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THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report No 5/2013

ACT Bushfire Preparedness

Background

An extensive performance audit was conducted by the ACT Auditor-General on Bushfire Preparedness in the ACT. The audit commenced in August 2012 and was completed in May 2013. The Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report into the ACT's Bushfire Preparedness was released (the Report) on 26 July 2013 and tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly by the Speaker on 6 August 2013. A Government Response to the Public Accounts Committee in the Legislative Assembly is due within 3 months of the release of the performance audit report or by 26 October 2013.

The objective of the Audit, as detailed in the Report, was to provide an independent report to the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of the ACT Government's approach to bushfire preparedness. The audit looked at the following:

- ACT bushfire management governance;
- Planning processes and plans guiding bushfire preparedness;
- Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (TAMS) bushfire management activities;
- Community engagement; and
- Preparing for bushfire threats.

The audit approach and method consisted of:

- Interviews and discussions with key Emergency Services Agency (ESA), Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (TAMS) and Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) staff;
- Consultation with other ACT Government directorates, agencies and local organisations with roles defined within the *Emergencies Act 2004* (the Act);
- Interviews with partner organisations, such as agencies within the ACT and beyond the ACT that contribute towards the Territory's bushfire preparedness and response; and
- Reviews of relevant information and documentation.

The ESA, TAMS, the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD), the ACT Bushfire Council, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister Territory and Municipal Services were provided the opportunity to comment against the audit report recommendations.

ACT Government Comments

The ACT Government thanks the Auditor-General's Office for the extensive work it has undertaken to prepare the ACT Bushfire Preparedness performance audit report.

The Government notes that the Auditor-General has found that the Government's prevention and preparedness activities position the community to meet the challenges of living in the bush capital. The Auditor-General found that the legislation the Government has in place, the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and bushfire operational plans successfully provide the framework needed to manage the risk of bushfires in the ACT.

The Report also acknowledges the significant reforms and activities that have been undertaken by the Government since the 2003 Canberra bushfires. These include:

- The actions taken to respond to the McLeod and Doogan inquiries into the 2003 bushfires, as well as the numerous reports and inquiries that have informed Government to significantly enhance the ESA's operational capability and response;
- The passing of the *Emergencies Act 2004* that strengthened the ESA's statutory roles and obligations, as well as the governance, management structure and operational preparedness within the agency;
- An increase in the Government's funding to the ESA since 2004-05 from \$44.8m to \$104.3m, a 133% per cent increase;
- Implementation of Community Fire Units;
- The construction of and upgrade of ESA facilities including the new Headquarters in Fairbairn, the Training Centre in Hume Tidbinbilla RFS Brigade station, the Heli-Base in Hume and the new ambulance and fire & rescue station in Charnwood;
- The upgrade of ESA equipment and appliances; and
- Significant investment in ACTRFS and ACT Fire & Rescue vehicles.

The Report will contribute to further strengthening bushfire management and preparedness in the ACT. It provides the Government and the community with an assurance that ACT ESA and TAMS staff and volunteers are working well to ensure they are ready to respond to, and the community is prepared for, major bushfires.

The Report provides the Government with the opportunity to respond to change, and seek to continually improve the provision of bushfire management services for prevention, preparedness and response, which it welcomes. The Government will take the next steps to build on the current planning framework, compliance and operational capability.

The Government will continue to strengthen its relationship with the ACT community to promote resilience by understanding and managing the risks associated with living in the bush capital. The approach of shared responsibility has been a constant theme for the past decade and the Auditor-General's Report and recommendations support the Government's commitment to building a shared responsibility by improving the resilience and capacity of both the community and the Government for bushfire preparedness.

Elevated bushfire conditions earlier in January this year with fires in and around the ACT and NSW resulted in the successful activation and implementation of a number of plans demonstrating their effectiveness across the ESA and Whole-of-Government. The Government has significantly enhanced the provision of information to the community, building a strong relationship with the local media and providing timely and accurate emergency warnings and messages through its website and increased usage of social media.

The Auditor-General made 24 recommendations in the Report on the ACT's Bushfire Preparedness. The Government agrees to or agrees in part to all the Report recommendations.

The Report has identified some '*areas for improvement*', which the ESA and TAMS will address, specifically the high priority issues highlighted in the Report, in consultation and cooperation with other ACT Government directorates, agencies and local organisations with roles defined within the *Emergencies Act 2004*.

Motion by Mr Brendan Smyth MLA in the Legislative Assembly on bushfire preparedness

Mr Brendan Smyth MLA put forward a motion on bushfire preparedness on 18 September 2013, calling on the Government to '*release and make explicit all resources needed to meet the objectives of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan as per the Emergencies Act 2004 by the last sitting day of November 2013*'.

The Auditor-General recommended in Recommendation 2 of the Report that the ESA should comply with the requirements of the Emergencies Act by including in the SBMP an explicit statement of all resources needed. The ESA conducted an assessment of additional resources it required to implement specific activities of the SBMP, and it was concluded by the agency that the SBMP did not provide an '*explicit*' statement of resources.

It is the Government's view that given version 2 of the SBMP is nearing the end of its current life cycle, an '*explicit*' statement of resources should be included in version 3 of the SBMP. It will not be a good use of the Government's resources to include a '*statement of resources*' in the current SBMP. Given that the SBMP will come to an end in October 2014, any provision of resources to support it will need to be considered in the 2014-15 budget cycle. The ESA and the Directorate has stated in its response to Recommendation 2 of the audit report that a statement of resources will be included as part of the development of the SBMP version 3.

Mr Smyth's motion was put and passed in the Assembly and the Government is now required to '*release and make explicit all resources needed to meet the objectives of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan as per the Emergencies Act by the last sitting day of November 2013*', i.e. by the 28th of November 2013.

The ESA and JACS Directorate will work collaboratively with the TAMS Directorate, and other Directorates as appropriate, to explicitly identify and put together a statement of resources to meet the objectives of the SBMP.

ACT Government Position on the Audit Report Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (Chapter 2) – ACT Government directorate strategic and accountability indicators

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate should continue to review its strategic and accountability indicators and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should commence a review of its strategic and accountability indicators. The directorates should consult to develop complementary measures, which better assess their bushfire management activities.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The JACS Directorate and the ESA have reviewed and made changes to the Strategic and Accountability Indicators for the 2013-14 reporting year to better capture and measure data that reflects the ESA's bushfire prevention and management activities. The ESA will work with TAMS to further refine the indicators as necessary in order to improve the measurement and assessment of the complementary bushfire management activities.

The ESA and TAMS both have accountability indicators that report on the delivery of the TAMS bushfire operational plan (BOP). In reviewing the indicators the agencies will endeavour to enhance the correlation between the indicators to improve the reporting of BOP activities. Both the ESA and TAMS have well established protocols for communication on bushfire management matters, which will facilitate the development of complementary measures.

The TAMS Directorate intend to undertake a review of its strategic and accountability indicators related to fire management before the end of the 2013-14 financial year. Any changes to the current indicators will involve high level input from the ESA to ensure that joint fire management related objectives are complementary.

Recommendation 2 (Chapter 3) – Statement of resources in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

The Emergency Services Agency should comply with the *Emergencies Act 2004* requirements for the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan by including in this Plan an explicit statement of all resources needed to meet the objectives of the Plan.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The Government will release and make explicit a statement of resources needed to meet the objectives of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) version 2 by the last Assembly sitting

day in November 2013. The provision of financial resources or otherwise to support this statement of resources will be considered by the Government in the 2014-15 budget cycle.

This statement of resources will also be included in the development of the SBMP version 3, which commenced in July 2013 and is planned for completion in October 2014.

Recommendation 3 (Chapter 3) – List of privately-owned assets in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate, in managing future amendments to the *Emergencies Act 2004*, should propose amendments, which require the Emergency Services Agency to maintain information on privately-owned assets of public interest that are vulnerable to bushfire without the need to include this information in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The details of many of these privately owned assets are 'commercial in confidence'. The ESA will continue to maintain a register of these assets to support decision making. The JACS Directorate will review the requirement under the Emergencies Act 2004 in relation to this information and provide advice to Government for further consideration.

Recommendation 4 (Chapter 3) – The Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Implementation Working Group

The Emergency Services Agency should review the operations of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Implementation Working Group to determine if it is the most appropriate mechanism for 'monitoring the scope and effectiveness' of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan. If it is retained, ways to improve its effectiveness should be identified and implemented.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA will conduct a review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Implementation Working Group (IWG), including its terms of reference.

The Government recognises that there is a need to review the process of monitoring the scope and effectiveness of implementation of the SBMP. The ESA will establish this reporting process, through the ESA Commissioner, to the ACT Bushfire Council.

The TAMS Directorate will continue to provide resources to actively participate in the monitoring of the implementation of the SBMP and will continue to work closely with the ESA to ensure the most effective delivery of the SBMP.

Recommendation 5 (Chapter 3) – Annual progress reports on the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

The Emergency Services Agency should undertake audits to meet the requirements in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the preparation, sharing and publication of annual progress reports. Annual progress reports should be made available to the ACT Bushfire Council.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The function of coordinating, auditing, monitoring and reviewing of the SBMP will be incorporated into the IWG review (see response to Recommendation 4). Annual progress reports on the progress of the delivery of the SBMP will be made available by the ESA to the ACT Bushfire Council. The provision of annual progress reports to Bushfire Council is reflected in the new terms of reference for the Council.

Recommendation 6 (Chapter 3) – Review of fire management zones and Regional Fire Management Plans

The Emergency Services Agency should annually review fire management zones and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should subsequently update the Regional Fire Management Plans.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA has developed a framework, which outlines the process for undertaking yearly internal reviews of the Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP).

The ESA has overall responsibility for the RFMPs, and will commit to providing resources to undertake the process of review. It is recognised that the values managed by TAMS, including threatened species and recreational facilities, may be significantly affected by the strategies identified in RFMPs. For this reason TAMS will be heavily involved in the review of RFMPs.

The TAMS Directorate will annually review and update the RFMPs based on any new fire management zone information provided by the ESA and include major fuel management activities undertaken by TAMS in the preceding year. This annual review will be documented and provided to the ESA Commissioner for comment and approval and implemented at the same time as the development of the following year's TAMS BOP.

**Recommendation 7 (Chapter 3) – Preparation and approval of bushfire operational plans
(High Priority)**

The Emergency Services Agency should specify preparation and approval requirements for bushfire operational plans, particularly those for lands in the Bushfire Abatement Zone.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA will develop a framework, which lists the ACT Government Directorates, ACT Government Corporations and any other Manager of ACT Land that is required to develop BOPs. This framework will include the timeframes and process for submission to the ESA Commissioner for approval, and monitoring of implementation by the ESA. The actions under this recommendation, which are linked to recommendation 15c of the audit report, will be conducted in consultation with TAMS.

Under the Emergencies Act 2004, the ESA has powers in relation to compliance and enforcement activities with rural landholders, including those whose properties are located in the Bushfire Abatement Zone (BAZ). The ESA will ensure that regular inspections and compliance audits will be conducted, and direction given, to rural landholders or land managers when required.

Recommendation 8 (Chapter 3) – Monitoring of ACT Government bushfire operational plans

The Emergency Services Agency should develop a strategy for monitoring the development and implementation of all Government land managers' operational plans.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ACT Rural Fire Service (RFS) currently monitors and records TAMS BOP activities and will continue to do this. The ESA will review and improve governance arrangements for BOP monitoring and recording to assess the development and implementation of BOPs for all Government land managers. The review of governance arrangements will establish the means to:

- *assess the extent of implementation of the BOPs;*
- *assess the standard of implementation of the BOPs;*
- *ensure the strategies and standards of the SBMP are being achieved;*
- *ensure transparency in the implementation of BOPs; and*
- *report BOP development and implementation of BOPs to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the ACT Bushfire Council.*

The review of governance and reporting will also consider inclusion of the reporting requirements required of TAMS under Recommendations 11 and 13.

Recommendation 9 (Chapter 3) – National Land bushfire management framework

The Emergency Services Agency should continue to work with National Land managers and develop a National Land bushfire management framework to address bushfire risks on National Land.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

Although bushfire plans for National Land are already in place, the ESA will continue to engage and cooperate with National Land managers to enhance their plans in line with the objectives of the SBMP. A key component of this engagement will be the development of a policy to guide managers of National Land in developing bushfire risk mitigation strategies.

A strategic framework will also ensure there is a consistent approach to bushfire planning for these National Land areas.

Recommendation 10 (Chapter 3) – ACT Bushfire Council terms of reference

The Emergency Services Agency, in consultation with the ACT Bushfire Council, should conduct a review of the ACT Bushfire Council against its recently developed terms of reference (July 2013) within two years.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA will undertake a review of the ACT Bushfire Council against the terms of reference within two years.

Recommendation 11 (Chapter 4) – Monitoring and reporting of Territory and Municipal Services Directorate's Bushfire Operations Plan

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, as part of its Bushfire Operations Plan monitoring and reporting, should assess and publicly report on cumulative progress against broader outcomes identified in the Regional Fire Management Plans and the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

Over the 2013-14 financial year, the TAMS Directorate will investigate mechanisms that allow a more seamless reporting regime to be implemented that aligns BOP delivery with the objectives

established under the RFMPs and the SBMP. Once these mechanisms have been developed, these reports will be made available on the TAMS website.

Systems development over the course of 2013-14 will improve the TAMS Directorate's capacity to publicly report against the RFMPs and the SBMP.

Recommendation 12 (Chapter 4) – Monitoring and reporting of Territory and Municipal Services Directorate's Bushfire Operations Plan

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should enhance internal monitoring of its implementation of bushfire management activities and spending under the Bushfire Operations Plan by routinely reconciling figures in this plan with those in the Directorate's corporate financial system.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The TAMS Directorate have already commenced a process to establish a new data base system that will link BOP implementation to the TAMS financial system. The TAMS Directorate plans to develop and trial this new system during the 2013-14 financial year. It is envisaged that TAMS will have a new system operational and running in parallel for the 2014-15 BOP. The aim is to be fully reliant on the new data base for the 2015-16 BOP.

Recommendation 13 (Chapter 4) – Tracking and reporting on funds allocated and spent on the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate's Bushfire Operations Plan

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should annually (and on a cumulative basis) track and report on funds allocated for, and spent on, its Bushfire Operations Plan to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The tracking and reporting on the expenditure of funds against the BOP will be a key output of the process outlined under Recommendation 12 with the development of a new data base system that will align activity implementation with the TAMS financial system (refer to Recommendation 12 response). Reports will be generated and provided to the ESA, the ACT Bush Fire Council and both the TAMS Minister and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Recommendation 14 (Chapter 4) – Across-Government project management (High Priority)

The Emergency Services Agency, the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should strengthen across-Government delivery of major projects in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and Regional Fire Management Plans by collectively:

- a. monitoring the effect of the 2011 amendments to *Planning and Development Act 2007* and identifying additional changes, if appropriate;
- b. improving information sharing;
- c. finalising the pre-appraisal procedure; and
- d. holding an annual forward planning session for capital works.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA will work closely with TAMS and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD) to support the effective delivery of major projects under the SBMP.

As part of the review of the SBMP, which is currently underway, a review of major projects will be undertaken. The Directorates mentioned in the recommendation will jointly identify any statutory, policy or procedural improvements that may be required, and provide advice to Government as appropriate, of any proposed legislative amendment to the Planning and Development Act 2007.

Directorates will continue to improve information sharing, including the recommended "annual forward planning session for capital works". This planning session will be identified as a part of the process for submission of BOPs to the ESA Commissioner for approval under Recommendation 7 of the Report.

The TAMS Directorate will continue to work with the ESA and the ESDD to ensure a timely and financially responsible approach to delivering major works. The TAMS Directorate will review the effect of the 2011 amendments to the Planning and Development Act 2007 and, if necessary, identify additional changes to streamline the development approval process for essential fire management activities designed to protect the ACT community and environment from bushfires.

TAMS will improve information sharing by utilising existing regular ESA/TAMS forums to disseminate information, provide updates on relevant industry innovation, and relevant scientific research. The Directorate will work closely with the ESA and ESDD over the 2013-14 financial year to amend and finalise the pre-appraisal procedure.

Capital works projects proposed by the TAMS Fire Unit for the 2014-15 financial year will be discussed with the ESA and ESDD at a formal forward planning meeting during the 2013-14 financial year.

The ESDD will continue to collaborate with the TAMS Directorate and the ESA to assist in the timely delivery of works supporting the Territory's preparedness for bushfire.

Recommendation 15 (Chapter 5) – Land Management Agreements (*High Priority*)

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, in consultation with the Emergency Services Agency, should improve its management of Land Management Agreements, with respect to rural leaseholders' fire management responsibilities, by:

- a. maintaining an up-to-date record of current Land Management Agreements;
- b. undertaking timely reviews of Land Management Agreements, at least every five years;
- c. clarifying responsibility for identifying and monitoring bushfire risk through Land Management Agreements; and
- d. specifying bushfire management requirements in Land Management Agreements, as required by the *Emergencies Act 2004* and the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, and aligning these with any requirements under the Farm FireWise Program (refer to Recommendation 16).

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA will work with ESDD and TAMS to ensure that LMAs are clear on the responsibilities, actions required and process to be followed by rural landholders within the ACT.

The TAMS Directorate continuously reviews its processes for the development and management of LMAs. During the 2013-14 financial year, TAMS will update its records of current LMAs and timetable for their review. TAMS and ESA will work closely to ensure there is alignment between the LMAs and Farm FireWise plans.

Recommendation 16 (Chapter 5) – Farm FireWise Program

The Emergency Services Agency, in consultation with the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, should review the Farm FireWise Program, including:

- a. its purpose;
- b. to whom it applies;
- c. the relationship between this Program and Land Management Agreements; and
- d. planning and implementation processes.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA acknowledges the findings in this recommendation and is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Farm FireWise program, including external stakeholder consultation, to ensure that the successes of this program are built upon and that appropriate mitigation activities occur on rural leases across the ACT. The Farm FireWise program has been a very successful engagement tool for the farmers in the ACT. Parts of the program have been replicated in other jurisdictions.

The TAMS Directorate will work with the ESA in implementing Recommendation 15 to ensure that the relevant provisions of LMAs are consistent with relevant elements of the Farm FireWise program.

Recommendation 17 (Chapter 5) – Community Fire Unit Program

The Emergency Services Agency should improve its management of the Community Fire Unit Program by:

- a. developing governance and administrative documentation for the planning, management, administration and evaluation of the Program;
- b. reviewing and consolidating standard operating procedures and operational guidance for participants in the Program; and
- c. maintaining accurate records of activities, including training undertaken by Program participants and the issuing of stores and equipment to program participants.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA will review and consolidate the current standard operating procedures and operational guidance for participants of the CFU Program. This documentation will be collated into one document. Evaluation of the Community Fire Units (CFU) is included in the ESA Community Evaluation processes.

The ESA will continue to update its records of activities by CFU members and recording the issuing of stores and equipment based on the records captured from the 2012 internal audit of equipment.

Recommendation 18 (Chapter 6) – ACT Rural Fire Service brigades (High Priority)

The Emergency Services Agency and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should continue to improve working arrangements between the ACT Rural Fire Service Parks Brigade and the ACT Rural Fire Service headquarters, by:

- a) documenting the responsibilities of the Parks and Conservation Service Branch in its land management role versus Parks Brigade role and conveying this to all brigades; and
- b) updating or replacing the Emergency Services Agency and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate 2007 Memorandum of Understanding to guide working arrangements for bushfire preparedness and suppression.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA and TAMS have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which would reflect the significant improvements in the current working relationship between the two agencies and document the responsibilities of the Parks and Conservation Service Branch in its land

management roles. The MOU will be signed-off between the ESA and TAMS. The MOU will replace the previous 2007 version and be ready for use before the commencement of the 2013-14 bushfire season.

The ACT RFS will ensure that the Parks and Conservation Service Branch in its land management role versus Parks Brigade role is conveyed to all RFS Brigades.

Recommendation 19 (Chapter 6) – ‘Strategic bushfire capability’ (High Priority)

The Emergency Services Agency and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should develop and routinely review a strategic bushfire capability for the ACT. The contribution of ACT Fire & Rescue (including the Community Fire Units) and the ACT Rural Fire Service (including Parks Brigade) should be explicitly stated.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The SBMP, the ACT Territory Wide Risk Assessment and Concept of Operations for Bush and Grassfires provide the guidance by which the requirements for a strategic bushfire capability can be undertaken. The ESA will develop a framework to enable the RFS, ACT Fire & Rescue and TAMS to report on their strategic bushfire capability. This will be delivered under the coordination of the ESA.

Recommendation 20 (Chapter 6) – Competency, training and Incident Management Team capability (High Priority)

The Emergency Services Agency should:

- a) review the ACT Rural Fire Service’s target for its members holding recognised units of competency, and the timeframe for achieving the target level of competency;
- b) review its training and development activities in order to meet its model of service, and the Rural Fire Service’s contribution towards the ACT’s strategic bushfire capability (Recommendation 19), taking into account the level of cross crewing that is feasible;
- c) continue liaising and collaborating where possible with the Parks Brigade over the Brigade planning and implementation of its training and development activity;
- d) prepare and maintain medium-term training and development plans for the ACT Rural Fire Service; and
- e) determine a target for incident management team capability and identify how this will be achieved.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The RFS has developed a training and development capability framework, which defines and documents targets for its members holding recognised units of competency. The RFS has undertaken a needs analysis based on this framework, which underpins its training program. This will be reviewed against the ACT Strategic Bushfire Capability when developed. The ESA will also identify minimum levels of Incident Management Team requirements.

Recommendation 21 (Chapter 6) – Information capture and sharing

The Emergency Services Agency and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should improve information capture and sharing by:

- a) recording accurately and efficiently personnel information and capabilities in relation to bushfire management; and
- b) improving the coordination of the planning and use of bushfire preparedness maps between ACT Government agencies.

ACT Government Position

AGREED IN PART

Vetrak is a recognised training and volunteer information reporting database that meets the requirement of record keeping for training activities to Registered Training Organisation standards. It is not intended to be a Human Resources (HR) management system. It is recognised that there is some HR information that the TAMS Directorate needs to keep separate from RFS requirements.

The new Mobile Data Terminal system also allows tracking and recording of individual activities and the ESA will develop additional reporting from this information. The ESA proactively coordinates the use of maps between the ESA and TAMS.

TAMS will continue to improve its engagement with the ESA to ensure coordination and information sharing with regards to map preparation as it is currently doing with the development of a joint fire trail map.

Recommendation 22 (Chapter 6) – Firefighters' Fitness

The Emergency Services Agency and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate should clarify the timing of the requirement for meeting firefighter fitness requirements, as set out in ACT Rural Fire Service operating procedures and the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate's Enterprise Agreement, and give priority to meeting that requirement.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA has refined the requirements for meeting firefighter fitness with RFS Volunteers by amending the RFS Standard Operating Procedure on volunteer firefighter fitness. This amendment clearly indicates that fitness tests are undertaken by RFS personnel in an ongoing annual and cyclical process.

Recommendation 23 (Chapter 6) – Fire readiness assurance

The Emergency Services Agency (ACT Rural Fire Service headquarters) should implement a system to provide assurance to the Chief Officer of the ACT Rural Fire Service that personnel and equipment readiness meets requirements.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The RFS has developed a framework that outlines the process for ensuring that an audit of vehicles and equipment is carried out at the Brigade level and results are forwarded to the RFS Chief Officer for consideration.

Recommendation 24 (Chapter 6) – Testing of public information communication systems

The Emergency Services Agency should develop and test administrative procedures for the communications systems used for the distribution of public warning and emergency alerts.

ACT Government Position

AGREED

The ESA has developed a standard operating procedure entitled "Testing of the ESA public alert, update and warning information distribution system". The ESA has developed and implemented a schedule for regular testing of the public alert and warning information distribution system.