



ACT Bushfire Council Meeting

2 September 2015
16:00 to 19:00

Black Mountain Meeting
Rooms
ACT ESA Headquarters

Chair: Ms Cathy Parsons, Deputy Chair

Secretariat: Victor Khaw

Attendees: Ms Christine Goonrey, Member
Ms Marion Leiba, Member
Mr Tony Bartlett, Member
Mr Michael Lonergan, Member
Mr Steve Angus, Member

Mr Dominic Lane, Commissioner, ACT
Emergency Services Agency
Mr Richard Woods, A/g Deputy Chief Officer,
ACT Rural Fire Service
Mr Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and
Rescue

Minutes

Agenda item: 1.0 – Welcome and Apologies

Presenter: Chair

The chair welcomed Members and Officials to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Mr Kevin Jeffery (Chair), Mr Andrew Joyce (Member), Mr Neil Cooper, Manager TAMS Fire Management Unit, Mr Andrew Stark, ACTRFS Chief Officer and Tony Hanson, Executive Officer to Bushfire Council.

Agenda item: 2.0 – Disclosure of “Conflict of Interests” of Council Members

Presenter: Chair

No Conflicts of Interest were reported by Council Members.

Agenda item: 3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting

Presenter: Chair

Discussion: The minutes from the previous meeting, of 5 August 2015, were accepted as a true record.
Moved: Marion Leiba Seconded: Christine Goonrey

Michael Lonergan queried whether Tony Bartlett’s views on two matters were to be included in the minutes but it was agreed that was not the case.

Agenda item: 4.0 – Update on action items arising from previous meetings

Presenter: Chair

The Chair noted that the action items from the previous meeting were on the agenda.

Agenda item: 5.0 – Correspondences

Presenter: Chair

Marion noted confusion around receiving actions items and doing a written submission to the review of the Emergencies Act. The Commissioner indicated that it was still possible for the Council to provide a submission to the review even though the consultation period has closed. The Council recalled that Andrew Joyce was co-ordinating a submission summarising what was discussed at the meeting.

- a. Outgoing Correspondence –

1. Draft Letter to TAMS regarding Murumbung Rangers Aboriginal Fire Management Project (supported and sent on 25 September 2015)
2. Submission to Review of the Emergencies Act 2004 (to be completed out of session)

Action Item: Cathy Parsons will follow up with Andrew Joyce regarding the BFC submission to the Emergencies Act review.

Agenda item: 6.0 – Council’s Annual Preparedness Report

Presenter: Chair

There was discussion on changing the commencement date of the 2015/16 Bushfire Season. It was decided that if there is sufficient information following the pre-season briefing on 15 September 2015 a decision will be made and advice provided to the Commissioner on 17 September.

Kevin wrote to members of the Bushfire Council asking which section they would contribute to in preparing the annual preparedness report.

- a. Confirmation of headings and contributors is as follows:
 - a. Marion – Communications
 - b. Cathy – Strategic factors
 - c. Christine – SBMP section of strategic factors
 - d. Tony – Land management, last year’s section was called implementation of BOP and the second part was plan BOP activities
 - e. Michael – Command, Control, Equipment and Morale
 - f. Andrew – Morale and any issues within the brigade
 - g. Kevin – Seasonal Prognosis
 - h. Steve – RFS Morale

In relation to the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan implementation working group annual report to the Bushfire Council, Council noted that there was a lot of information from the report that could be imported into the Council’s report and Christine encouraged members to utilise the information and contact Andrew Stark if they feel there are any gaps. Input for the report is due in the middle of the month, 18 September 2015. All input should be sent to members and copied to the Executive Officer. The meeting noted that Kevin usual puts the report together. That gives enough time to provide something to ESA by 28 September 2015.

The Commissioner has been trying to drive bushfire policy that is understandable to all members of the community, but as a government the focus is on 12 key objectives and 71 sub actions contained in the SBMP. The Commissioner noted he is interested in any critiques, concerns or gaps that Council may see in the implementation and the broader policy. ESA is trying to make it easier for the Council in their monitoring role of the SBMP and the Commissioner saw no issues with referencing the recent annual report provided to Council as part of Council’s report to the Minister.

- b. Out of Session arrangements to ensure completion by October meeting in advance of Ministers visit to Council at the November 2015 meeting

To finalise Council’s annual preparedness report, a sub group meeting will be planned for Wednesday 23 September 2015, late in the day 5pm, however the aim will be to make as much progress via email. The sub group meeting will only go ahead if it is required.

Michael inquired on the status of the review of ComGen. The Commissioner provided an update noting that Bushfire Council would be involved in any future consultation processes.

Tony Bartlett requested the RFS audit of the TAMS BOP for his section of the report as he’s not sure where that is up to and that is something that has been criticised in the past.

Marion was after some input from ACTF&R as to what they have done in terms of public awareness and community engagement. Maybe inclusion in some of the school education. Some information covered in the implementation working group report. Also information on any changes to CFU numbers. Mark advised that the number of volunteers and units remains the same, no units have been disbanded, a team leaders meeting is coming up on the 25 September. One item of note is that there is going to be a review of the CFU program that has

come out of estimates, and the terms of reference will be finalised shortly.

Michael is going to write to Richard Woods regarding anything required for the equipment section.

One of the things from the SBMP that was of particular interest to the Council is the incident management training that was to be taken in conjunction with the Tasmanian program and has that progressed because the SBMP states that is a plan. Richard is following this up with information for the Council on specific training instances as an action item and has indicated that it has happened.

Action Items:

Council Members attending RFS Pre-Season briefing to advise on any change to the commencement of Bushfire Season to the Commissioner by 17 September 2015. Input for the Council's Annual Preparedness Report due 18 September to be emailed to members and copied to the Executive Officer. A sub-group meeting is planned for Wednesday 23 September 2015 at around 5pm if it is required to finalise the report.

Richard Woods to provide RFS Audit of the TAMS BOP to Tony Bartlett.

Mark Brown to provide information regarding community engagement and public awareness activities and CFU status information including the upcoming review of the program to Marion.

Richard Woods to provide specific instances of incident management training program in conjunction with the Tasmanian program.

Agenda item: 7.0 – Emergency Management Arrangements **Presenter: Rob Kilpatrick**

Discussion: An interactive tour and presentation of the Emergency Coordination Centre at ESA HQ provided an overview of EM arrangements, plans and facilities in preparation of Bushfire Season including:

- ACT Emergency Planning processes
- Activation of the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) – role of the ECC
- IMTs and AIIMS – Overview of Roles and Facilities
- Upcoming Training Exercises
- Use of Emergency Alert – Demonstration of System Capability

The common operating picture (COP) is a situation awareness tool that can track vehicles and can be accessed from trucks, computers and tablets. A overview of the Emergency Alert system was provided.

The council expressed their thanks to Rob Kilpatrick, Emergency Management Operations Officer for the presentation.

Agenda item: 9.0 – Community Warnings **Presenter: Darren Cutrupi**

Discussion: Council toured the Public Information Coordination Centre at ESA HQ and were provided with an overview of community warnings in preparation of Bushfire Season including:

- Overview of the Single Point of Truth (SPOT) Application
- Public Information Coordination across the Territory
- Warnings
- Media facilities

The council expressed their thanks to Darren Cutrupi, Manager, ESA Media Unit for the presentation.

Agenda item: 10.0 – Other Business **Presenter: Chair**

The Commissioner communicated that the ESA is trying to refocus on how we articulate our reporting to the community on bushfire mitigation and preparedness. We may understand bushfire, but the complexities can be lost on the community, that's why it's important to have a

strong policy base and action focus. The annual report provided to Council by the SBMP Implementation Working Group shows we are well and truly on track and there will be more undertaken in the lead up to summer. The Commissioner reiterated the need to tackle our biggest challenge being community complacency. It's a big challenge, but ESA is attempting innovative ways of engaging with the Community such as the doorknock program undertaken in 2014/15.

Christine flagged that there is growing concern from the community about the actual reduction of risk from all the activities under the SBMP. Managing and measuring the actual reduction of risk which these activities achieved over the next five years of the plan is very important. Achieving a reduction of risk through fire management activities is something the Conservation Council is going to pick up on in their submission to the review of the Emergencies Act. The Council discussed the difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of hazard reduction. The Commissioner sought clarification on what 'reduction of risk' actually referred to. Tony Bartlett added that he saw presentations from a range of people on how they approach that in Victoria and recommended that we needed to find a way to get those people to come up and brief the Council. These Victorian fire managers could run various scenarios on how much of the identified fire risk could be reduced through activities under their equivalent to our SBMP. For example, after a hazard reduction burn they could estimate the resulting level of risk reduction that had been achieved through running a series of models. The program they used was based on real information of likelihood of fire, fuel levels and fire behaviour.

Christine noted that the government has spent a lot of money on the SBMP from 2009-14 and spent a large amount on hazard reduction activities, but the question is: to what extent has the identified risk been reduced over that period? It's not a season to season thing. When the next SBMP is developed, there should be a report on the reduction of risk achieved on the life of that SBMP. It should not be a value thing and should be very much science based and if there's any dispute it can go to a scientific panel or be peer reviewed. The Commissioner welcomed the challenge to be able to clearly demonstrate how the risk has been reduced across the 12 objectives, if the 71 actions are implemented, noting that you can never truly test it. But there was agreement that the best testing that can be done is running models.

Christine noted that if we should give more prominence to the report from Phil Gibbons et al that reducing the vegetation within property boundaries is a significant factor in risk reduction. The Commissioner noted that the community typically wants more helicopters and faster fire trucks than asking what individuals can do. He said that ESA recognizes the interesting balance we have in trying to help people save water, create an environment that reduces heat buildup in the urban environment (which is a risk to the aging population and vulnerable people) and at the same time reduces the risk of fire.

Action Items

The meeting noted that Andrew had sent out a draft submission to the review of the Emergencies Act which required feedback from Council Members by Friday 11 September 2015.

Christine to email Tony regarding the Victorian risk modelling and liaise with RFS to see if they can come and provide information on their work

(Executive Officer to list *Hazard Reduction Research and Planning* as a agenda item to the areas of focus in 2016 for Council's consideration).

Agenda item: 11.0 – Next Meeting

Presenter: Chair

The agenda for the next Council meeting will include:

- Minor Works on Rural Leasehold Properties (CO RFS)
- Disaster Recovery Planning (Community Services Directorate)
- Power Infrastructure and Bushfire Prevention (CO RFS)
- Presentation on the Dynamic Coverage Tool – TBC (CO RFS)

Closing: The meeting closed at 7:00pm. The next meeting is scheduled for 7 October 2015.