



# ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 1 February 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
<b>Chair</b>	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
<b>Attendees</b>	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
<b>Apologies</b>	Kylie Coe – Member
<b>Guests</b>	Ken Hall – Acting Chief Officer, ACTRFS Stephen Alegria – EBM, EPSDD Bren Burkevics – EGM, EPSDD Richard Glenn – Director-General, JACS Karen Wright – Director, Strategic Planning and Policy, EPSDD Justin Foley – A/g Senior Director, Fire, Forests and Roads, EPSDD Nina Allen – ACT Farmers
<b>Secretariat</b>	Lianna Luton – Executive Officer Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the country on which the Council were meeting, the land of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, and paid respects to elders past, present and emerging. She particularly acknowledged the role they played in the care and forming of the land we enjoy and hopes to continue to work with indigenous people collectively in the management of the land.

The Chair welcomed Nina Allen to the meeting. Ms Allen is a representative for ACT Farmers and has been invited to attend by the Minister, pending formal appointment to the Council.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

## 3. Acceptance of Minutes from 7 and 14 December 2022 meetings

The draft minutes were accepted with an amendment to the Minutes of 7 December 2022.

## 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:

- Remuneration Tribunal's Determination
- Council comments on the Flood Sub-plan and advice from Anthony Draheim, Chief Officer of the SES, confirming these comments would be provided to SEMSOG
- Council's advice to the Minister on the ACT Planning System review
- Annual report on the MHAC for the Minister
- MHAC Bushfire Review
- Letter from Dr Bartlett to EPSDD concerning the dangerous condition of fire trails and a response to this from EPSDD

## 6. Advice to MPES – Planning System Review further discussion

The Council discussed the Territory Plan and the Planning System Review and whether further information was required from EPSDD at this stage. The Council agreed it would be good to have more awareness on how district plans overlap with the fire management zoning system and specific areas of natural hazard risks. It was proposed that Matthew Kamural, EBM Planning, Review and Reform Project, and a representative from ESA/EPSSD be invited to the next meeting to discuss how the planning system interacts with emergency management arrangements. An update will also be sought on the progress of the draft Bushfire Management Standards.

**Action:** Presentation to be sought from Matthew Kamural and representatives from ESA and EPSDD to discuss how the planning system interacts with emergency management arrangements. Update to also be sought on the draft Bushfire Management Standards.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

## 7. Cultural Burning discussion

The Chair welcomed Justin Foley, Senior Director, Fire Management Unit, to the meeting. Mr Foley acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land, their continuing culture and the critical contribution they make to the management of the land through cultural practice. He also acknowledged the responsibility he has as part of the land management team to enable this contribution.

Mr Foley advised there had been a long-standing cultural burning program, framed by the Aboriginal Fire Management Plan, which is currently still in place. There has been a fundamental shift since 2018, however, to progress co-management with the Ngunnawal people. The new approach has a significant reconciliation dimension with a focus on burning as an expression of culture, for ecological benefits and to allow healing for the community.

Mr Foley confirmed the practice of cultural burning can be difficult to balance with established processes around protective equipment, planning, training and risk management. His team will be running workshops to build engagement with the Ngunnawal community and has also received Commonwealth funding to develop a Ngunnawal country fire management plan. They will also be working with Scott Falconer,



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Director of Forest Fire Operations in Victoria, as other land management agencies are looking at ways to reduce barriers around risk management and liability.

The Council agreed the approach to cultural burning should be as flexible as possible. Mr Foley confirmed there would be engagement with the Ngunnawal community on where burns could work in a complementary way and that there was a strong focus on capability building, re-learning fire management practices and bringing the Ngunnawal people's values into the program. The Council suggested the wider community would also be interested in helping grow the understanding of cultural burning practices too.

The Chair thanked Mr Foley for his discussion.

## 8. Western Edge investigation including discussion

The Chair welcomed Karen Wright, Director, Strategic Planning and Policy, EPSDD to the meeting. Ms Wright outlined the investigations being undertaken on the ACT's Western Edge including suitability for urban areas, nature reserves and environmental offsets, as well as cultural heritage values assessment. Some initial studies are available on EPSDD website, including the preliminary bushfire risk assessment.

Dr Bartlett noted the previous Bushfire Council's advice on the bushfire study and the concern for a more strategic assessment of bushfire risks in the Western Edge. Ms Wright advised that the intention was to continue to do further studies, including bushfire risk. She confirmed they were also monitoring population projections and the demographic profile of Canberra to understand current strategic planning work. Climate changes and flood risks are included in planning studies. Extreme heat has not yet been picked up in detailed planning but is included in the Territory plan and new urban design guides.

The Council sought confirmation on how, in the event of a disaster, access roads are considered in the planning stage and Ms Wright advised areas would not be considered suitable if there were no alternate routes. She further explained that the Western Edge investigations were the beginning of a ten year process and that it would take some time to undertake studies, environmental surveys and planning approvals. The Chair queried when it would be appropriate for the Council to review the next studies and Ms Wright advised the current assessments should be completed later this year.

The Chair thanked Ms Wright for her presentation and advised the Council would be interested in more discussions when further studies are available.

The Council discussed the need for a higher level understanding and strategic oversight of bushfire paths and other hazard risks. Dr Bartlett suggested the previous Bushfire Council's views be put forward again and noted the concerns around the Western Edge from different sources. Mr Bren Burkevics advised he would also look at how the Fire Management Unit could be engaged in the planning study process.

**Action:** Dr Bartlett to locate the previous advice on the bushfire risk study for circulation to the Council.

**Person responsible:** Dr Bartlett

## 9. Discussion with Director-General of Justice and Community Safety Directorate



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The Chair welcomed Richard Glenn, Director-General of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate. She explained she had invited him to the meeting to discuss how the Council could best meet Government needs in providing strategic and targeted advice across multiple hazard risks and cross-cutting themes.

Mr Glenn outlined the work being done by the Security and Emergency Management Division and the potential for the Council to provide input into territory-wide risk assessments and the flood plan, as well as future work around a resilience strategy and recovery frameworks. He suggested the Division's work program could be mapped against meetings of the Council with some scoping to determine how to best intersect with the Council and draw on their expertise. The Council members advised it is more efficient for them to be provided with documents to comment on, rather than trying to source information themselves, and that they would like early engagement in planning and assessment processes to enable sufficient time to respond. Mr Glenn agreed earlier consultation and a more coordinated approach would be useful.

The Council also discussed the need for more expertise within its membership on flood, storm and extreme heat risks and on indigenous cultural perspectives. Mr Glenn agreed it would be useful to proactively address gaps in building the membership of the Council. He proposed a further meeting to bring the Council, SEMSOG and the ESA together to overlay the strategic priorities and identify where the Council could contribute. He also noted the need for further discussion on the secretariat function of the Council and that more assessment on the sequencing of upcoming work would assist this process.

The Chair thanked Mr Glenn for his attendance and his commitment to further discussions.

**Action:** Further engagement with JACS, ESA and EPSDD to identify strategic government processes the Council should be reviewing to determine sequencing and scheduling for comments.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Secretariat

## 10. Discussion on Council Skillsets

The Chair noted that more work is required to expand the current skillset list of the Council from the perspective of multi-hazards. Council members also identified the need for clarification around the skillsets for planning, environmental and land management, community interest and engagement. A new skillset list will be developed for the next meeting.

## 11. Community Resilience Advice Discussion

The Chair thanked Council members for their comments on the latest version of the Community Resilience Advice document. Some clarifications were discussed around the term demographics. An additional sentence will also be inserted to identify the importance of understanding the specific attributes of a community to better assess their strengths and vulnerabilities with regard to disaster resilience. The recommendation on co-design of activities will also be amended to include a reference to resourcing.

The Council agreed to the Chair making the proposed changes and confirmed an Executive Summary for the report was not required. The Chair will prepare a covering letter which summarises the key points and will circulate this to Council members prior to sending to the Minister. Ms Allen will also be given the opportunity to provide comments directly to the Chair.



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**Action:** Chair to make the proposed changes to the document and prepare a covering letter for circulation. A copy of the document to be provided to Nina Allen for comments to be provided to the Chair.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Secretariat

## 12. Field Trip Plan

The Council discussed options for the upcoming field trip and their interest in flash flooding issues, fire progression from forests to suburbs, ESA/EPSSD consideration of future risks and a visit to an RFS/SES shed. Dr Yebra also advised that the group working with the ANU on lightning detectors would be holding a seminar next week, which includes a demonstration in Hume, which Council members could possibly attend as an alternative to it being part of the field trip. The Chair advised she would continue to engage with Rohan Scott and Anthony Draheim on options for the field trip.

## 13. Council member updates

Dr Bartlett advised a report has been issued by the Bushfire and Natural Hazard Cooperative Research Centre on its research and key findings since the 2019/20 bushfires. He noted the lack of ACT research in the report and suggested it would be useful for the Council to receive an overview of the report from ESA.

**Action:** Presentation to be sought from ESA. Summary of the report to also be circulated to members.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

Dr Yebra advised she had forwarded information to the Council on the lightning seminar.

Mr Morris advised he will be speaking at a conference on natural disaster management in Japan, but is not attending as a member of the Council. He will also be involved in a YouTube video on the historical context of the tsunami, but not as a member of the Council.

Ms Allen noted the restorative project being done in the east Canberra area which will help with heat mitigation. Support packages are available for ACT rural land holders to receive grant money for tree planting.

The Chair advised the MHAC's Report on Bushfire Management since 2003 was released to the media on 10 January 2023 and was subsequently reported across local news articles and radio interviews. She also attended the SBMP Governance Committee in December. Discussions at the meeting included the development of SBMP 5, bushfire management standards and an update on SBMP 4. Further information on these should be available at the next meeting.

## 14. Other business and next meeting arrangements

### Dangerous Conditions of Fire Trails

Dr Bartlett advised he had raised concerns about the conditions of some fire trails and had written to EPSSD as a private individual and not as a Council member. He also copied the Chair and Secretariat into



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this correspondence. He has received some advice from EPSDD concerning the prioritisation of tracks and the strategic trail review being undertaken and has tabled this response for the Council's information.

The Chair noted that this had raised a general question on how Council members should individually identify issues of concern under the Terms of Reference. She sought confirmation that other members were comfortable with the approach taken, with any response received being tabled in order to provide an opportunity for other views. The Council members agreed with the approach.

Mr Burkevics also advised that an update on the strategic review of trails is expected for an upcoming SEMSOG meeting and could be provided to the Council too when available.

**Action:** Presentation to be sought from EPSDD on the strategic review of fire trails.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

## Morning Tea with the Minister

The Chair advised a discussion was underway with the Minister's Office on the possibility of the Council holding a morning tea with the Minister. Dates are yet to be determined.

## Next meeting

The next meeting should cover the SBMP 5, the social recovery framework and the bushfire management standards. The Chair proposed that discussions on the theme of Agency capability be held off for the moment pending further engagement with ACT Government agencies on strategic processes and scheduling.

## **15. Confirmation of Communique**

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

*On 1 February 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazard Advisory Council (formerly ACT Bushfire Council) met with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate Director-General, Richard Glenn, to discuss the Council's direction. The Council also met with officials from the ACT Government Directorate of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development including Justin Foley to discuss Cultural Burning and Karen Wright to discuss the Investigation into the ACT's Western Edge.*

## **16. Meeting Close**

Next meeting 1 March 2023 – ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn