

FIRE UPDATE

BUSHFIRE CRC NEWSLETTER DECEMBER/JANUARY 2011-12

PROGRESS REPORT FOR MEMBERS

A busy and informative program occupied attendees at the Bushfire CRC Stakeholders Council Annual General Meeting in Melbourne on 23 November.

The meeting voted to accept two new members to the Bushfire CRC – the University of Wollongong and Central Queensland University – and participants were provided with an update of the financial status of the centre. The chairs of the Governing Board committees delivered progress reports.

Stakeholder representatives were informed of the actions now being undertaken to secure long-term ongoing funding for fire research. A lengthy discussion followed on how each partner could best provide support.

Among highlights of the rest of the meeting were reports from end users of Bushfire CRC research projects.

John Schauble, from the Office of the Fire Services Commissioner, Victoria, is a lead end-user of the *Effective Communications: Communities and Bushfire* project. The research teams did not come from the fire industry, he said, which brought a fresh set of perspectives from such disciplines as sociology, psychology and political science.

“As a lead end-user I’ve found myself mentoring students from various projects which is one of the strengths of the CRC.”

Deputy Chief Officer of Melbourne’s MFB and a *Risk Assessment and Decision Making* lead end-user, David Youssef, said this was the largest and most complex of all Bushfire CRC projects, seeking to develop a computer-generated wildfire assessment tool for incident management teams, leveraged from Phoenix RapidFire and other earlier Bushfire CRC projects on fire weather, house protection and smoke dispersion.

Present computer speeds were insufficient for real-time use but that would evolve, he said. It was planned to have a model to run as a trial by the end of the current Bushfire CRC extension in 2013.



CALL FOR PAPERS

Organisers of the 2012 AFAC and Bushfire CRC Conference have issued a Call for Papers, with abstracts to be submitted online by 17 February 2012. The theme for the conference, to be held in Perth from 28-31 August, is *Diverse Country. Common Ground*. The conference program will be a mix of invited speakers and speakers selected from abstracts received in response to the Call for Papers. Visit <http://www.afac2012.org>

Economics and Future Scenarios lead end-user, Andrew Stark, of the ACT Emergency Services Agency, said the project’s researchers were looking at such issues as the personal and economic reasons people built homes in bushfire-prone areas. They were also looking 40 years into the future, when Australia’s population would have doubled and temperatures were expected to be higher, to produce scenarios to test against future conditions.

Fire in the Landscape lead end-user, Neil Cooper, of ACT Parks, said most of the projects focused on controlled burning, looking at implications for carbon and water supplies.

“In future we will have to do large areas of fuel reduction burning so we are looking at how much carbon there is in the landscape before and after the burning. Actions need to be underpinned by good, sound science and there are big gaps.”

CEO’S BLOG

GARY MORGAN



A year ago I wrote about how the new research program was starting up with great promise. A year on and we find ourselves planning for the final outputs of the three-year program. As distinct from the first years of the Bushfire CRC, in this research program we have all had to hit the ground running in what we all knew was going to be extremely tight timelines. It is hardly surprising we find ourselves closing 2011 with a year of so much activity in our wake.

This week the Bushfire CRC is undergoing a formal First Year Review by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The Chairman of the CRC Committee, Neville Stephens AO, and his team wish to know how the Bushfire CRC is performing and whether it will deliver what it promised. I will take this opportunity to talk about the key achievements of the year.

Our greatest challenge is to secure ongoing funding for fire research. We now have the support of all our industry, research organisations and much of government at both state and federal level. I remain hopeful that our transition into the Australasian Fire and Emergency Management Research Institute will make great progress in the New Year.

On behalf of the Board and the staff at the Bushfire CRC office, a big thank you to all those in the wider Bushfire CRC community for the efforts you have put in over the past year. In particular, I thank on your behalf the dedicated researchers and end-user leaders who are working on behalf of all the Bushfire CRC partners.

My very best wishes to you and your family for a Happy Christmas and a safe and successful New Year.

Find the full blog at www.bushfirecrc.com/blog/gary-morgan

BURNING ISSUES LAUNCHED

Burning Issues, the new book on prescribed burning by Professor Mark Adams of the University of Sydney and Dr Peter Attiwill of the University of Melbourne, has been launched by the Hon Bernard Teague, AO, the chair of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Justice Teague told the audience at the book launch after the Stakeholder Council AGM in Melbourne in November that he became a convert to the evidence for prescribed burning to reduce bushfire risk during the proceedings of the royal

commission. "I hope the robust rigour of *Burning Issues* will help to convert many others."

Professor Adams said he was aware of the opposing views on prescribed burning but felt the book would stimulate an important debate. Bushfire CRC CEO Mr Gary Morgan said many agencies had improved their manner of prescribed burning in recent years. The book provides a view at a point in time. This will assist policy decisions on prescribed burning that need to take into account social, cultural and political views.

RESEARCH BLOG

RICHARD THORNTON



As 2011 draws to a close, the Bushfire CRC can look back on a highly productive

year of establishment and delivery. This has been marked by a significant change in the tenor of the Research Advisory Forums: thinking back to the meeting held in Adelaide in November 2010, which was really a discussion about what the research was going to achieve; whereas the most recent forum really showcased what had already been delivered. The core of the research program is now well and truly underway. We have seen a large number of new researchers join the Bushfire CRC across different research partners. It is great to see the enthusiasm of these new researchers for what we are trying to achieve.

Similarly with the student program, we have seen the completion of many of the original PhD scholars, which is great for them, especially as so many of them have immediately found gainful employment in the industry. Also we have seen the establishment of a new cohort of students. At the completion of this group we will have fostered almost 80 PhD qualified researchers for the industry, quite some achievement.

Following such a successful year will be a challenge, but one I am sure we will meet and deliver better than ever.

RESEARCH UTILISATION BLOG

NOREEN KRUSEL



It has become apparent to me that the best people to promote our research, are those that make good use of it! To encourage

end users, and their agencies, to actively participate in the utilisation of our research we are introducing two incentives – the Research Utilisation Award to acknowledge agencies that make outstanding use of Bushfire CRC research and a Conference Support Scheme to provide as many as three grants a year of up to \$3000 to support individual end-users to attend major international conferences to discuss and promote the use of the research.

The Research Utilisation Award will be presented at each AFAC-Bushfire CRC annual

conference alongside the existing Bushfire CRC Special Recognition Award for research leadership and AFAC's Laurie Lavelle Award for industry achiever of the year. The award will be specifically for agencies and specifically focused on Bushfire CRC research utilisation. It is the end-user agencies who utilise our research to make improvements to their businesses and ultimately impact on the safety of communities. Nominations for the award will be sought through both the Bushfire CRC and AFAC websites in early 2012.

The travel grants will support conference attendance by end users from member agencies who can demonstrate that they have utilised the Bushfire CRC Research to make effective improvements to the business of their organisation. Up to three applications will be supported each year. Conferences with a high international profile will be preferred.

I hope to be flooded with applications!

COMMUNICATIONS BLOG

DAVID BRUCE



The Annual Reporting process is mostly a dry and formal process that provides our Federal funder

with the data it needs to know we are performing acceptably in research outputs, finance and a range of other measurements.

On the other hand, the written Annual Report is also an annual stop-and-think about the main achievements of a hectic year. What is immediately apparent is that the Bushfire CRC is a very different organisation to what it was in earlier years.

With the new research program getting into full swing a whole team of new faces

have become part of the wider Bushfire CRC team – researchers, end-user leaders and students. Alongside specialists in fire behaviour, fire weather and ecology, we now have psychologists, sociologists, economists, and health and safety experts. We have new partner organisations from the State Emergency Services, the fire protection industry and the rural fire brigades associations.

All this adds up to a very different story to tell for the year 2010-11.

The Annual Report was formally submitted to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research at the end of October. A more reader friendly edition was distributed at the November Stakeholder Council AGM. You too can read all about the year online here: <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/publications>

HELPING HAND

Research conducted by the Bushfire CRC has helped Fire and Rescue NSW managers to better understand the symptoms and health effects of smoke exposure and the mitigation strategies that can be adopted on the fire ground, says Darryl Dunbar, Manager of Fire and Rescue NSW's Bushland Urban Interface Section.

"In developing its bushfire training programs and guidelines, FRNSW has drawn on information from Bushfire CRC's research findings on smoke exposure management. This information is then applied by FRNSW operational personnel for safe firefighting operations during bush and grass fires and prescribed burns," he adds.

Most recently, the organisation has been updating its guidelines on firefighter safety and is including the Bushfire CRC's *Field Guide to Smoke Exposure Management*, by Dr Fabienne Reisen and Dr Mick Meyer of CSIRO, as a key supporting document for all operational personnel.