



Department of Planning and Environment

Evaluation Management Response

NSW Bushfire Risk Management Research Hub

Evaluation

24 June 2022



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Executive Summary

The NSW Bushfire Risk Management Research Hub (the Hub) created collaborative research comprising of scientists, fire agencies, public land managers and Indigenous knowledge holders. Over a five-year period, the initiative developed end user-focused research to address knowledge gaps and the increasing complexity of bushfire management. The aim was to improve understanding of bushfire behaviour and risk. The Hub’s research was designed to meet the department’s strategic knowledge needs and align with the objectives of the department’s Enhanced Bushfire Management Program (EBMP) and the Living with Fire Strategy.

The Hub’s activities, outputs and impacts were established under the four guiding principles:

- Enhance bushfire research that informs the department’s strategic knowledge needs and helps the department to improve fire management
- Work closely with the department to deliver a cost-effective research program which leverages greater investment for fire research
- Ensure research information is relevant, based on the best available evidence and readily available in forms that end users can access, easily understand and use
- Foster transfer and integration of skills and knowledge to the department and also between research institutions, government agencies, Aboriginal co-management partners and the communities that the department serves.

From 2018 to 2022 six work packages were established to deliver the science projects. The hub achieved a critical mass of bushfire research, strengthened partnership between fire researchers and fire management and left a legacy of continued activities, tools and impacts. The primary outputs were 19 projects in response to the 2019/2020 Bushfire Inquiry, impact and influences on burning strategies such as FireTools, contributions to cultural burning research, 241 outputs (27% newspaper articles, 20% publications, 18% articles and theses) and \$16.69 million leverages funding providing a return of \$3.34 per \$1 invested.

The evaluation highlighted the need for six management improvements including:

- adequately resource and integrating end users in every step of the research translation process
- better resourcing the knowledge management function to amplify Hub outcomes
- ensuring the outcomes and objectives of the Hub activities are guided by the program logic
- improved development and reporting on SMART KPIs
- facilitate project completion to aid research adoption and reallocation of resources
- better identify and mitigate risks to strengthen planning for the end of the Hub to support researcher engagement and completion of research projects.

Management has reviewed these recommendations (Table 1) and has accepted all of the recommendations.

Table 1 Summary of recommendations and program team management response

Recommendations	Accepted (actioned)	Partly accepted	Not accepted
6	6	0	0

Management response to evaluation findings

Table 2 Evaluation findings and response

Rec. No.	Report finding	Recommendation	Response	Action/ Explanation	Responsible party (proposed)	Action contributors	Timing
1	<p>Finding 13 pg32 It will be challenging for the WPs to conclude all outstanding work to a satisfactory degree by the end of 2022.</p> <p>Finding 15 pg36 End users do not always have visibility of the outputs or how the research will be translated.</p> <p>Finding 17 pg41 There are opportunities to improve delivery and consider the process and structural dimensions of research translation to ensure they are more effective/impactful. In order to capitalise on these opportunities, additional resources will be needed to support enhanced information and knowledge exchange in the future.</p>	<p>Adequately resource and integrate end users in every step of the research translation process to ensure — end users receive research outputs that are targeted to their needs and support them to manage bushfires and environmental priorities — knowledge and research are applied — the research delivers outcomes and impacts.</p>	Accepted and action taken	<p>Contracts have been extended due to time required for the 2019/20 inquiry reports. Extra time has been given to Director to complete work.</p> <p>Bushfire Hub Showcase was held on 17 June 2022 with fire notes to aid incorporating research into practice.</p> <p>Next research centre proposes to ensure there are 2 positions with DPE to support both knowledge management and admin/communications.</p> <p>FIOB have 3 positions all addressing knowledge management.</p>	<p>Senior Team leader Fire and Cultural Science NPWS and RFS to provide staff time and resources</p>	<p>Current Hub Director Steering Committee NPWS member</p>	2022-2027
2	<p>Finding 5 pg19 Knowledge exchange officer role could have delivered more value if better resourced and focused</p>	<p>Better resource and task the knowledge management function to amplify Hub outcomes</p>	Accepted and action taken	<p>Next research centre proposes to ensure there are 2 positions with DPE to support both knowledge</p>	<p>Senior Team leader Fire and Cultural Science</p>	<p>Director, Steering Committee</p>	2022-2027

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	solely on knowledge transfer and research translation, which would require separate resourcing to deliver administrative functions Finding 21 pg 51 The Department will largely be responsible for the ongoing management of the Hub website and databases. The Hub's lasting legacy and future potential impacts can be improved by ongoing translation and adoption of existing and new outputs as they are developed.			management and admin/communications.			
3	Finding 6 pg 20 Hub program logic was not effectively leveraged to support the Hub's operations, management, governance, monitoring and evaluation activities.	Integrate the program logic into the early design and ongoing management of the program so that the outcomes and objectives of the Hub drive activities, reporting, performance management and evaluation.	Accepted	Hub program logic was commended in the review. Action will be taken to provide these recommendations for future development of program logics with Science, Economics and Insights Division.	Senior Team leader Fire and Cultural Science	Director, Steering Committee, Knowledge manager	2022
4	Finding 7 pg 24 There are opportunities to enhance the performance orientation of a Hub's KPIs	Develop and routinely report on SMART KPIs to drive accountability,	Accepted	Relationship between KPIs, outcomes, objectives and evaluation plan will be	Senior Team leader Fire and Cultural Science	Director, Steering Committee,	2022- 2027

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	in the future and to develop the KPIs in collaboration with the Hub Steering Committee.	data collection, reporting, performance management and evaluation. Reporting should clearly link to the Hub outcomes.		strengthened in the future. Ensure more routine and comprehensive reporting of the KPIs.		Knowledge manager	
5	Finding 9 pg 27 The WPs did not have formal processes for completing projects, which would have prompted discussions about translation and resource allocation.	Develop formal project and WP completion processes that integrate end users to facilitate discussions on research adoption and reallocation of resources.	Accepted	Design work packages and reports with completion processes	Senior Team leader Fire and Cultural Science	Hub Director Work package leader Knowledge manager	2022-2027
6	Finding 4 pg 18 Hub steering committee should have been more proactive in adequately planning for and mitigating risk Finding 16 pg38 The end of Hub life has created contract and funding uncertainty that has led key Hub members to leave prematurely. These risks were not adequately planned for and have caused significant	Incorporate active risk planning and management into the governance arrangements at strategic and operational levels to better identify and mitigate risks. Strengthen planning for the end of the Hub to support researcher engagement and completion of research projects.	Accepted	Future science research hubs will plan for the “end of life” by using the last year to ensure knowledge is incorporated into relevant programs	Steering Committee Chair	Steering Committee, Hub Director, Knowledge manager	2022-2027

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	challenges to the completion of WPs and the delivery of research.						