

# Large Scale Natural Disaster Service Continuity

An overview of lessons learnt from 2016 to 2022





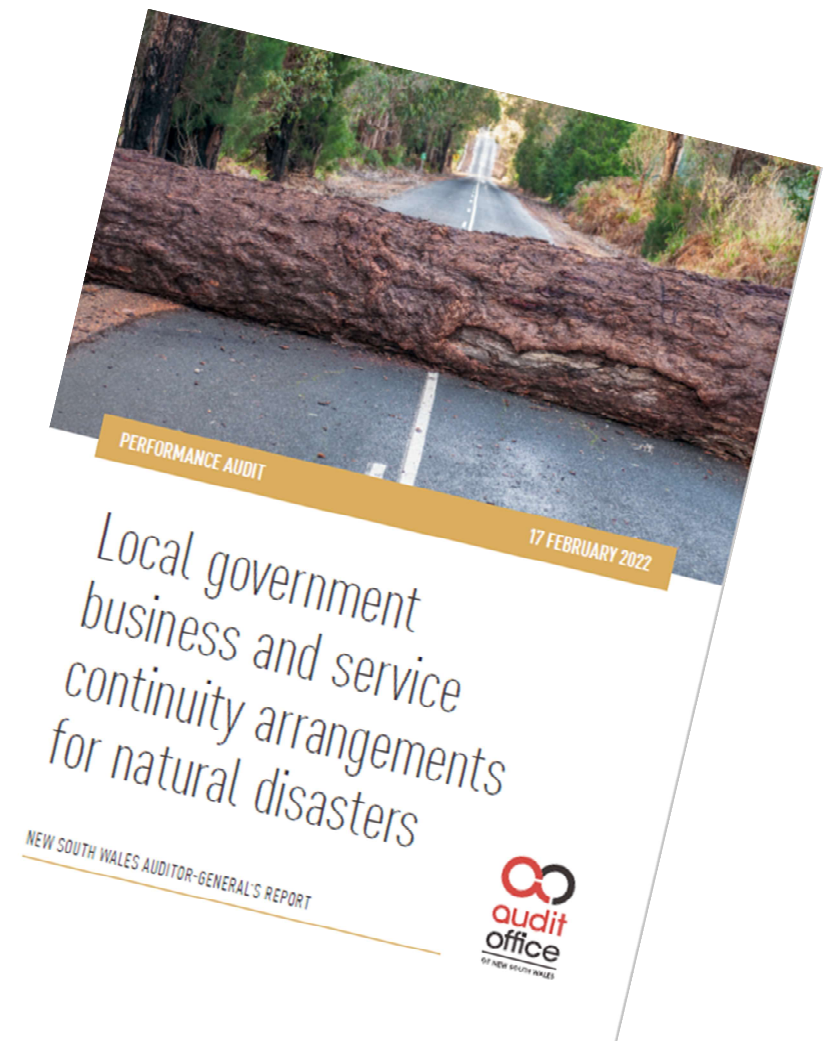
# Overview

## ***To identify some challenges and lessons learnt by BVSC:***

- Emergency response context as it affects Council
- Initial response limitations
- Service delivery challenges during the response phase
- What we can do differently next time

# Overview

- In 2021 BVSC was selected by the AONSW for a performance audit examining Councils business and service continuity arrangements for natural disasters
- This review identified five recommendations for BVSC to improve continuity of service delivery during an incident

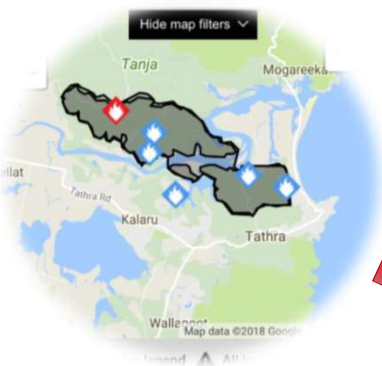


# Context

## Large Scale Natural Disaster – How Does it Work?



**Incident Management**  
Combat Agency Responds



**Incident Evolves**  
The Nature of the Emergency  
Exceeds Combat Agency  
Capacity to Manage the  
Totality Effectively



**All Agencies  
Approach**  
Other Agencies  
Engaged to  
Assist the  
Combat Agency

***NOTE:***  
***The Combat  
Agency Retains  
Incident  
Control***

## Context

- Series of natural disasters starting in 2016 which we are still recovering from
- Initial response and ongoing recovery has had a significant and ongoing impact on normal operations

*Series of natural disasters in the Bega Valley spanning six years*





## Limitations

- Campaign fires which impacted operational capability for all agencies but especially Council who filled the gaps
- During the black summer fires 146 Council staff were involved in supporting the incident

*Campaign fires that stretched operational capacity*





## Limitations

- Our BCP wasn't designed for the increased pressure of having a large number of key staff involved in emergency response and recovery
- Fortunately actual impacts on service delivery during each event was minimal – and business continuity was largely maintained

*Business continuity planning was focused on a small number of key staff*



# Challenges

- External support was greatly appreciated and particularly boosted the communities morale
- However dealing with external agencies was difficult and at times inefficient and impacted our ability to resume BAU

*Involvement with other external agencies complicated how we resumed services*



**Photo: Defence Department.**



# Challenges

## *Tasking requests and unexpected reliance on Council*

- Heavy reliance on Council to fill gaps using staff with varying degrees of knowledge and experience plus staff on leave e.g GM
- Unexpected reliance on Council for resources and facilities e.g waste sites, rec assets, airport, fleet units, plant and basic equipment
- The inability to formalise a continuity management team during the response with ad-hoc arrangements used instead





# Lessons

*Consider a large scale natural disaster in your BCP*

- Update BCP and subplans applying lessons learned from the experiences of the recent natural disasters
- Ensure recordkeeping relating to service delivery during natural disaster events is adequate – especially decisions made
- Council owning community recovery – continued depleting resources across the business in the process





# Lessons

## *Prepare for established responsibilities & unexpected tasking*

- Consider training and succession planning in your BCP roll out – train deeper and wider
- For large scale events expect Council to be asked to do more than you would expect
- Manage safety and wellbeing effectively – especially trauma counselling and support to employees affected





## Final Thought

*Knowledge management is key  
It is important we continue to capture  
and share the lessons we have learned!*

*In the last six years Councils across NSW have experienced a wide variety of damaging large scale natural disasters that have impacted operations, service delivery and staff/community well being*

**Debrief - Capture Lessons Learnt –  
Action Plans – Share Knowledge**



# Stay Connected



**Phone:** 02 6499 2222



**Email:** [council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au)



**Facebook:** [begavalleyshirecouncil](https://www.facebook.com/begavalleyshirecouncil)



**Website:** [begavalley.nsw.gov.au](http://begavalley.nsw.gov.au)

