



Media Release

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Preparing for natural disasters

Due to the changing climate, natural disasters such as bushfire and flooding are becoming more commonplace and extreme. The impacts of disasters are complex and can disrupt people's lives for years. With a growing population in the Mount Barker district, more people and property will become exposed to the hazards of catastrophic events.

With \$1.376 million from the Australian Government's *Preparing Australian Communities* grant scheme, Mount Barker District Council is putting in place a project to help local communities to be better prepared for future natural disasters and lessen the impacts of disasters should they occur.

Fire to Flourish is a project that will run over 2.5 years (2022-2025) to bring communities together so that residents have the capability to improve their preparedness for and resilience to natural disasters.

Acting General Manager Planning and Community, Alison Hancock said that local communities know their history, risks, people, resources, capacities, and geographical location better than anyone from outside the community.

"It is timely for communities to draw upon their significant local knowledge and capacity to work together to prepare and support each other before, during and after emergency events", Ms Hancock said.

Along with emergency management agencies such as Red Cross, SES and CFS, the council will be supporting residents of each local township to implement emergency response plans, and prepare for, adapt to and recover from natural disasters.

Forty local residents went along to a workshop recently held in Macclesfield where they learnt about the impact emergencies may have on their township.

"This workshop was very successful and is the first in a series that will ultimately result in the preparation of a community led action plan, Ms Hancock said.

"We'll be running similar workshops in other townships leading up to, during and following the upcoming bushfire season".

The council will also be working with Traditional Owners and the broader community to explore Aboriginal land and fire management in relation to natural disaster resilience.

“For tens of thousands of years, Australia’s Aboriginal communities cared for country by using land management that worked with the environment, Ms Hancock said.

“There is growing recognition of the value of Aboriginal land and fire management practices as a way to mitigate the effects of bushfires.

“We want to work with our local Aboriginal communities to find opportunities to reinvigorate these land management practices to reduce hazards but also to protect, maintain, heal and enhance healthy and ecologically diverse ecosystems”.

To support the *Fire to Flourish* project, the council has engaged two fire mitigation specialists who will increase the capacity to maintain fire tracks, fire buffers, roadside verges and assets by reducing fuel loads on council land.

The council’s Fire Prevention Officer will also be working closely with landholders located in bushfire risk areas to prepare their properties ready for the fire danger season.

Further information on the program is on the council’s website www.mountbarker.sa.gov.au/fire-to-flourish or you can contact *Fire to Flourish* program staff on 8391 7200 or email firetoflourish@mountbarker.sa.gov.au

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