



ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 7 December 2022

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
Chair	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
Attendees	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member (online) Marta Yebra – Member
Apologies	Kylie Coe – Member Stephen Alegria – EBM, EPSDD
Guests	Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (online) Scott Seymour – Project Manager Assurance, Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) Ailish Milner – Assistant Director, Strategic Planning Bushfire Matthew Kamarul – EBM Planning, Review and Reform Project – Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) Trina McFarlane – Director, Planning and Sustainable Development, EPSDD Alix Kaucz – Senior Director, Planning and Sustainable Development, EPSDD Monica Saad – Planning and Sustainable Development, EPSDD
Secretariat	Natasha Andrade – ACT Emergency Services Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair acknowledged the country on which the Council were meeting, the land of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. She paid respects to elders past present and emerging and acknowledged the considerable role traditional owners have played throughout history in developing the land we live on and enjoy.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from 3 November 2022 meeting

The draft minutes were accepted with two minor amendments.

4. Review of Council Action items

Council action items were reviewed and updated.



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5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined the correspondence received by the Secretariat:

- Len Morris provided more context on the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse definition and how it could be reflected in the Terms of Reference. The suggested text will be included in the Community Resilience document. Further discussions will be held on whether the council should develop a policy on how to refer to people from diverse backgrounds.
- An apology was received from Wayne Phillips, the Acting Commissioner, who had to leave unexpectedly last meeting.

6. Planning System Review & Reform Project

The Council received a presentation from Matthew Kamural, Monica Saad, Trina McFarlane and Alix Kaucz from EPSDD on the draft Territory Plan.

Mr Kamarul provided an overview of the community consultation being conducted on the draft Territory Plan including the timeframes for public consultation, review and implementation. He identified the shift to a more strategic focus with the establishment of a hierarchy of plans to ensure decisions are in line with Government strategies.

Ms Saad outlined the consultation conducted for the Planning Bill and its objectives around Biodiversity, People-focused outcomes, Knowledge and culture of traditional custodians, Planning for population growth and a Sustainable and resilient environment. The Council questioned which objective would most relate to Hazards and risk reduction and was advised it would most likely be under Biodiversity or Sustainable environment. They suggested consideration be given to having a more specific objective related to Community Safety, particularly around mitigating bushfire and flood risk.

Ms Saad set out the principles for planning decisions, identifying some of the considerations for developments and the timeframe for legislative changes. The Council questioned the exemptions applying to bushfire prone areas and Ms Saad confirmed the current arrangements will remain the same. The Chair suggested prevention activities around heat management and bushfire risk mitigation be given more primacy in the plan, with more consideration to management of hazard risks at a strategic level, rather than a focus on individual zones.

Ms McFarlane outlined the District Strategy and the change to a more spatially driven and strategically focused planning system to allow for increases in Territory population. The strategies cover housing, population, infrastructure and natural hazard management for each district and will connect strategies across Government. Special characteristics have been identified for each district based on key drivers around the Blue-green network, Sustainable neighbourhoods, Inclusive centres, Economic access and community, and Strategic transport movement.

Ms McFarlane confirmed that the consideration of natural hazards for each district would also cover road access for emergency management. Increasing effects of climate change will be covered through improving canopy cover and focusing on existing areas rather than just buildings on the edge. She confirmed that some ACT areas are not covered by the plan and are the responsibility of the National Capital Authority. The Council also sought clarification on the western edge in Molonglo and Ms McFarlane advised this boundary was still under investigation.



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Ms Kaucz then outlined the Draft Territory plan, its supporting principles and the connection to the District strategies. Developments will still need to comply with planning policies and technical specifications but the new approach is based on improving design quality and outcomes. The main policy changes are around:

- Increasing density and supporting infill rather than greenfield development
- Increasing requirements for living infrastructure and urban heat provisions
- Enhancing bushfire and flood risk mitigation provisions
- Encouraging more active travel with more infrastructure for electric vehicle charging
- Prohibiting new gas connections and enabling more battery storage.

New Housing design and Urban design guides will enhance planning provisions by encouraging innovation, promoting a more sustainable environment and improving climate change adaptation.

The Council questioned how the plan would achieve behavioural change and Ms Kaucz advised there would still be minimal compliance requirements, along with the focus on educating the community to think differently on development. Mr Kamarul highlighted the ongoing process of review and audit of the plans. He also invited the Council to provide feedback on the Territory Plan and the Planning Bill for consideration by Government.

The Council questioned how the requirements for bushfire mitigation would work and Ms Kaucz advised new blocks would have to comply with district specifications and subdivision policies. Mr Rohan Scott confirmed the new bushfire management standards, which will be referenced as an annex in the plans, would be available for circulation early next year.

The Council sought confirmation on whether prevention activities are considered to be new developments and whether prescribed burns might be held up due to approvals for roads. Ms Kaucz advised she would need to take the question on notice.

The Chair thanked the group for the presentation and expressed the Council's strong interest in planning as a mechanism for mitigating and managing disaster risks. She advised the council would write to EPSDD on any feedback and issues they would like to follow up.

Action: Council to write to EPSDD on any issues they would like to follow up in relation to the Planning Bill, Territory Plan and District Strategy. Council members to provide dot points to the Chair on any issues and feedback.

Person responsible: Council members and Chair

Action: Presentation slides to be provided to the Council.

Person responsible: Secretariat

7. Discussion on the Tenure Blind Fire Risk Mapping Project

Ms Ailish Milner provided an update on the progress of the Tenure Blind Fire Risk Mapping Project. She advised there had been some delay due to the implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System but that a live layer is now available. There have been some issues with how the data is captured but they are working on developing a consistent standard with EVOEnergy, Chief Minister, Territory and Economic Development Directorate and other agencies with Geographic Information System capability. Information



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from the Suburban Land Agency will also be added shortly. Ms Milner confirmed the tenure blind process requires a change in the next

SBMP to allow a risk management process for the whole ACT and the current project will enable a visualization of the information held by different agencies.

8. Discussion Draft Bushfire Management Standards

Mr Scott Seymour provided an update on the draft Bushfire Management Standards. The working group has reviewed the national standards and those of other jurisdictions and determined best practice would be to adopt the same standards as NSW. This will provide a performance based and prescriptive based approach for new developments in bushfire prone areas and will ensure similar terminology and a consistent approach with NSW. The ACT will retain the classification system for existing suburbs. Mr Seymour advised the standards are close to finalisation, pending resolution of some issues with EPSDD. A first draft will then be circulated to the Council, and to industry and key stakeholders for review.

The Council discussed whether bushfire prone areas should be specifically referenced in the Territory plan. Mr Seymour confirmed there is some conflict between the building code and the definitions used by the Emergency Services Agency (ESA). He also advised the existing ACT standards are more effective than NSW's in setting out the management of asset provision zones and that these standards will be retained to reflect the ACT context.

The Chair noted the potential plan for the ESA Commissioner to approve new developments and expressed concern this might create resourcing issues. Mr Seymour advised the performance-based approach would mean the onus is on the proponent to prove it is a suitable design and that this is similar to current arrangements. He suggested a representative from the assessment team could attend a Council meeting to provide a presentation on the process. It was proposed that consideration of the draft bushfire standards be set for the March 2023 meeting. The Chair also asked Mr Seymour to provide a timeline for the Council to review the draft standards to enable scheduling.

Action: Timeline to be provided for the provision of comments on the bushfire standards.

Person responsible: Scott Seymour

9. Discussion of April Field Trip and calendar for 2023

The Council discussed options for the Field Trip in April. Suggestions were put forward for the Council to:

- visit a river corridor in relation to bushfire abatement zones,
- observe the practical application of the bushfire management plan, including prescribed burning,
- visit an State Emergency Service (SES) or Rural Fire Service (RFS) Unit,
- view issues around flooding or dam failure,
- view the installation of lightning detectors,
- follow the path of a fire to assess mitigation activities,
- review NSW fire risks,
- visit an evacuation centre, and
- observe issues around agency capability.



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The Chair will discuss the different options with Mr Scott and other agency stakeholders to determine what would be most useful for the Council to attend.

Action: Different options for field trip to be discussed with ACT RFS & ACT SES and other agencies.

Person responsible: Chair

10. Council Members Updates

Mr Morris advised he is travelling to Japan and will be providing a presentation to a university as an emergency management volunteer. It will be in a personal capacity and not as a representative of the council. The Chair suggested he check the TOR arrangements if any media is likely to be involved.

Dr Yebra advised the ANU and Fire Neural Networks would be installing lightning detectors in January and that she could provide a presentation on this to the Council.

Action: Suggestion from Dr Yebra to be included in list of potential future presentations.

Person responsible: Secretariat

The Chair advised she attended a biodiversity conservation forum as the chair of the Council. At the forum she had a discussion with the Minister for the Environment on the primacy of bushfire planning and the development of the SBMP. She also held discussions with a representative from ACT Farmers concerning a possible representative joining the Council. The Council discussed whether the person could be invited to attend Council meetings prior to an official appointment being made. The Chair will discuss the issue further with the Minister's advisor on the correct process.

Action: Chair to discuss with Minister's advisor the possibility of a representative from ACT Farmers joining the council.

Person responsible: Chair

The Chair advised she attended the SBMP5 Steering Committee. She noted there had been discussions around the governance structure and a push for SBMP5 to adopt a more strategic focus. The Council should be briefed in more detail in February.

The Chair advised she also attended the SBMP Governance Committee which assesses progress against the SBMP4. She noted there had been some discussion on how ongoing issues were not able to be clearly identified as completed, which could be something to address in the development of SBMP5.

The Chair advised she also met with the Deputy Director General of Justice and Community Services to discuss Government expectations and support for the Council. She noted the Council has developed its own work plan and that its remit covers both policy and operational issues. On a number of issues the ESA is not responsible for policy or is not the relevant operational agency. A further discussion will be held with the Director General and Deputy Director General in the February meeting. The Chair advised she also provided an update on the timelines for the upcoming 20 year Bushfire report.



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11. Review of Council Meeting effectiveness & efficiency in past 12 months

The Chair invited comment from Council members on how the MHAC is functioning. The Council noted the heavy workload involved and the reliance on people to provide considerable amounts of unpaid time. They questioned whether this would be sustainable over the longer term. Having presentations in advance of the meetings was considered to be very helpful in enabling Council members to understand the issues. They also noted the Council has had to frequently source information from Government themselves and agreed that agenda papers could provide more analysis to enable the Council to focus on key issues. The Council agreed that the mix of presentation and discussion was working better and that the option to have more meetings dedicated to a focused workshop or specific discussion could be pursued further.

The Council discussed how far in advance of meetings they should receive papers. It was proposed that papers in excess of 3 pages be provided 5 days prior to the meetings to allow sufficient time for review. Council members should also ensure they have read the papers and are ready for meetings to commence on time. It was noted the process for the bushfire report working group worked very well and could be a model to take forward for other issues requiring review. It was also suggested that a matrix be developed to map members' areas of expertise to specific issues.

Action: A matrix be developed to map members' area of expertise with documents for review.

Person responsible: Secretariat

12. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

The Chair advised that the Bushfire review document would be provided to members that night and the Community Resilience document would be sent to members on Friday. The next meeting will focus on finalising the Community Resilience document with a view to submitting it to specific community stakeholders for review, and finalising the review of Bushfire management arrangements .

13. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

On 7 December 2022, the ACT Multi-Hazard Advisory Council (formerly the ACT Bushfire Council) met with officials from the ACT Government Directorate of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development including Matthew Kamarul, Trina McFarlane, Alix Kaucz and Monica Saad to discuss the Planning System Review and Reform Projects, as well as Scott Seymour, from ACT Emergency Services Agency, to discuss the Draft Bushfire Management Standards and Ailish Milner, to discuss the Tenure Blind Fire Risk Mapping Project.

14. Meeting Close

Next meeting 14 December 2022 – ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn