



ACT
Government



MEETING MINUTES – ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

MEETING INFORMATION

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|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---|
| Date: | 1 August 2018 | Location: | Ground Floor ESA Headquarters, Black Mountain Meeting Room |
| Time: | 4:00 PM | Meeting Type: | Council |
| Call-In Number: | 02 6207 7160 | Call-In Code: | N/A |
| Attendees: | See list attached | Secretariat: | Victor Khaw |

ORDER OF BUSINESS

AGENDA ITEMS

Presenter: Chair

1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land that the meeting was on, the Ngunnawal people. She expressed acknowledgement and respect towards their continuing culture and the contributions they make to the life of this city and this region. She also acknowledged and welcomed other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting.

Presenter: Chair

2 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all meeting attendees and noted apologies on the attached attendees list.

Invited attendees for the meeting were:

Anna Mitchell – Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

Simon Butt – Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) Bushfire Operation Plan (BOP)

Chris Condon – Farm FireWise.

Victor Khaw – Secretariat

Ryan Lawrey, Tony Scherl, Neil Cooper and Greg Potts were invited guests that did not attend for various reasons.

Mark Brown, Joe Murphy sent their apologies.

Kylie Coe and Steve Angus did not receive the papers, which resulted in Kylie not being in attendance.

MEMBER AND OFFICIALS – ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

Meeting 16.00 to 19:00, Wednesday 1 August 2018

Black Mountain Meeting Room, ESA Headquarters

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|------------------------|--|------------------|----------------------------|
| Council Members | Sarah Ryan (Chairperson) | Marion Leiba | Steve Angus |
| | Natarsha Carney (Deputy Chair) | Jeremy Watson | Bhiamie Eckford-Williamson |
| | Cathy Parsons | Margaret Moreton | Kylie Coe |
| | David Snell | Tony Bartlett | |
| Officials | Dominic Lane, Commissioner, Emergency Services Agency (ESA) | | |
| | Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue (ACT F&R), ESA | | |
| | Rohan Scott, Acting Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), ESA | | |
| | Daniel Iglesias, Executive Director, Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (PCS, EPSDD) | | |
| Secretariat | Lynda Scanes, Executive Officer, ACT BFC | | |
| Apologies | Joe Murphy | | |
| Invited Guests | Anna Mitchell, Senior Manager, SBMP version 4, ESA | | |
| | Neil Cooper, Manager Fire Forests and Road (FF&R), PCS, EPSDD | | |
| | Ryan Lawrey, Manager Fire Planning, (FF&R), PCS, EPSDD | | |
| | Tony Scherl, Manager, Fire Planning (RFMP), PCS, EPSDD | | |
| | Greg Potts, Manager Community Protection, ACTRFS, ESA | | |
| | Chris Condon, Senior Rural Liaison Officer, ACTRFS, ESA | | |

Presenter: Chair

3 Declaration of Interest

No declarations of conflict of interest were received.

Presenter: Chair

4 Presentations

Due to the ESA Commissioner's time commitments, the agenda item that he was presenting was brought forward, and a new item on the Commencement of Bushfire Season was added to the agenda.

Commencement of Bushfire Season

Under section 119 of the *Emergencies Act 2004* (the Act) the bushfire season runs from the start of October in one year until the end of March the following. Under the same section of the Act the Commissioner may declare different dates for the bushfire season after he consults with the Bushfire Council.

The Commissioner discussed the risks of the current conditions in the ACT, noting the exceptionally dry landscape. The Commissioner advised that he proposes to bring the start of the bushfire season forward from 1 October 2018 to 1 September 2018. Not only are conditions in the ACT very dry but many parts of NSW are experiencing record dry conditions.

The seasonal outlook from Agenda Item 9.2 Commissioner's Report is as follows:

In the last month the Bureau of Meteorology has issued an 'El Niño Watch', which indicates that there is a likelihood of an El Niño event this. Detailed climate outlook models all indicate that at least a mild El Niño event should be expected, if not planned for. An El Niño produces warm dry summers for the ACT.

The ACT and surrounding NSW is currently experiencing a high level of drought, and the outlook indicates that this is likely to persist, if not increase, as we head into the summer. Unless future outlook runs start to suggest a different situation as we move towards summer, the risks to the ACT from heatwave and wildfire must be assessed as elevated. Other associated risks, such as dust storms, will need to be monitored. The Chief Officer ACTRFS will be forwarding a request to Council to consider declaring the Bushfire Season, from 1 September 2018.

NSW considers changes to their bushfire season through local councils, and a number of them even commenced on 1 August 2018. The ACT is looking to coordinate with the surrounding NSW for the early commencement, but at this stage it will likely be brought forward.

It was noted by Mr Bartlett that there is little fuel around the city and inquired about how that compares to other areas of the territory. Mr Iglesias advised that moisture levels across the whole territory are very low. There is no differential in soil moisture between eastern and western slopes. Under the current conditions, as land managers they cannot consider burning in the lead up to the season.

The budgetary impacts of a longer bushfire season are met from within the agency. The costs are higher due to a higher number of stand up days. If there are expected financial impacts it is best to advise treasury early, which the Commissioner has already done.

Mr Eckford-Williamson inquired about whether the timeframes for the Bushfire Council's season preparedness report change in light of the early start to the season. Logistically it will not be different, due to the regular reporting constraints. The Commissioner does not want to put undue strain on Council in terms of producing the report, however if any members would like to bring any issues forward they are welcome to do so before the report is finalised. The Commissioner also noted that it would be good to see the report in October or November rather than later in the

season.

It was noted that while a lot of the report will focus on the current season, it is not constrained to that season and takes into account previous and future seasons.

Mr Scott advised that the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) is on track to complete vehicle servicing, but not by 1 September 2018. It is an annual servicing of vehicles and not a pre-season servicing. The ACTRFS are looking to run a seasonal outlook for brigades in early September. Brigades are already scaling up training with many running weekly.

Council members provided agreement to bring forward the commencement of the 2018/19 bushfire season.

Commissioner's Report

The Commissioner invited any queries about the report that was tabled.

Mr Bartlett queried the status of the Potter's Hill fire review. Council was advised that the review team will commence work in the week of 6 August 2018.

Mr Eckford-Williamson advised that he considered the letter attached for Canberra Bushfire Ready report to hold some harsh language that would benefit from being softened. The letter goes to members of the public targeted in the bushfire season community engagement activities.

The Commissioner understood the perspective that the letter was harsh noting that it is usually complemented by a friendly face during the annual doorknock. They want to be approachable but there was debate at the time that they still needed to be taken seriously. The Commissioner takes the advice of experts with the wording of the letter but is willing to work on it more.

Ms Carney noted that there have been two calls for overseas deployment, and 22 personnel have expressed interest. She inquired if the change in season affect whether the ACT will fulfil the requests for assistance. It was advised that the biggest challenge is administrative rather than operational, but regardless of that, if there is an opportunity to go and we have the capacity the ACT will help.

The Chair highlighted that with global climate warming, there seems to be more overlap in bushfire seasons and inquired about the effects on resource sharing between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. She identified the issue applying to aircraft and now with personnel and asked if it is talked about across jurisdictions. The Commissioner acknowledged that were previously resources could be moved around Australia for combating slightly different seasons, the change in the seasons means that that now they overlap, affecting the resourcing. The situation has created a more collegiate relationship between commissioners and chief officers around the country.

For the development of the Council's report on bushfire season preparedness, as soon as the draft annual report is cleared by the DG, Council will have a copy of it, but it may change depending on the auditor-general.

Mr Bartlett queried the closing off of the action item regarding advising Council of recent graduates from the Incident Controller (IC) Level 3 course. He did not consider the action to have been finalised. Bushfire council received the list of recently graduates from level 3 IC program and

noted it. Mr Bartlett asked about whether experience was considered when appointing ICs for managing a bushfire. The Commissioner said that was certainly considered and he has a role in managing that to an extent.

ESA Commissioner departed the meeting.

Farm FireWise

Mr Chris Condon presented to the group on Farm FireWise (FFW). Seven plans were hung in the room and also provided in the meeting papers. Some issues have been picked up while developing these plans. For example, ACTF&R does not have the capability to get down all farm tracks as their vehicles are designed for an urban environment. As a result some work is currently being done to update road and track information to guide choice of response vehicle. Another piece of work is to digitise the plan on site on a tablet so that the landholder can sign the FFW plan immediately. This would increase efficiency by avoiding going back and forth printing maps and amendments.

In the current conditions a lot of landholders are buying in feed because there is not enough in the landscape. The fodder stall is commonly being identified as a priority on properties and brigades are being notified of those priorities.

Red areas on the map are asset protection areas and the yellow areas are maintained, often with grazing. Stockyards are being identified as landholders often identify them as assets for protection.

Mr Angus inquired about the timeframe for getting the FFW maps in the field for operations. Council was advised that the information is currently available in Communications Centre (ComCen) but they are looking at how to get it into the next Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) upgrade. They are getting ComCen operators to increase their proficiency in using the information and feeding it through the MDT and to crews. The data set currently identifies asset protection, site specific information, electric gates and combination locks.

Mr Eckford-Williamson asked if there is anything like this for culturally significant sites such as rock art. Mr Iglesias advised that they are registered as assets within the Aboriginal community. Assets that are managed have mapping information in the geospatial system that is available to all. However it was unclear as to whether each site had a plan set out in a similar way to FFW.

There was a discussion around what information is displayed live during operations on the MDT. Pre-suppression atlases were circulated to provide an example of information available on sites. Not all information in the pre-suppression atlas is provided to crews through the MDT, but it is the responsibility of those first on scene to identify the information.

There was a discussion around the number of FFW plans that are in place to various properties in the ACT. There are still some properties in the Bushfire Abatement Zone (BAZ) that do not have a FFW, however they are mainly located in the north-east and east of the ACT where the risk is lowest. There are minimal properties located in the west and north-west ACT in the BAZ that do not have a FFW plan, but work is concentrated on getting those completed. This type of information is beneficial for the development of their report as they need to understand existing risks.

Each plan is due for review every 5 years, however they remain current even if they are not reviewed. They are working through getting everything in the BAZ completed this financial year so everything is covered. Each year the ACTRFS get through approximately 36 FFW plans. This enables

them to keep maintaining the five year review of plans. There was a suggestion to do them all at once with additional resources, however that would mean all are due for review at the same time.

There is a mechanism for self-reporting changes to a FFW plan as priorities change. Changing priorities are fed back through communications to the local ACTRFS brigades to assist with combating risks to properties.

Discussion of achievements of the all Bushfire Operational Plans in 2017-18, in particular the EPSDD BOP

Mr Simon Butt presented information to council taken from the Table Management database (TM1). Reporting was done 13 July, which means it took 13 days to process.

As part of the 2017/18 BOP EPSDD completed or partially completed 735 jobs (97% of the target), improved access over 552km (99%) and hazard reduction burnt 19,739ha (87%). Failure to reach the hazard reduction area target was due to a single large hazard reduction burn that they could not complete, given the fire behaviour of burns in the lead up. However, the plan for that particular burn was completed, which equates to 50% of the work required to complete the burn.

Overall 97% of the 2017/18 BOP jobs were completed, which is above the 94% average and the best since 2008/09. Construction is only 13% complete but it was only one job.

Council requested that if there is a format that most makes sense to EPSDD for reporting achievement of prescribed burns in rolling year data they would be happy to receive it in that way. It was noted that however it is reported, it seems to be that there are still not enough windows to complete it in. Mr Butt reported that the burning windows are certainly shrinking, but the other activities that are completed make up the bulk of work conducted by the land managers. The ACT is in a privileged position to be able to focus on activities other than burning. For example, close to 11,000 ha are subject to grazing and slashing to reduce fuel load and that was completed to practically 100%.

Park and Conservations Services (PCS) delivered nearly 100% of the small burns in the critical urban fringe areas. It was suggested that those types of burns that create risk reduction near the urban edge, while being small in size, could be reported separately from the large burns that are in the national parks. Simon agreed but it is important to note that there is still a risk if the mosaic burns are not being done in the southern part of the ACT. It was also noted that the 2003 bushfires entered the urban area from the national parks.

There is an increase in activities other than burning that are also reducing the risks. Work will continue to happen to prepare the burns in hopes the windows will be there. Mr Iglesias noted given the conditions of the upcoming season, the 2018/19 BOP result could be substantially less given the fuel moisture and restriction on being able to burn.

Council commends EPSDD on the high rate of achievement against the BOP within roughly 3% of the same budget as in the last financial year. The issue of not being able to burn due to decreasing suitable weather windows remains a concern that may need to be address through other risk reduction methods.

Mr Iglesias noted that a quarter of the budget is spent on BOP activity. There is a need to recognise the significant amount of funding that is required to achieve the results of the 2017/18 BOP in reducing the risks of bushfire to the Territory.

Community Education to ensure the community is prepared for bushfire – SBMP Actions 47, 49 and 53

This agenda item was not a presentation but papers were provided to council for the preparation of the next report. The Chair noted the map of areas covered is very good but does not contain Bushfire Prone Area information. Council could not identify door-knock property numbers for 2017/18, a table on page 2 2017-2018 Canberra Bushfire Ready Report is present but not completed. Council do not need to know suburb by suburb information, but the table for 2015-16 (page 11) should be replicated for 2016-17 and 2017-18 with information on number for door-knocking, people reached and overall community engagement.

2018/19 Bushfire Operational Plans – Identification of Directorate and Utility DOP Drafts, to be submitted to ESA Commissioner as required under Section 78 of the *Emergencies Act 2004*

This agenda item was moved to September 2018.

5 minute break

Action:

- ACTRFS to provide a written report to Council on preseason preparations and the seasonal outlook for Council's Preparedness Report.
- EPSDD to provide Council with information on how culturally significant sites are managed for fire protection.
- EPSDD to consider the best way to present rolling year data on achievement of prescribed burns to Council and provide it within the next two weeks.
- ESA to provide Canberra Bushfire Ready door knock figures for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 activities

Presenter: Chair

5 Acceptance of minutes from the July meeting

Agenda item 6 contains a name error.

Minutes were accepted as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting pending name correction in agenda item 6.

Presenter: Chair

6 Review action list

Mr Scott to follow up action item 1807-1 and circulate 2017/18 Bushfire Risk Assessment out of session.

1807-03 Mr Joe Murphy to follow up with a written response relating to the maintenance of power poles on private land.

1807-04 the action plan from the Fire Management Unit Review (Morgan Review) is at page 69 of the current papers. Mr Iglesias met with Mr Joe Murphy and worked through the document which stipulates what they want to do and when. The table is in Daniel's performance plan with Ian Walker. They are reviewing the MOU between RFS and PCS using it as an opportunity to bring to the table any issues, including historical ones, and address them and move on. The MOU was seen by Council many years ago, but once it's clarified he is willing for it to be circulated to Council. The Council provided their thanks to Mr Iglesias for the table, which provides a strategic overview.

A piece of advice was to institute the culture of meeting before the end of the year, Mr Iglesias agreed and would consider it.

The table has mostly been the result of the Morgan review and with small additions from Mr Iglesias and Mr Murphy. Mr Iglesias proposed that he report back to Council in December 2018.

1804-07 similar to 1807-05 about how risk is being reduced

1806-5 can be closed now rather than previous meeting

1806:8.2 all ACTRFS volunteers have been invited to attend a BBQ on 18 August 2018.

1804-06 a high level timeline to be provided in September 2018.

Action: EPSDD to provide an update on actions taken against Morgan Review table in December 2018 meeting

Presenter: Chair

7 Correspondence

The Chair received an invitation from Tony Scherl to attend the first stakeholder meeting on the next Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP), other Council members may attend if they are interested. EPSDD takes the approach that it is key to engage stakeholders early and often. Chair encouraged everyone to attend at least one session.

The RFMP informs the SBMP in more detail, providing a 10 year window of work that is drawn on to inform EPSDD BOPs. Development and consultation of the plans provides the capacity to go to the community periodically, rather than annually. The RFMP is primarily a spatially based plan rather than a text based plan but will have more explanation and narrative in the next version than it had previously.

Council does not have a legislative requirement to be consulted on the RFMP as it is the land manager's responsibility.

There will be a pre-season brief for Government bodies and stakeholders at the ESA Hume training centre on 25 September 2018.

Action: Circulate 25 September 2018 preseason brief information to Council.

Presenter: Council members

8 Bushfire Council business

Bushfire Council Annual Preparedness Report

Council is proposing to use as much reporting data that is already prepared for other purposes rather than creating new data sets, especially considering the reporting around SBMP and getting it progressed is the backbone of being bushfire ready.

The Council is suggesting that it not progress with the old chapter headings so that it can align them more with the chapters of the SBMP. They will be reporting on how the risks are being addressed and whether there are gaps from the Council's point of view.

Mr Bartlett and Ms Leiba noted that community preparation does not fit into one of the categories. Chair recommends that they deal with all of the objectives in the SBMP. The current

priorities will have greater depth. The items on the second page of the agenda item 8.1 paper highlights themes that should be focus on. Council needs to assess how well actions taken have worked to reduce the risks they are trying to reduce.

The Chair clarified that the September 2018 meeting will be conducted as a workshop so that Council can form a collective position on each objective Responsibility for shepherding each objective/chapter will be taken by different members based on their areas of expertise.

The following members volunteered:

David – fuel reduction and editor

Tony – land management (public) 4.7 and 4.8, 5

Bhiamie – community preparation, 4.2 reducing unplanned ignitions, 5

Natarsha – fuel reduction, skilling and motivating firefighters, community, 4.10 and 4.12

Steve – equipment and resources, FFW

Cathy – 4.11

Marion – 4.10, 4.2

Margaret – 4.10 and 4.13

Jeremy – 5 share the rest

Sarah – share the rest

Community preparation added to major focus topics on the second page

Council agreed on the processes outlined in the paper. The Chair will talk to Kylie regarding the areas she is interested in oversighting.

Action: Chair to create draft list of responsibilities for the annual bushfire preparedness report and circulate.

Presenter: Officials

9 Official's Reports

9.1 ESA Commissioner's Report

The report was taken as read.

9.2 ACTRFS Chief Officer Report

The report was taken as read.

The first deployment to the US will leave at 13:15 on 2 August 2018. It will be made up of three ACTRFS three ACTF&R and four PCS middle management roles. Mr Bartlett expressed surprise at ACTF&R personnel being deployed to fight forest fires.

Deployment to Canada

2 IC level 2, 3 ground arduous crews, 3 logistics

Mr Scott advised that the ACT provide a lot of personnel for deployment considering the size of our jurisdiction. A dollar figure cannot be placed on the experience gained from the deployments.

Ms Carney inquired about the possibility of the community engagement campaign being run earlier in the bushfire season instead of during February. The response was that this year the

campaign will be an all hazards approach to catch the end of storm season.

9.3 EPSDD PCS Report

The report was taken as read.

Action: Nil

Presenter: Chair

10 Review and adoption of action items from this meeting

Action items were reviewed and agreed to

Presenter: Chair

11 Next Meeting

12 September 2018

Presenter: Chair

12 In Camera Meeting

Not required

Presenter: Council member

13 Council's performance checklist

Agenda clear with one error

Papers well circulated in advance, except the ones indicated on agenda mainly belonging to PCS, maybe talk to Daniel about providing their papers earlier

Good preparation for meeting

Everyone had an understanding of papers

Good attendance

Chair effective in guiding the meeting and kept to time

Minutes pretty good

Follow up of actions pretty good, with new format that will help.

Some members haven't been able to download the PDF because it's too big, maybe divide into 2 PDFs. Getting too much detailed information, potentially adapt the type of information being provided and reduce the pictures provided or their quality.

Meeting closed 7:00pm

NEW ACTION ITEMS - reviewed and adopted by Council

| REF | ACTION | RESPONSIBLE | DUE DATE |
|------------|--|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | RFS to provide a written report to Council on preseason preparation and the seasonal outlook for Council's Preparedness Report | Joe Murphy | 15 August 2018 |
| 2 | EPSDD to provide Council with information on how culturally significant sites are managed for fire protection | Daniel Iglesias | 3 October 2018 |
| 3 | EPSDD to consider the best way to present rolling year data on achievement of prescribed burns to Council and provide it within the next two weeks | Daniel Iglesias | 15 August 2018 |
| 4 | EPSDD to provide an update on action taken against Morgan Review table | Daniel Iglesias | 5 December 2018 |
| 5 | Circulate 25 September 2018 preseason brief information to Council. | Secretariat | ASAP |
| 6 | ESA to provide Canberra Bushfire Ready door knock figures for 2016-17 and 2017-18 activities | Fiona Amundson | 15 August 2018 |
| 7 | Chair to create draft list of responsibilities for the annual bushfire preparedness report and circulate | Sarah Ryan | 15 August 2018 |

OTHER NOTES OR INFORMATION

