

FIRE UPDATE

BUSHFIRE CRC NEWSLETTER JUNE 2012

REVIEW REPORT RELEASED

The Bushfire CRC is “sound and robust”, with supportive and engaged stakeholders, a high quality research program, a cohort of leading international researchers and a clear vision for its future – that is the view in the final report from the Independent Review Panel on behalf of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.

Over three days in April 2012 the Panel reviewed a broad range of activities and structures within the Bushfire CRC.

The report with its recommendations will now be considered by the Governing Board of the Bushfire CRC at its next meeting on Tuesday 26 June in Adelaide. The Board will formally respond with details on how the recommendations will be addressed. The following day, Wednesday 27 June, all partners will have the opportunity to discuss the way forward from the review at the Stakeholder Meeting.

The Panel made four major conclusions on the performance of the Bushfire CRC. It said the Bushfire CRC:

1. Demonstrates sound governance and committee structures that effectively involve stakeholders, researchers and end users.
2. Has a high level of interaction between

end users and researchers from determination of the scope of research projects through monitoring progress and in using results. It undertakes social and technical research of high quality that is valued by end users.

3. Manages research progress in a sound manner but with sufficient flexibility to take account of opportunities emerging during a research project.
4. Operates a successful postgraduate program that supports students and integrates them into the work of the CRC and that of the CRC participants.

The Panel supported the proposal for the Bushfire CRC to extend its term by 12 months to June 2014, using existing Commonwealth funds with additional resources from partners.

Although the main research program would still conclude in June 2013, a limited set of activities would be possible beyond this date. This would allow greater scope to deliver “fourth year” impacts of the research projects, allow postgraduate students to complete their courses and provide more time to transition to an ongoing research institute with a new research program.

The full report is online at the [Bushfire CRC website](#).

RESEARCH ADVISORY FORUM

Hobart was the venue for the sixth Bushfire CRC Research Advisory Forum on 23-24 May 2012. The forum was hosted by the Tasmania Fire Service, with Director of Community Safety Damien Killalea opening the proceedings at the Baha’i Centre of Learning (right).

The Bushfire CRC holds the forum every six months to review the progress of ongoing projects. Researchers and lead end users are given the opportunity to present an update of their activities and invite discussion from across the members of the Bushfire CRC. The audience heard presentations from around half the current research program from researchers, students and end users.

Featured at this forum were updates on research into risk communication and



risk assessment; environmental impacts of prescribed and wildfire; incident management organisation; urban and regional planning systems and fire; legal and policy sectors; fire, fuels and risk planning in the interface; and fire behaviour under extreme weather conditions. Presentations on the research project updates are now online at the [Bushfire CRC website](#).

CEO'S BLOG

GARY MORGAN



The Performance Review Panel delivered what can only be described as a positive and encouraging report on the Bushfire CRC. Again, I would like to publicly thank everyone who contributed to the presentation of our work over these days. It clearly had a positive impact on the Panel members.

The Panel noted the strong support of stakeholders and end users, at very senior levels, to the CRC and the extent to which evidence based research from the CRC was supporting cultural change within the participant organisations.

It recommended that the Bushfire CRC could better measure its research impacts, enhance its presence in social media and increase and diversify its partner base beyond its current 45 partners to include others such as utilities and insurance industries, to better match its future research aims.

Interestingly, the Panel’s main concern centred on measuring impact from the outcomes of the research. It believed we understated these actual and potential benefits.

The Panel wrote: “It was clear to the Panel that the research was being taken up with enthusiasm by participants, even where the results may not be the most palatable to those organisations. The Panel has made a number of recommendations for the CRC to measure these impacts more realistically.”

I am confident we can address all the recommendations over the next 12 months.

I encourage you to read [the full report](#) on our website, as it offers an insightful third party endorsement of the strengths and opportunities for the Bushfire CRC.

HELP FOR WA WITH PRESCRIBED BURNS

The Bushfire CRC is assisting Western Australia's Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) with its prescribed burning program.

Risk assessment and management arrangements for prescribed burns are being examined by Bushfire CRC's independent consultants Roger Estall and Ross Runnalls, along with insight from Bushfire CRC Deputy CEO and Research Director Dr Richard Thornton, to ensure they conform to international Risk Management standards (ISO 31000).

The Bushfire CRC consultants have already been successful in assisting DEC to prepare burn plan methodology for 71 burns covering 114,000 hectares for autumn and winter 2012. Following

the WA Special Inquiry into the November 2011 Margaret River Bushfire, burn plan methodologies must be submitted to the newly created Office of Bushfire Risk Management for assessment prior to a burn commencing.

Murray Carter, Manager Fire Management Services Branch at DEC, said the expertise of the Bushfire CRC is proving to be highly beneficial.

"The close involvement of the Bushfire CRC has not only facilitated access to a very high level of expertise in the risk management area, but will also ensure a much greater level of quality assurance is able to be applied," he said.

The assessment is expected to be completed by September 2012.

BUSHFIRE CRC HOSTS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHER

Botswana bushfire researcher Gloria Maikano (right) recently completed an internship at the Bushfire CRC with a special project assessing the objectives of our biannual Research Advisory Forum.

In Botswana, Gloria is a Senior Scientific Officer in the Research and Monitoring section at the Department of Forestry and Range Resources, conducting inventories and ecological research. Gloria was able to complete the internship through one of two scholarships she has received from the Australian Agency for International Development – the other scholarship is allowing her to undertake a Masters of Forest Ecosystem Science at the University of Melbourne.

Gloria noted that the knowledge and skills she



acquired in her time at the Bushfire CRC would benefit her upon her return to Botswana.

"My internship at the Bushfire CRC has been a fulfilling one, not only was I able to learn about leadership, I have

acquired skills that will help me develop in my profession in the research field," she said.

Gloria also presented at the Research Advisory Forum in Hobart last month on bushfire research being undertaken in Botswana.

STUDENT BLOG **LYNDSEY WRIGHT**



Now is the perfect time to keep an eye out for any students currently undertaking an

applicable project who may be interested in a Masters by Coursework scholarship through the Bushfire CRC. It's a great

opportunity for students to have their hard work supported and exposed to the industry.

By supporting students in relevant areas, the Bushfire CRC builds capacity and capability to sustain bushfire research, and to apply research in the future. More information, including how to apply, is available on the Bushfire CRC website or by contacting me on lyndsey.wright@bushfirecrc.com.

COMMUNICATIONS BLOG **DAVID BRUCE**



The amount of research that has been produced by the Bushfire CRC over the last decade can be quite overwhelming. With around 1000 items – research reports, journal articles, books, presentations, and posters – the Bushfire CRC website

is a huge resource for communities, researchers and the broader emergency management sector.

The Bushfire CRC publication *Fire Note* was created to make all this research digestible for such a varied audience. It's not

surprising that *Fire Notes* are regularly cited as one of the most useful outputs of the Bushfire CRC – they are forwarded throughout organisations, placed on websites, used as discussion papers for workshops and handouts at conferences, reprinted in newsletters, and quoted in reports.

These four-page research summaries are co-written by the researcher and a science writer in a plain language – the reader is left with a clear understanding of what the research is about, why it is being done, how it can be used, and where to go for more details. We are close to producing a milestone of 100 *Fire Notes* – all are online at www.bushfirecrc.com/firenotes.

IN BRIEF

STAKEHOLDER COUNCIL

The Bushfire CRC Stakeholder Council meeting will be held 9am-3pm on Wednesday 27 June in Adelaide.

Please note the meeting has moved to the National Wine Centre of Australia.

This is an important meeting for all Bushfire CRC partner organisations to contribute to discussion and decisions on the future research program in light of the recent Australian Government review of the Bushfire CRC.

Stakeholder Council representatives should contact beth.whelan@bushfirecrc.com to ensure all organisations are represented.

FIRE DANGER RATINGS

International Fire Danger Ratings expert Dr Marty Alexander will provide an overview of the principles of fire danger ratings in Sydney on Monday 18 June. For more information visit the [Bushfire CRC website](http://www.bushfirecrc.com).

BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK

The Northern Australian Fire Managers Forum is taking place in Townsville this month. An outcome of the meeting will be the annual Bushfire Seasonal Outlook for northern Australia – which will be publically distributed as a Bushfire CRC *Fire Note*.

HIGH FLYER

Dr Blythe McLennan – Bushfire CRC researcher based at RMIT University – has been selected to participate in the 2012 Theo Murphy High Flyers Think Tank entitled *Australia's population: shaping a vision for our future*, to be held in Adelaide on 26-27 July 2012. The Think Tank is organised by the Australian Academy of Science to gather early career scientists across varied disciplines to contribute to a national discussion on the major issues and knowledge gaps around Australia's population.

INNOVATION HONOURED

Prof Colin MacLeod – Bushfire CRC researcher based at the University of Western Australia – has been awarded a prestigious Thomson Reuters Australia Citation and Innovation Award for his work in the field of psychology.