



Post Activity Report

Operation Woods – Wooroloo, WA

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Foreword:

The launch of Operation Woods was a unique undertaking for DRA in that it was not only our first operation in Western Australia, but also the concurrent launching of our Perth DRT. The concept of a 'Sustain Team' was field tested with staff from established DRT's and with operational experience, deployed into theatre to establish key relationships, prepare for operation launch and talent scout for potential key DRT positions. This proved successful and ensured continuity and mentoring across the duration of the operation and left in place a solid DRT leadership team.

With Covid19 still resulting in varying states of lockdown and travel restrictions, bolstering numbers from the East coast became challenging and reliance on, and expansion of the Perth membership base took precedence.

With Minderoo Foundation providing much needed plant operators, corporate volunteers and many Perth DRT members undertaking multiple waves, Operation Woods became our largest operation to date.

I commend the efforts of all those who gave up their time, both on the ground and back of house to assist the affected residents of the Shire of Mundaring and City of Swan. The impact on these communities cannot be overstated and Operation Woods has created a solid DRA foundation in Western Australia and increased the already significant reputation across Australia.

Thankyou all for your outstanding efforts.

Yours in service

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Summary of Events:

Background

On Monday, 1 February 2021 the Wooroloo fire started near Werribee Road, Wooroloo, Western Australia and was first reported at around 2pm. On Tuesday, 2 February 2021, the fire had travelled in a northwest direction spreading from the Shire of Mundaring into the City of Swan, destroying approximately 80% of properties in the township of Tilden Park. By Saturday, 6 February 2021, the fire had covered 26kms burning approximately 10,900 hectares. The emergency efforts transitioned from the response to recovery phase on Thursday, 11 February 2021. As of Thursday, 18 February 2021, approximately 320 properties had been damaged by the fire with 86 of those destroyed.

Intent

Operations Woods was Disaster Relief Australia's first major operation in Western Australia. Strategically, Op Woods incorporated the launch of the Perth Disaster Relief Team and strengthened the partnership with the Minderoo Foundation's Fire and Flood Resilience initiative.

The operational intent was to conduct Type 3 bushfire recovery operations in the Shire of Mundaring and the City of Swan. Providing direct assistance to the impacted communities and supporting the wider bushfire recovery operations coordinated by the WA State government. Deploying DRA resources predominantly from the WA to identify talent and build the Perth DRT leadership structure and membership base, augmented with key leadership appointments from established DRTs into designated areas of operations.



Overall Assessment

As previously stated, Op Woods was DRA's first operation in WA and DRA's largest operation to date. It was conducted with simultaneous operations being conducted on the east coast of Australia and placed significant demands on the organisational capability.

That it was conducted safely with no major incidents or injuries is a credit to the systems, processes, leadership and ultimately the 219 volunteers that participated in the execution of the operation.

Operational Data Overview

General Data		Operations Data	
Operation #	Woods	Total DRA Volunteers	M: 139 F: 66
		Total SponVol - CorpVol	S: 0 C: 16
Dates	213/02/2021 – 24/04/2021 (54 days)	Total Vol. Hours	11,064
		Total ADAT flights	148
Location	Perth Hills, WA	Total Work Orders Completed	103
Regions Involved	National, DRTs (Syd/Bne/Melb/Tsv, Adl, Per).	Total Work Value	\$545,497
Interagency Collaboration			
Government	Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia SCRGPF SEMC Chair Shire of Mundaring City of Swan DFES	PR / Media	Channel 9 Echo News
Partners	Minderoo Foundation Fire and Flood Initiative Coates Hire – Project Lowerson	NGOs/VOADs	RSL WA Blaze Aid Red Cross
Local Business	Eastern Hills Saws & Mowers Café Mojo Bunnings Midland RSEA Safety Midland Wooroloo Primary School Kalamunda IGA Food Market	Corporate Volunteers	Coates Hire PSM Upstream Solution

Table 1. Operational Data Overview

Operational Appraisal

Notable Achievements

- Launch of a DRT from scratch off the back of this operation. Prior to Op Woods, DRA had no formal presence in WA. The Wooroloo fires provided the opportunity to develop that presence and recruit a leadership team from which to develop a disaster recovery team.
- Early deployment of DRA's ADAT capability and employment of ArcGIS as a mapping / GIS platform. The delivery of high-quality products early in the recovery phase impressed stakeholders at council and state level. The use of local volunteers to undertake flights provided a service that could be tapped into, without needing to deploy a dedicated ADAT team from elsewhere.

Key Feedback & Lessons Learnt

Pre-deployment preparation and planning

- Most of the waves did not have FULCRUM experience and required training prior to field deployment.

Volunteer selection process and deployment

- Generally reported as good, with some isolated disagreements during course of the operation.
- MC W4 had to deal with an unauthorised DRA 'member' self-deploying. repeatedly. The MC reported that HR provision was insufficient.

IMT roles and support

- Having functions within the IMT with national level reporting / communication lines outside the MC impacts on the unity of command. Consideration needs to be given as to whether this should be revised as the IMT training is further developed. One mission, one boss.
- Terminology within DRA doctrine is not consistent with AIIMS. Engagement and coordination with state agencies will be more effective with common terminology. Roles such as Theatre Commander and Mission Commander could be changed to be aligned AIIMS positions.
- All IMT members were unfamiliar with the IT requirements but had access to training and assistance when required.
- The benefit of thorough IMT handovers was noted as a positive on several occasions. A couple of occasions were reported of substandard level of handover.
- Limited numbers on some waves required IMT members to undertake multiple roles combining both IMT and Field Operations.
- Wave 2 MC and Ops/Plans gave continued support to Wave 3 IMT across the week.
- Issues were reported managing logistics in W4 due to poor management in the previous wave.
Recommendations included:
 - Ensuring only experienced LOGS are used.
 - The National Logistics Manager has input into LOGS on all future Ops.
- The ADAT capability was not fully understood by the IMT members – it was often regarded as a capability for in-house use as opposed to a service offering in its own right.

Work - including identification and allocation, and selection of teams

- Varying sizes in deployment numbers and timing caused complications at times during the waves with some knock on effects on handovers, forward planning etc.
- Small team numbers and the loss of some personnel saw members undertake multiple roles or move from one role to another.
- Small teams on some waves meant that only one strike team and one DA team deployed on most days. On one occasion, the entire wave deployed into the field for one day to complete a large job
- Employment of capability and qualifications was well thought out and implemented.
- Employment of Minderoo plant qualified pers allowed capability to achieve out of scope taskings.
- Project Lowerson funding for larger plant & arborists allowed a lot of out scope tasks to be completed.

Spontaneous Volunteer Management / Corporate Volunteer Management

- The Corpvolts deployed from Coates Hire enjoyed their experience with us and the resulting strong relationship was really beneficial

Donor Management

- James McMahon of Australian Capital Equity (Project Lowerson donor) was welcomed at the FOB.

Deployment logistics

- Logistics officers were mostly in position for their first deployments with DRA and generally did amazing jobs, although as with other IMT members initial struggles with the logistical requirements were experienced.
- The Theft and Damage incidents occurred to equipment at Mundaring Arena. However, these were promptly attended to with policy and procedures completed.
- Meals provision for one of the oncoming waves was reviewed with its sourcing and pricing to be of better value from a local provider.

Demobilization process

- Local members returned to their individual point of origin with no concerns.
- National Mobilisation return all other interstate members on schedule.

Documentation

- SOPs:
 - Limited issues reported, with exception of finance commentary below

- Templates:
 - No specific comments noted

Finances

- No guidelines, information or processes were available as to the correct usage of the MC corporate credit card.
- No situational awareness of credit card limits can create issues for holders when completing purchases due to insufficient funds being available.

Technology and Information Management

- Audits of Fulcrum identified errors in data entry, considered largely to be due to unfamiliarity / lack of training with the system. However, residents changing work requests and miscommunication were also noted as contributing factors.

Equipment

- The capability to purchase equipment via the National Logistics network was valuable.

Health and Safety

- Daily safety briefs were given prior to STs leaving the FOB regarding the usage of the bleed kits, snake bite kits, working in extreme environments (Heat) Slips and Trips, correct chainsaw operation techniques including spotters, the importance of hydration and decontamination procedures for both personnel and equipment.
- Heat illness and awareness was managed through briefs and reduced work timings.
- Toolbox sessions undertaken at the start of the wave to revise the usage of bleed kit components, snake bite evolutions and EpiPen
- Reportable incidents were followed up with QAs and statements taken from members concerned.

Medical

- Nothing beyond that referenced above

Communication and Media engagement

- Open day radio engagements for CEO Geoff Evans and other members of the wave.
- Channel 9 news segment during Wave 7

Additional Items of note

- Potentially a minimum number of personnel per wave should be set. At times during Op Woods the whole IMT was deployed to the field to effect field operations.
- FULCRUM training is required.
- There were a few comments regards first time IMT roles with no shadow for position other than support from MC and TC. This reinforces the need for the ongoing development of mentors for each operation.
- The W4 Chainsaw course for personnel to upskill while on deployment was considered a successful initiative.

Stand out individuals

Richard Lucas (STL) - an immense wealth of knowledge in both chainsaw operations and HAZMAT. Invaluable member on the ground with a great attitude and personal presence.

Bec Talbot (Planning) - a valued member of the team with her caring nature and situational awareness of other members' problems. A very kind hearted person who will take time to reach out to others if they need it.

Terry Evans (National Membership) - working incredibly hard behind the scenes to sort out the Queensland (BNE) members who had been stranded / quarantined, due to the WA Premier closing the border with QLD, while these members were in flight.

Aaron White (Ops) - Despite no previous IMT experience Aaron attacked the role of Ops with enthusiasm. His support of myself in both the planning and MC roles was invaluable.



Gye Draney (Team Member) - Gye's chainsaw experience and enthusiasm enabled the teams to complete a much greater workload than initially expected. His mentoring of other chainsaw operators and willingness to tackle any task allocated had a great impact on the team dynamic.

Table 2. Operational Appraisal

Community Feedback

When a disaster strikes such as with the Wooroloo bushfire human lives get turned on their heads.

For the recovery these days the machinery of Federal State and Local Governments kicks into gear but by their nature they are slowed down by their needs to be accountable, transparent and thorough given there is public money involved.

As the State Recovery Controller, it was a source of great comfort to know that Disaster Relief Australia was already on the ground in the fire zone supporting people by undertaking reconnaissance and intelligence gathering of their properties and then working with the locals in actually cleaning up and remedying the situation. Wherever I went there was this great outpouring of goodwill towards the DRA teams as they went about their daily business. People did not feel alone in this time of crisis. This has worked wonders for the mental health of the community. 219 DRA personnel contributing 11,000 hours to our community. We are all so grateful.

The State Recovery Control Group Partnership Forum has embraced DRA. I am delighted they are here to stay in WA. I can also see the benefit of their good works within their own ranks. They will become part of the architecture of our future recovery efforts.

Dr Ron Edwards
Chair State Emergency Management Committee
State Recovery Controller-Wooroloo

Table 3. Community Feedback

Improvement Goals

The following goals were developed and have now been aligned to the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR) P²O²S²T²E capability framework (see Appendix A), except for the exercise (E) capability element.

Capability	Goal	Status	Comment / Further Action
People	Safely and efficiently deploy a disaster relief team to the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring region.		Community feedback is positive
	Assist in the protection of life, preservation of property and return to normalcy for affected community.		Recovery ongoing. DRT continues to undertake small scale service projects
	Initiate a recruiting campaign to increase DRA membership base.		Increase from 56 to 160 members.
Process	Ensure accountability of all resources, personnel and funds deployed to the relief effort.		All assets recovered from operation to national / DRT stores All personnel safely demobilised COO has signed off operational accounts

	Effectively and efficiently transfer provision of services and safely demobilise from the area of operations.	●	All resources and assets safely demobilised during COVID restrictions,
Organisation	Integrate into the existing disaster recovery incident management structure and operations.	●	DRA is now part of the SRCGPF.
	Identify and appoint key leadership and stage equipment assets to support the launch of the Perth DRT.	●	DRT established with DRTM and Associate positions assigned.
	Integrate with corporate and spontaneous volunteers to increase operational capability	●	Corporate volunteers from PSM were involved in a playground rebuild project
	Strengthen relationship with Minderoo as DRA manages large numbers of the Minderoo Volunteers in the designated area of operations	●	Minderoo personnel participated
Support	Identify and appoint key leadership and stage equipment assets to support the launch of the Perth DRT	●	
Technology	Leverage the assets available through Project Lowerson to facilitate greater assistance to the fire affected communities	●	
Training	No specific goals set		

Key Improvement Actions			Responsible
	Priority Issues	Priority Actions	
1	DA data collection errors / variation	Ongoing Fulcrum training	Training / Tech
2	Some Logs Officers did not have skills to effectively fill the role	Logistics Officer training	Training / Logs
	Process Issues		
3	Credit cards limit visualisation to allow seamless purchases without error.	Allow TC or MC access to credit card account for duration of operations.	Admin
	Training		
4	DA data collection errors / variation	DAs should be a standalone position held by personnel that are trained for that task. This will greatly reduce the number of errors	Training



		that occur when people look at things differently.	
	Staff / Manning		
5	IMT often had to have multiple roles due to low deployment numbers	Review minimum staffing numbers for waves	Field Ops

Table 4. Key Improvement Actions

Appendix A: Supporting Information

The application of the AIDR capability framework against the established goals provides capability targets against which the DRA’s operations can be evaluated.

P²OST² Elements of Capability

Breaking down issues into their basic elements can help identify root causes for problems, as well as viable treatment options.

People	Roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, skills
Process	Plans, policies, procedures, processes
Organisation	Structure, jurisdiction
Support	Infrastructure, facilities, maintenance
Technology	Equipment, systems, standards, security, inter-operability
Training	Capability qualifications/ skills levels, identification of required courses

Table 1. – Elements of capability

Icon	Interpretation of rating
	Goal is complete.
	Goal is partially correct.
	Goal is not complete.