

EXTRACT OF JOINT UFU/CFA VOLUNTEERS GROUP/AVA SUBMISSION EXAMPLES OF VBRC RECOMMENDATIONS &

187. The evidence base for reform is already substantial. What the Committee should focus on under this term of reference is a rigorous assessment of where Victoria actually stands in relation to each of the 67 VBRC recommendations. That is, what has been implemented and is working, what has been implemented poorly or only partially, and what has not been acted upon at all? A structured stocktake of all VBRC recommendations is an efficient use of this Inquiry's attention and a useful contribution it can make. Further inquiries and reviews are not a substitute for action. The Victorian Government must be held accountable not for its willingness to commission processes and reviews, but for its willingness to implement their outcomes.
188. The issues raised throughout this submission are not novel. A number of the matters identified above as areas of ongoing concern correspond directly to recommendations made by the VBRC in 2009 that have either not been implemented or have been implemented inadequately. Each of those are set out below.
189. **Radio and communications failures experienced across Victoria during the 2026 season:** handheld radios failing in heavy smoke conditions and/or the built environment, loss of communications during burnover events, and the absence of reliable redundancy. These speak directly to VBRC Recommendation 23, which required the CFA to review and improve its communications strategy and develop a program for identifying and responding to black spots in radio coverage. Sixteen years on, crews from both CFA and FRV are still losing communications at critical moments.
190. **The failure to meet the prescribed burning target of five per cent of public land annually,** identified throughout this submission as a significant contributing factor to the severity of the 2026 fire season, goes to the heart of VBRC Recommendation 56. Victoria formally abandoned that target in 2015, and the consequences of that policy reversal were evident this season.
191. **Electrical infrastructure,** particularly the failure to progress the undergrounding or replacement of SWER power lines in high-risk areas, remains one of the most significant unimplemented recommendations from the VBRC. Recommendation 27 called for the progressive replacement of SWER lines with safer technology. As addressed under Term of Reference 5, power line infrastructure continues to pose ignition risks and communities were left without power for extended periods during and after the 2026 fires.
192. **The inadequacy of recovery frameworks and community support,** documented under Term of Reference 6, reflects the incomplete implementation of VBRC Recommendation 54, which called for a comprehensive approach to recovery addressing the needs of individuals, families and communities across the short, medium and long term. The experiences of fire-affected residents described in submissions to this inquiry suggest that comprehensive framework remains aspirational rather than operational.

Our Recommendation 25: The Victorian Government be required to provide a structured public stocktake of its progress against each of the 67 VBRC recommendations, clearly identifying what has been fully implemented, what has been partially or inadequately implemented, and what has not been acted upon. Where recommendations remain outstanding, the Government should be required to set out a funded timetable for timely completion. Further reviews and process commitments are not a substitute for accountability for action on recommendations already made.