

New Rural Fire Division established

In April 2018, the State Government announced the provision of \$80 million for the creation of a Rural Fire Division within DFES. The new Division includes the establishment of a new \$18 million Bushfire Centre of Excellence, additional funding for bushfire mitigation activities, plus a range of new support measures for volunteers.

The reform package includes substantial new investment in bushfire prevention, with an additional \$15 million to extend the Bushfire Risk Management Planning Program and \$35 million to fund bushfire mitigation activities.



The Division has been created in response to the *Report of the Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire* and community feedback, which highlighted the value of decentralising rural fire management when supporting regional communities.

It aims to reduce WA's bushfire risk across the State, increase community resilience and forge stronger relationships with the State's bushfire volunteers.

Led by Executive Director Murray Carter, who has more than 30 years' experience in rural fire management, the new Division incorporates OBRM, the Bushfire Centre of Excellence, Bushfire Risk Management Program and its related activities, Land Use Planning and Bushfire Technical Services.

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence aims to improve rural fire management outcomes through leadership, collaboration and innovation across the sector. The initial and primary focus of the Bushfire Centre of Excellence will be to enhance the coordination and delivery of rural fire management training in WA. It will draw together the significant expertise of volunteers and local communities, along with state and local government, industry and research organisations.

OBRM's Assurance Program continues to provide oversight in the management of risk for conducting planned burning activities. This will become more important as organisations engage in planned burning as part the Bushfire Risk Management Planning Program.

In March 2018, the Kimberley Land Council were formally endorsed by OBRM and commenced involvement in the Assurance Program. The Council are the third organisation to be endorsed by OBRM. Others are DFES and Parks and Wildlife Service.

To make sure local volunteers have more input into bushfire management, Volunteer Liaison Officers will facilitate communication with DFES and the State Government. Volunteer Support Officers will be established in the regions to help volunteers with administrative duties.

Establishing better links with regional volunteers means communities benefit from the vast knowledge and experience of local volunteers, who understand the unique characteristics of their environment and how to support their communities.

Working together in this way will help make sure we are doing all we can to prepare for the hotter, drier summers ahead.