

FIRE UPDATE

BUSHFIRE CRC NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2012

TIME TO PERFORM

The Bushfire CRC has been advised by the Australian Government of an important review that will require the involvement of some of our partners.

The Chair of the CRC Committee, Mr Neville Stevens AO, has informed us that the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research will conduct a Performance Review of the Bushfire CRC in April 2012.

This Review is usually conducted after three years of a CRC but given that the Bushfire CRC Extension is only funded for a three year term, the Department has decided to conduct it after the first year.

The CEO of the Bushfire CRC, Gary Morgan, said he would soon be personally requesting the support of partners to either attend the review hearings or to be available to offer written or oral support.

“This presents the Bushfire CRC and all its partners with opportunity to show the worth of our research program, the usefulness of our outputs and the soundness of the path forward into an ongoing fire research institute,” he said.

This Performance Review follows the First Year Visit of the Bushfire CRC which was completed in December.

IN BRIEF

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY WORKSHOP

A one-day workshop at RMIT University in Melbourne on 29 March will examine the idea and practice of sharing responsibility for disaster resilience.

The idea of ‘shared responsibility’ is shaping emergency management thinking in Australia. It has gained significant policy traction following the Victorian 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission and the release of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

The free workshop is being organised by RMIT’s Centre for Risk and Community Safety on behalf of the Bushfire CRC and the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility’s (NCCARF) Emergency Management network. To register, or seek

KEY DATES FOR 2012

- **17 February:** Call for papers closes for Annual Conference
- **27 March:** *Fire in the Landscape* field excursion, NE Victoria
- **17 and 18 April:** DIISR Review of Bushfire CRC
- **23 and 24 May:** Research Advisory Forum, Hobart
- **27 June:** Stakeholder Meeting, Adelaide
- **27 August to 1 September:** AFAC & Bushfire CRC Conference including Science Day, Perth
- **24 and 25 October:** Research Advisory Forum, TBA
- **22 November:** AGM and Stakeholder Meeting, Melbourne

All indications from the First Year Visit were that the Department and CRC Committee were satisfied that the Bushfire CRC was on track to meet its deliverables by 2013.

The Performance Review will be conducted by a panel chaired by Mr Stevens at the Bushfire CRC offices in Melbourne from 17-18 April 2012.

details, contact Blythe McLennan at blythe.mclennan@rmit.edu.au

ROLL OF HONOUR

Four people closely associated with the Bushfire CRC have recently been awarded honours.

In the Australia Day Honours, former Bushfire CRC Board member Professor John Baird, of the University of New South Wales – Australian Defence Force Academy, was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to higher education. Stakeholder Council member Tony Blanks, of Forestry Tasmania, and long-time Victorian Country Fire Authority stalwart Alan Rhodes (now with the Victorian Fire Services Commissioner) were awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal.

In the New Zealand New Year Honours, just-retired New Zealand Fire Service Chief Executive Officer/National Commander Mike Hall was made a Companion of The Queen’s Service Order.

CEO’S BLOG

GARY MORGAN



It has now been three years since the horrific fires of 7 February in Victoria and still they are very much a part of our industry conversation. There have been large fires before and after Black Saturday but these fires have reshaped the way we all go about our daily business of seeking and applying new knowledge on managing the bushfire threat.

Australian Government funding for the current Bushfire CRC research program was shaped exclusively around issues related to the Black Saturday fires. At the time it made perfect sense to target short term funding directly at the issues most pertinent to those fires.

But now, three years on, we realise that far more knowledge is needed for us to deal with bushfires across the country, amid fast moving changes in community values, demographics, climate and technology. We now also can see the connections between emergency management of bushfires, cyclones, floods and other natural hazards.

We must not forget that both the subsequent Royal Commission and the Senate recommended the establishment of an ongoing national centre for bushfire research. While many of the other recommendations have been publicly discussed and acted upon, this recommendation is still outstanding.

Much of my efforts in 2012 will be directed to ensuring this aim is not forgotten by working towards obtaining ongoing funds for an Institute to expand into the areas not currently being covered by the national research program, in addition to exploring links with other natural hazards.

This is being done in conjunction with partners who are already doing research into these broader fields including the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and many universities.

SCIENCE DAY PROCEEDINGS

The formal proceedings of the Science Day (pictured) held as part of the Bushfire CRC and AFAC 2011 Conference in Sydney are now available. These papers have been anonymously reviewed and published as formal proceedings. Go to: www.bushfirecrc.com/resources/full-proceedings-2011-science-day

FIRE AUSTRALIA

The summer edition of *Fire Australia* is about to be published. Among its wide variety of contents are the cover story on the Fire Decision Support Toolbox being developed by Bushfire CRC researchers; an adding up of the costs of the 2009 Victorian Black Saturday bushfires by John Handmer and Catherine Stephenson of the Centre for Risk and Community Safety at RMIT



University; an article on University of Tasmania Bushfire CRC PhD scholar Briony Towers' work to help children become bushfire-ready; and a paper by University of Canterbury Bushfire CRC PhD scholar Brenda Mackie on the problems of "crying wolf" with emergency warnings.

RESEARCH BLOG

RICHARD THORNTON



Happy New Year to everyone! 2012 will be busy, but also a year in which a lot

of the promise of the research program will be delivered. It will be an exciting time for everyone, I hope. With the third anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, it is useful to reflect on the reasons that sit behind the current research agenda and why we are all on an important path for the community and the industry which serves them.

As many of you will be aware, the Bushfire CRC faces a major review on 17 and 18 April. Whereas this may seem daunting to some, a successful result will help in the transition to an institute. In my mind this is a great opportunity to tell the good news story of the Bushfire CRC. It is sometimes easy to get lost in the detail of the day-to-day work we conduct and not recognise the importance of what we do. As I have been going through the preparatory thinking for the review and reflecting on the most recent visit by the Commonwealth we had last year, it became clear that there are many aspects of what we do that are best practice, in particular the research teams we have pulled together and the way in which the end-users have integrated into the program, I think is remarkable. We have an enviable track record of embedding outputs in the agencies and simultaneously we maintain a steady stream of high quality science outputs.

Personally I am looking forward to being able to tell the good-news story of the Bushfire CRC, and I hope that those of you who are approached by the panel feel the same.

RESEARCH UTILISATION BLOG

NOREEN KRUSEL



For all those people out there who may be thinking "where does all this research go? What happens to it? What do we do

with it?" Well, here's a story of what happens . . .

Two of the research projects from the first seven years of the Bushfire CRC were Safe Behaviour and Decision Making, led by Dr Mary Omodei of Latrobe University, and Enhancing IMT effectiveness and organisational learning, led by Dr Christine

Owen of the University of Tasmania.

In addition to research publications, the research teams, with the support of the Bushfire CRC, produced a number of *Fire Notes* in an effort to make the research more approachable to a broader audience of people in our industry. Both Mary and Christine have been actively engaging with end-users through presentations, seminars and professional development workshops. And industry has responded in possibly the most lasting way possible – by embedding the pertinent research findings into national industry training.

To read more, [click here](#) to go to the January AFAC newsletter.

STUDENT BLOG LYNDSEY WRIGHT



In recent weeks I have been delighted to hear that a number of our 'old' Bushfire CRC students

have submitted a thesis and received positive feedback and comments. We have also heard that a number of other students are getting close to submission, which is also fantastic news. We feel that we share so much of the

PhD journey with you over the years and cannot help but be thrilled when someone gets to this point.

Many of you will have seen that we have recently announced a new scholarship for those undertaking the research component of a Masters by course work in relevant areas. I am not aware of many such scholarships and am hoping there will be great interest so please promote as widely as possible..

More details on this opportunity for Masters students is available on our website.

COMMUNICATIONS BLOG DAVID BRUCE



One of the more striking sights at our annual conference is the row upon row of research posters in the main expo area. The range and diversity of style, colour and layout is impressive but the real impact is in the prominent Bushfire CRC branding across the lot. This is visual proof of the first "C" in

our name – *cooperative* national research under the one banner across multiple different projects.

Likewise, presentations given on Bushfire CRC slides are a strong

statement to our broader industry and beyond that many parts are working together on national issues.

The Bushfire CRC templates for slide presentations and posters have just been updated for 2012 and are available online here: <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/members/crc-documents>

These templates maintain the consistency across Bushfire CRC presentations while still allowing presenters some degree of artistic control over their final product.

I urge you to use these templates for any presentations of Bushfire CRC work. The website has some simple points on how best to use the templates.