
Appendix one – Response from agencies

Response from Department of Planning, Industry and Environment



Planning,
Industry &
Environment

Office of the Secretary

IRF21/1220

Ms Margaret Crawford
Auditor-General for New South Wales
GPO Box 12
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via email: mail@audit.nsw.gov.au

Margaret
Dear Ms Crawford

Performance Audit: Addressing public inquiry recommendations

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a formal response on this audit for inclusion in the final report to be tabled in Parliament.

I acknowledge this audit incorporates findings relating to five agencies: Fire and Rescue NSW, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW State Emergency Service and Resilience NSW, and I appreciate the significant work and professionalism of your audit team throughout this process.

I believe the findings and recommendations outlined in the report will improve transparency and performance within NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and across my Department more generally. I am pleased to note that the audit process has enhanced collaboration between key emergency response agencies.

The Department has commenced a review of the recommendations with the view of formalising governance arrangements around the implementation, tracking and reporting on public inquiry recommendations. This will include ensuring consistent practices and regular reporting to senior executives, audit and risk committees and our website, where appropriate.

Again, I would like to acknowledge the important work undertaken by your team and the opportunity your recommendations provide for the Department to continually improve its processes and practices.

Yours sincerely

Jim Betts
Jim Betts
Secretary

Many thanks.

29/3/2021

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Response from Resilience NSW



Resilience
NSW

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Tel 02 8688 7777
www.resilience.nsw.gov.au

Margaret Crawford
Auditor-General for New South Wales
Audit Office of New South Wales
Via email

Your Ref: D2102758
Our Ref: DOC056728

Dear Ms Crawford

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your Performance Audit on Addressing Public Inquiry Recommendations (Emergency Response Agencies) which examined the performance of emergency agencies' governance arrangements in addressing accepted recommendations from public inquiries.

We have prepared this joint response representing the following emergency agencies: Resilience NSW (ResNSW), Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW), NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) and NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES), for inclusion in the published report.

It is important to note that the scope of the audit extends only to process and governance arrangements relating to delivery and reporting of implementation of public inquiry recommendations. The report does not examine or make findings about the Agencies' performance with respect to the implementation of recommendations.

The agencies have focused on the successful implementation of recommendations as the most crucial benchmark for performance in relation to delivery of inquiry recommendations. The agencies consider that this is particularly appropriate in the absence of mandated governance processes for the management of all inquiry types within the scope of this audit. In that regard, it should be noted that of the 191 accepted recommendations within the scope of the audit, 98% of the recommendations have been implemented or are in progress.

The agencies consider that this record of implementation delivers on the primary intent of public inquiries, which is to identify areas for future improvement and to prompt a commitment to action by government or agencies in response.

Notwithstanding their strong performance on implementation of recommendations, ResNSW, FRNSW, NSW RFS and NSW SES welcome the opportunity to renew focus and effort in strengthening and developing their respective processes and systems for the management and reporting of implementation of public inquiries recommendations.

The agencies support the recommendations from your report. The recommendation related to establishment of an approach to tracking implementation status is supported in principle to ensure robustness and accountability throughout the process, noting however the extensive list of requirements may not be necessary in every instance given the varying nature, priority, and risk level of recommendations.

Each of the agencies have committed to the development of a more consistent and comprehensive approach and stronger governance systems for tracking implementation of, and publicly reporting on, public inquiry recommendations.

Following the findings of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements last year, agencies have been working towards improvements to relevant governance and accountability processes. This includes the establishment of a centralised and comprehensive approach for tracking public inquiry recommendations, building on agencies' existing mechanisms.

It is noted the recommendations from your report will create a new benchmark for governance and reporting on implementation of recommendations from public inquiries in NSW. It is presumed that the Audit Office will engage more broadly with the sector to consider establishment of these standards in policy.

The Government's commitment to improved governance and accountability is also reflected in the December 2020 amendment to the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*. This amendment conferred an explicit statutory function on the State Emergency Management Committee to promote the continuous improvement to policy and practice in the NSW emergency management sector through consideration of reviews and inquiries and their recommendations.

ResNSW is also in the process of establishing the central accountability mechanism as recommended by the NSW Bushfire Inquiry. The mechanism will initially report on the recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, with the first report to be presented to Parliament in May 2021. Options to broaden the scope of the central accountability mechanism to manage other public inquiries and reviews will be explored later in 2021.

We would like to formally thank the Audit Office review team for their work throughout the audit process.

Yours sincerely



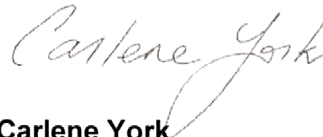
Shane Fitzsimmons
Commissioner
Resilience NSW



Paul Baxter
Commissioner
Fire and Rescue NSW



Rob Rogers
Commissioner
NSW Rural Fire Service



Carlene York
Commissioner
NSW State Emergency Service