellaneous comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't think we can do any more than what we already have in place – <i>Bethanga</i> • I was ok, fortunately – <i>Bethanga</i> • We weren't preparing to live out here last summer but we will be this summer 21/22 – <i>Bethanga</i> • Common sense – <i>Unknown</i> • Common sense - <i>Unknown</i>

Unfortunately, the small number of respondents means we can't be sure that the responses are representative of the concerns and thoughts of the wider Peninsula community. However, they did hint at some of the concerns the community had. A selection of ten recurring ideas for bushfire preparedness resources were taken from this information and were taken back to the community for ranking in order of importance. This was conducted at the Peninsula Seasonal Market held in Talgarno in March 2021.

Residents were asked to rank the following resources, with one being the most important to them and 10 being the least:

- Bushfire preparedness workshops
- Installation and use of water pump workshops
- Assistance with preparing an escape plan
- Regular community meetings during a fire event
- Frequently updated website with fire related information specific to the Peninsula region
- Physical place with fire related information specific to the Peninsula region
- Better communication infrastructure (mobile network)
- A clearly identifiable evacuation site for each township
- Increased community water storage
- Alternative power sources for local halls/community centres

In total, 56 people responded to the survey. The order in which those options were ranked can be found in Figure D below:



Figure D: Options in rank order, with number 1 being the highest rank and 10 being the lowest.

In conclusion

As part of the mission of BPCN to give a voice to the residents of the Berringa Peninsula, this report is offered as an insight into what resources residents may find helpful in future emergencies. The purpose of the report is not to draw conclusions or make recommendations. Rather, it is hoped that the information collected from this subsection of residents may assist organisations in planning future activities and infrastructure. While many of the resources listed are outside the realm of some organisations receiving this report, they may fall within the realm of others.

Report prepared by Dr Stacey Rich, Deputy Chair BPCN