



Download: Summary of key learnings and considerations from Hawke's Bay trial

The Local Advisory Committee Trial in Hawke's Bay demonstrated that:

- LACs will work in the way intended by Cabinet and the Act.
- LACs will enable Fire and Emergency to connect with and broaden existing reach into communities.
- The primary value LACs bring, in the early years, will be the connections they have with their communities. Fire and Emergency personnel can leverage these connections to facilitate risk and need conversations with communities in order to inform local planning as to how the organisation will mitigate these risks.
- It will take time to evolve and mature LACs before Fire and Emergency can expect them to identify existing and emerging risks and needs. Fire and Emergency could utilise LACs in the first instance to validate and prioritise known local risks and needs, and supplement what Fire and Emergency already recognise as critical risks and needs.
- LACs have the potential to inform Fire and Emergency's risk reduction activities and strategies and strengthen community resilience, locally and nationally.
- It would be difficult to reduce the size of the committees below eight members if the local areas are a similar size to the Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group boundaries. The ability to identify members who have sufficient coverage across communities and risk profiles would be challenging with a fewer number of members.
- LACs will require careful set up and ongoing support from Fire and Emergency. Local Fire and Emergency personnel who support and interact with LACs will need to be capable in engagement and facilitation to ensure the LAC members connect to and leverage their community's perspectives.
- A co-ordination function will be required to maintain consistency at a national level. The national function will need to administer LAC membership, consolidate advice from LACs, monitor LAC performance, and manage interactions with the Board.
- Fire and Emergency must focus on sustainability of membership. It would not be in Fire and Emergency's interest to potentially lose all LAC knowledge after an initial three-year term, i.e. membership terms should be staggered.
- Fire and Emergency must engage and communicate openly with LACs when receiving their advice. Fire and Emergency risk losing members if it cannot provide rationale for why it has chosen to act or not act on certain advice.

Specifically, Hawke's Bay trial helped Fire and Emergency to:

- **understand and quantify the breadth and depth of connections into the community that a committee can provide** – the Area Manager and Principal Rural Fire Officer recognised the benefit of this and made a number of new connections with parts of the community that they would not have normally engaged with. In some cases, they found tactical solutions to local needs raised during engagement – e.g. first aid courses with Plunket for mothers of young babies in a remote area, who previously could not find enough people to meet minimum number of attendees for a course.
- **understand how to leverage the LAC members' connections** to obtain a community perspective on local risk and need, while balancing the work effort required of committee members to engage with their many connections in the community.
- **understand how to support committee members to engage their communities of interest, with confidence and credibility** - the trial helped to identify the information that new committee members will need to know about Fire and Emergency, the data around local risks, capability, and emerging risks they may need to address when they are engaging with their communities of interest.
- **realign expectations of LACs as they are being formed - "Rome wasn't built in a day"** - the trial helped Fire and Emergency to better understand that it will take time for committees to engage the community on the purpose and value. Expecting new committee members to get their communities of interest engaging and advising on the risks and needs of their local area, early on is likely to be a challenge.
- **understand the role of local leaders** - it is proposed that dedicated resources are provided to support committees on an ongoing basis to enable them to operate successfully and will be the key to their effectiveness and perceived value in the community. If Fire and Emergency does not dedicate the appropriate time, attention, and resource to establish, manage and support LACs, its credibility for becoming a community organisation could be compromised.
- **LACs cannot be treated on a "set and forget" basis** - it will take time, investment, and continual oversight from Fire and Emergency, particularly in the formative years to ensure committees and Fire and Emergency feel confident that they are able to connect with their communities in a credible and effective way for the longer term.