



Shelley Hancock
Minister for Local Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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SPECIALIST SUPPORT UNIT STANDS READY FOR BUSHFIRE SEASON

A specialist support unit to co-ordinate council-to-council assistance has been re-established to help NSW communities prepare for the bushfire season.

Minister for Local Government Shelley Hancock said the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group was instrumental in ensuring offers of help from non-bushfire affected councils reached communities devastated by the Black Summer bushfires in 2019-20.

“Councils are the heart of their communities but no more so than during times of emergency,” Mrs Hancock said.

“With the bushfire season officially beginning this month, I am once again calling on councils in a position to help other councils to come forward. Likewise, I am also calling on those councils who need a hand with bushfire preparedness to register through the specialist unit.

“While the initial focus will be on preparation, the unit will play a key role in matching council resources with communities in need if they are unfortunate enough to suffer more bushfires this season.”

Local Government NSW President Linda Scott welcomed the move, which would help councils and communities be better prepared as the warmer weather approached.

“Councils have long supported each other during emergency and recovery situations,” Cr Scott said.

“Established in response to the scale of the horrific 2019/20 bushfire season, the unit now helps to coordinate this support and represents an excellent example of generosity and collaboration among councils and NSW Government agencies for preparedness, recovery and rebuild.

“These efforts have never been more important, especially as we deal with the challenges presented by the changes to our climate.”

Cr Scott said forms of assistance provided earlier this year included records officers to locate archived planning files for hundreds of properties damaged by fires,

engineering staff to conduct assessments of damaged timber bridges and work crews to clear debris blocking access roads.

Formed in January 2020 as a partnership between the Office of Local Government, Local Government NSW, the City of Sydney, and Sydney Resilience Office, the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group co-ordinated hundreds of offers of assistance during the devastating 2019-20 bushfire season.

In total 44 councils offered 556 items of assistance in the form of staff and equipment across a broad range of functions, including asset construction and maintenance, engineering, environmental services, communications, planning and development, and community services.

Offers of plant and equipment included tippers, off-road vehicles, excavators, waste collection vehicles, generators and bobcats, along with staff to operate the machinery. Councils also offered arborists and tree removal teams, building surveyors, data management specialists, mechanics, and town planners.

In total 18 bushfire-affected councils lodged 60 requests for help which were matched with councils who offered assistance and those recovery efforts were completed.

Any council with outstanding work from last bushfire season can also contact the support group.

Councils requiring help and councils in a position to offer assistance can contact the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group on recovery@olg.nsw.gov.au or speak to their OLG Council Engagement Manager.

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