



Feedback from Rangelands NRM Fire Forum

February 2014
(PJ130305)

Feedback from Fire Forum held 19-20/2/2014

Background

The initial concept for hosting a fire forum evolved from discussions at the Western Desert Fire Project Steering Committee meeting in June 2012 and other fire related projects across the Kimberley and Pilbara. These discussions identified that new projects encountered questions and issues that would benefit from knowledge and learnings from already established work.

The forum was held on the 19th and 20th of February, at the Department of Parks and Wildlife offices in Kensington (Perth). A series of topics was presented by a range of groups with the aim providing an opportunity for varied groups engaged in fire management across WA and beyond an opportunity to share experiences and look towards solutions. It was hoped that fire managers would walk away with a fresh understanding of each other's roles in this work.

Evaluation of the fire forum was conducted in several different forms. A written evaluation form was distributed by Rangelands NRM (RNRM), a series of short interviews were filmed by staff of Rangelands NRM, and a written evaluation form was distributed by the external facilitator of the event. These have each been discussed below.

Written evaluation - RNRM

The Fire Forum had 38 listed attendees but of these 36 attendees were available to complete an evaluation form as 3 were observing only and 1 person completed a form but was not listed on the attendance list. Of those 36 attendees 26 RNRM evaluation forms were received – a response rate of 72%.

The evaluation form consisted of four qualitative questions:

- How did you benefit from attending fire forum?
- Did the event meet your expectations? Did you learn what you hoped to?
- What was the key take home message? How will you implement the message?
- Was there anything that could have been done better?

The responses were tabulated and analysed for themes arising from the responses relating to benefits and take home-message.

1. How did you benefit from attending fire forum?

All (100%) respondents provided a response to this question. The key themes relating to perceived benefits gained from the forum were as follows (Table 1). Many respondents provided a response that sat across more than one theme.

Table 1: Summarised themes relating to perceived benefits of attendance

Theme	Number of responses	% of total
Networking and meeting other stakeholders	13	25%
Greater understanding about other groups and management activities (including Indigenous)	10	19%
Knowledge sharing (non-specific)	9	17%
Understanding of the fire management issues	9	17%
Improved understanding of the strategic picture of what is needed	6	11%
Opportunity for involvement in development of future directions	6	11%
Total number of times themes mentioned by participants *	53	

* This number exceeds the number of participants as many responses covered more than 1 theme

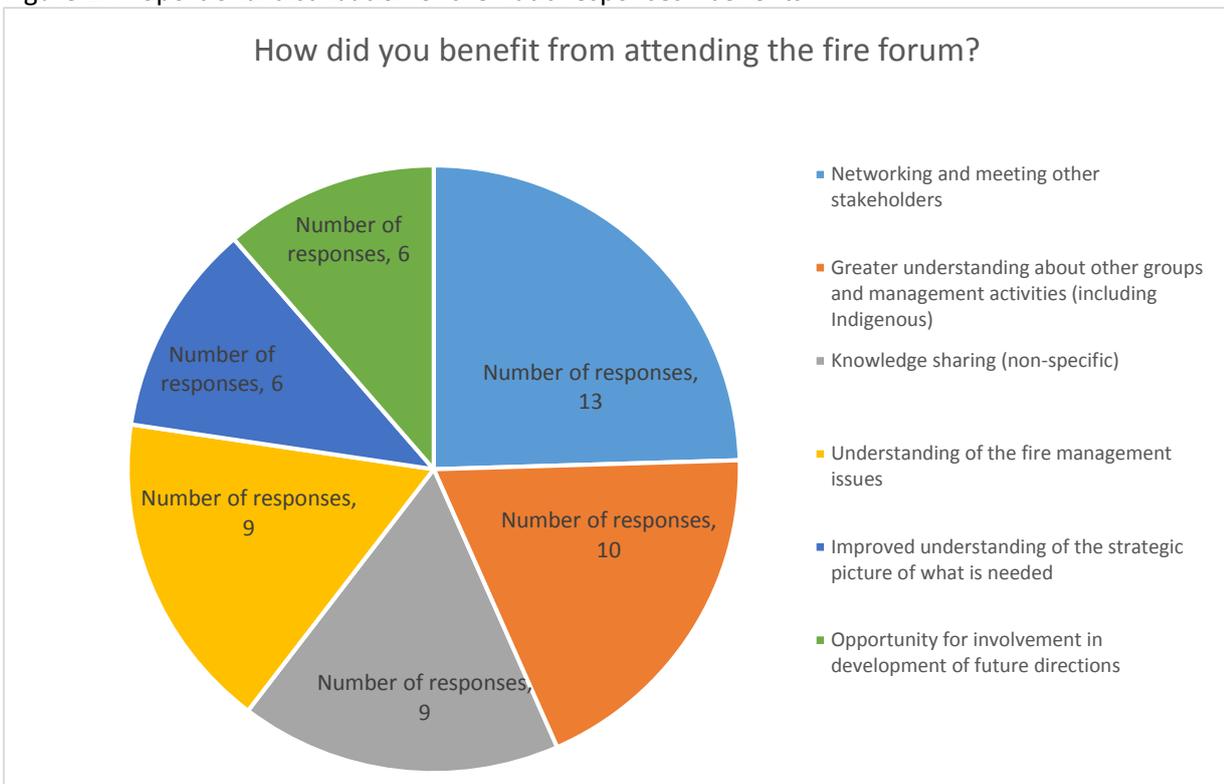
The results indicate a keenness to network with other stakeholders involved in fire management and learn from each other about differing management activities undertaken and issues experienced.

“Greater understanding about other groups and what they are doing. Broadened my understanding of the bigger strategic picture of what needs to happen”

“Clearer understanding of the various stakeholders engaged in fire management across the state and a positive way forward for managing fire in the rangelands”

“We are not alone - many, possibly all, are on the same page. Discussed ways forward based on past experiences.”

Figure 1: Proportional distribution of thematic responses - benefits



2. Did the event meet your expectations? Did you learn what you hoped to?

All respondents (100%) provided a response to this question. All responses positively indicated that the event had provided the information and learning that attendees had sought.

“Event did meet expectations and appears to have led to some good outcomes if momentum can be maintained”

“I was invited to present and really enjoyed staying for the rest of the forum. I found it very valuable and gained a great insight into the issues.”

“I wanted an introduction to issues, I got a valuable introduction to the scale, scope, type etc. of issues I'm likely to come across.”

3. What was the key take home message? How will you implement the message?

All respondents (100%) provided a response to this question. All responses indicated that the event had provided information that participants could take away with them.

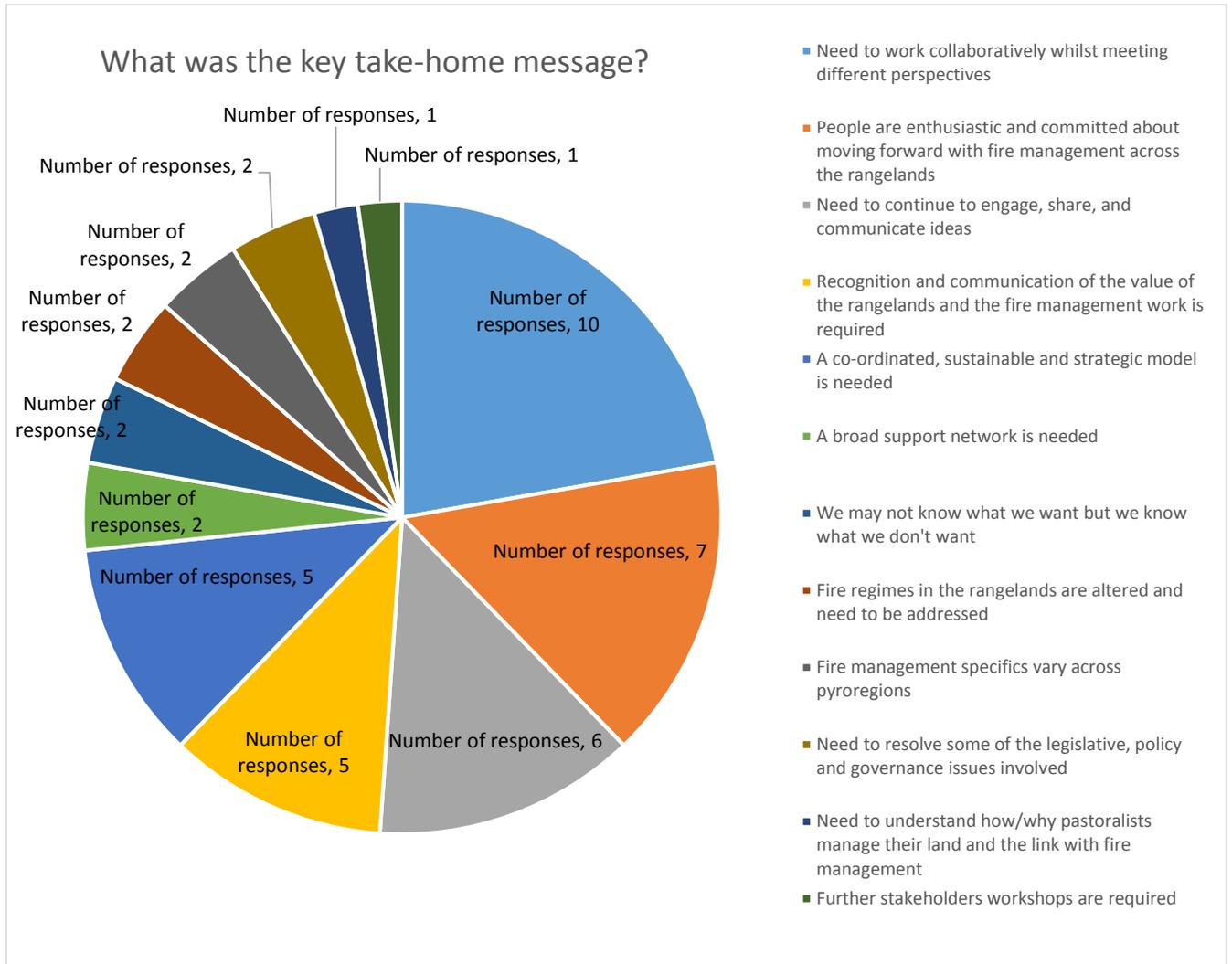
The themes relating to the key take-home message and ongoing implementation were as follows (Table 2). Many respondents provided a response that sat across more than one theme.

Table 2: Summarised themes relating to perceived take-home message gained

Theme	Number of responses	% of total
Need to work collaboratively whilst meeting different perspectives	10	22%
People are enthusiastic and committed about moving forward with fire management across the rangelands	7	16%
Need to continue to engage, share, and communicate ideas	6	13%
Recognition and communication of the value of the rangelands and the fire management work is required	5	11%
A co-ordinated, sustainable and strategic model is needed	5	11%
A broad support network is needed	2	4%
We may not know what we want but we know what we don't want	2	4%
Fire regimes in the rangelands are altered and need to be addressed	2	4%
Fire management specifics vary across pyroregions	2	4%
Need to resolve some of the legislative, policy and governance issues involved	2	4%
Need to understand how/why pastoralists manage their land and the link with fire management	1	2%
Further stakeholders workshops are required	1	2%
Total number of times themes mentioned by participants *	45	

* This number exceeds the number of participants as many responses covered more than 1 theme

Figure 2: Proportional distribution of thematic responses – take-home message



"Fire is important; Rangelands are important; working towards a common goal needs to be communicated and celebrated"

"Fire management in the rangelands is a "wicked problem" presents many opportunities to make the world a better place but needs strong leadership"

"Fire management is specific to different environments and different needs. Not easy to balance all requirements. There is a lot of good will and passion to make things happen."

4. Was there anything that could have been done better?

Fifteen respondents (58% of total respondents) provided a response to this question. Six of these responses (40% of respondents to this question) were a positive indication that the event could not have been improved whilst 9 (60% of respondents to this question) indicated how they felt the event could have been improved (Table 3).

Table 3: Summarised themes relating to perceived improvements needed

Theme	Number of responses	% of total
Need to increase access to the event	4	44%
Need for more information (prior to event and take away supporting material)	2	22%
Need for more social interaction	1	11%
Greater level of information about subject required	1	11%
Venue issues	1	11%
Total number of times themes mentioned by participants *	9	

* This number exceeds the number of participants as many responses covered more than 1 theme

“There were notable absences - Aboriginal people and pastoralists in particular”

“Positive messages are good but sometimes the contradictory message assists”

Short interviews - RNRM

Attendees were interviewed by Rangelands staff in order to gain a greater insight into the outcomes of the learnings obtained and gain an understanding of the attendees’ perceptions of the need for cross regional collaboration for fire management. The interviews were undertaken using an iPad to film attendees’ responses to up to three of four standard questions:

- What do you feel is the key factor in the success of ongoing cross-regional networking and co-ordination?
- What do you believe are the future potential benefits of such collaboration and networking?
- What would successful collaboration of fire management look like and can you suggest how we try to measure that success?
- What was the key take-home message from the forum?

Ten attendees were interviewed. A short film will be made of the interviews and posted on the Rangelands NRM website. A transcript of the audio content of the interviews was taken and key responses to the four questions. These have been categorised below.

Key factor in success of cross-regional networking/collaboration

“It’s about sharing information, finding common ground, finding areas where we’ve got knowledge gaps, that perhaps we can work together and pool resources to help solve some of those knowledge gaps. The rangelands is a large area with relatively few resources, so if we can both share knowledge and I guess even physical resources and collaborate and partnership up with funding to achieve good fire management in the rangelands, I think that’s where we need to go next. We can’t continue to operate in isolation, we need to work much more collaboratively, sharing knowledge and resources we’ve got.” Neil Burrows, Department of Parks and Wildlife

“...it begins with a conversation, it begins with an idea and gives you an understanding of what values, drivers and resources you can bring to a collaboration. So I think this is kind of the start. It’s also about

creating multiple economic streams and bringing lots of different people together to accomplish fire management.” Hamish Morgan, Central Desert Native Title Service (CDNTS)

“...Finding out what others have been doing and then sharing it, whether it be in a workshop like this, or preferably out in the bush, out on the ground, kicking the dirt, especially if we are going to be talking to Traditional Owners out on their country.” Stephen Van Leeuwen, DPaW

“...greater level of cross regional discussion between the rangelands groups of WA and the NT and Queensland because there are very disparate conversations that take place at the present time. And, quite clearly from what we’ve seen today, there’s lots of very similar challenges and I think one of the good things that could come out of this would be to actually encourage more of that dialogue that takes place.”
Jeremy Russell-Smith, Charles Darwin University

“...and planning together, not just working together, the planning has to come first.” Neil Hamagouchi, Environs Kimberley

“...good will is the fundamental thing. People have to have a desire to make things like this work. And it will rely initially on the passion of individuals but if it is perpetually reliant on the passion of individuals when they move on, it dies. So somehow you have to embed good will in organisations that last a long time.”
Ralph Smith, Department of Fire and Emergency Services

Potential future benefits of collaboration

“...be in a much stronger position to actually be able to get some resources and connecting block programs and all those things together to make it possible. ...there are those sorts of opportunities there, whether it’s in biodiversity, carbon offsets. But unless that conversation is actually being held with the people across the north, across the centre, they won’t go anywhere.” Jeremy Russell-Smith, Charles Darwin University

Picture of successful collaboration

“I think success would look like integrated action on the ground. Things actually happening in a collaborative fashion on the ground to reduce the adverse effect of unplanned fire. ...So if we can, over time, see a reduction in those late season impacts that would be a degree of success.” Malcolm Cronstedt, Office of Bushfire Risk Management (DFES)

“What it would look like is, would be agencies ... providing strategic overarching direction and lots of landowners, land managers on the ground doing the implementation of those plans with fire across the country all the time. And the measures of success would be employment for Traditional Owner groups and pastoralists and communities and lots of fire in the landscape so that biodiversity is not declining.” Stephen Van Leeuwen, DPaW

“...success would look like a reduction in big summer wildfire or high intensity wildfires. It would look like a patchwork quilt of small fires at different times since fire. It would look like having indigenous communities in power to carry out their own fire management with their own capacity and resources and knowledge and skills supported obviously with modern technologies.” Neil Burrows, Department of Parks and Wildlife

Key take-home message

“...there is a need to ensure that the community as a whole appreciates the value of rangelands, the very diverse values associated with rangelands. And...those that participate in the rangelands for whatever role,

ensure that we optimise the benefits to the rangelands as an entity and look at all of the components that influence rangeland management but in particular fire, because fire is the key component in all processes.”
 Ralph Smith, Department of Fire and Emergency Services

“...the thing that really impressed me was that it does seem possible is that we can make all those stakeholders happy with pretty much a single approach to fire. That we are not talking about irreconcilable differences between the stakeholders, and that is a pleasant surprise.” Ian Hereford, Department of Parks and Wildlife

Facilitator evaluation

Written evaluation - Facilitator (Craig Salt)

Feedback was also sought by the external facilitator – Craig Salt of Sustainable Consulting – engaged to facilitate the event. This evaluation form used a Likert-type scale to measure feedback across a series of questions under several components:

- Perceived outcomes
- Process
- Facilitator
- Overall experience

The quantitative questions required a response of ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘not relevant’ to a series of predetermined outcome statements. Twenty-seven responses were received – one more response than those received for the RNRM qualitative form. This is also a very positive response rate.

When RNRM decided to seek feedback from attendees it was not known that the facilitator would also be seeking feedback and this may have been an unwanted burden of those attending. In future communication is required to ascertain the level of feedback that will be required of attendees and a collaborative process should be put in place.

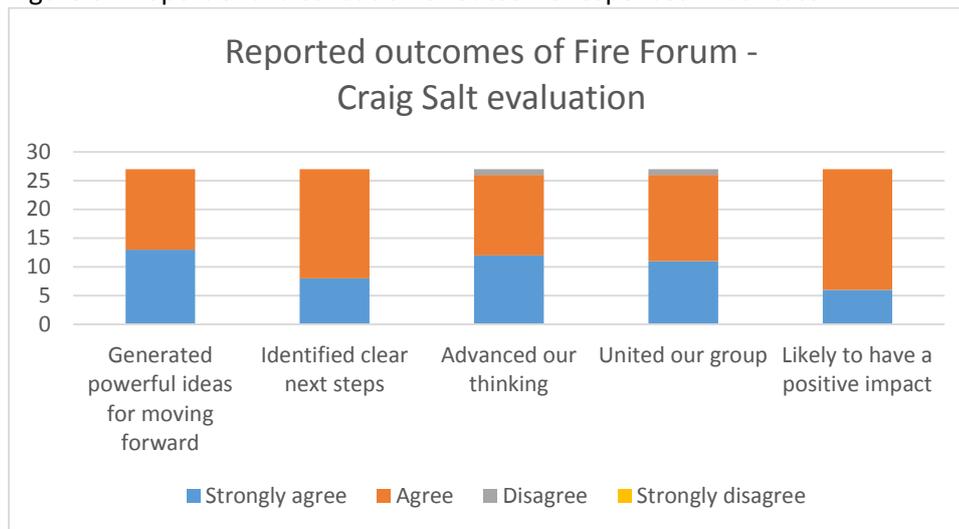
For the purposes of this review only the outcomes component was considered. Results indicate that almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that outcomes had been achieved from the event – most noticeably that the forum had generated a way forward. Two respondents negatively responded to statements that the event had advanced thinking or united the group.

Table 4: Feedback received via the Facilitator’s evaluation

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Generated powerful ideas for moving forward	13	48%	14	52%	0	0%	0	0%
Identified clear next steps	8	30%	19	70%	0	0%	0	0%
Advanced our thinking	12	44%	14	52%	1	4%	0	0%
United our group	11	41%	15	56%	1	4%	0	0%
Likely to have a positive impact	6	22%	21	78%	0	0%	0	0%

Source: Craig Salt, Sustainable Consulting

Figure 3: Proportional distribution of outcome responses - Facilitator



Conclusion

The Rangelands Fire Forum held in Perth in Feb 2014 successfully brought together key stakeholders to learn from the experiences of others, share their knowledge of fire management, and network. Respondents gained a positive sense of how to improve fire management and agreed that the event was an important first step in effective collaboration. There was strong agreement that outcomes had been achieved from the event.

In summary:

"We have just had the inaugural fire forum for rangelands, which I thought was a great success in the fact that we've got a heap of people sharing knowledge and looking towards the future as to what we could be doing as a collective in terms of having the peak body and coming down to individual sub-regions and operating at that level ... everyone is working towards a common objective of environmental, cultural and pastoral values that because there are so many cross overs at the centre, it's taking people on a journey so that they own the process and ultimately everyone wants the wildfires contained....with assets protected... high productive pastoral country, environmental assets, infrastructure." John Silver, Rangelands NRM