



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL (BFC)

3 June 2009

ACTRFS HEADQUARTERS

4 POINT COOK AVENUE

FAIRBAIRN ACT

Wednesday 3rd June 2009

AGENDA

1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman

2. Attendees/ Apologies

3. Minutes of previous meeting

4. Actions running sheet

5. Correspondence

- Incoming
- Outgoing

6. Agenda Items

6.1 Discussion on proposed Victorian Bushfires Field Trip – What do members wish to see and hear about? - Kevin Jeffery

6.2 Discussion on Brigade Membership – Kevin Jeffery

6.3 Council discussion and finalisation of Bob Smiths Report and advice to the Minister – Kevin Jeffery

7. Other Business

8. Outstanding Items/Issues

9. Confirmation of next meeting

AGENDA ITEM:	1- 5	
DATE:	3 rd June 2009	1600-1900 Hrs
LOCATION:	ASOC Fairbairn	

Meeting Opened Time: 4:10pm

1. Welcome by Chairman Michael Lonergan opened meeting and later handed over to Deputy Chairman Tony Bartlett on his arrival.

2. Attendees:

Tony Bartlett	(TB) Deputy Chair /Member
Gregor Manson	(GM) Commissioner ESA
Conrad Barr	(CB) A/Deputy Commissioner Fire & Rescue
Tim McGuffog	(TM) Deputy Chief Officer ACTRFS
Tony Fearnside	(TF) Member
Michael Lonergan	(MIL) Member
Cathy Parsons	(CP) Member
Ken Batt	(KB) Member
Christine Goonrey	(CG) Member
Simon Katz	(SK) Member
Peter Kanowski	(PK) Member
Michelle Fleming	(MF) Secretariat

Apologies:

Kevin Jeffery	(KJ) Chair
Marion Leiba	(MAL) Member

3. Minutes Of the Previous Meeting:

Minutes of the 6th May 2009 meeting tabled. MAL asked that the format of the minutes be checked to ensure the document type is .doc to ensure everyone can open them.

Changes to the May minutes to be updated:

4. Council recommends consultation with the Weather Bureau and Community Education Unit of ESA to develop a campaign to heighten the public's awareness of Bushfire Danger on specific fire danger days. To be changed to Council recommends that ESA consult with the Bureau of Meteorology to develop a campaign to heighten the public's awareness of Bushfire Danger on specific fire danger days.
- 6.4 CG: This approach should focus on more than Incidents; she believes somebody should become an identified face for ESA broader issues such as SBMP2.
- 7.1 Council believes that tensions between the land managers (TAMS) and RFS are affecting the cohesion between the services.
- 8 Council has not received an update from the "High Fire Project" group and has made several requests for such an update. CG perceives that the project is being driven by a specific community element and that they are not willing to accept comments. Council is interested, and suggests the project open up more and provide access from external stakeholders.

Minutes Accepted

Moved: Michael Lonergan

Seconded: Christine Goonrey

4. Actions Running

Sheet:

Action Required:

1. Commissioner to seek the Ministers advice regarding the BFC's letter to meet with him to discuss the BFC Consultant report and the future Structure of the ESA.
2. E-Mail from Neil Cooper. Council agrees on a Sub Committee to meet with Neil about the BOP around the 17th June, reporting back to the Council at the next Council meeting on the 8th July for official sign off by Council
3. Commissioner to report back to Council the feasibility of this initiative. Council see benefit in ensuring a co-ordinated approach across all jurisdictions.

5. Correspondence In

Apology from Marion Leiba

Biodiversity Under Fire Notification

High Fire Project

Email from Neil Cooper – PCL BOP link to SBMP

E-mail from Monaro Team – Kerry Evans about hosting a field trip to study area

SOURCE: Tim McGuffog

AGENDA ITEM:	6.1
DATE:	3rd June 2009
LOCATION:	ASOC Fairbairn
SUBJECT:	Victorian Bushfire Field Trip

BACKGROUND:

Council has previously approached the Commissioner regarding the possibility of a guided trip to parts of Victoria affected by the “Black Saturday Bushfires”.
The Commissioner agreed that this would be possible and that it would be a valuable experience for members.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Deputy Chief Officer has made some personal inquiries and has been advised that it would be prudent to seek the support of both the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) if we were to conduct such a tour. The CEO of the Bushfire CRC has indicated that he would provide a suitable staff member to help with a tour if CFA and DSE also support the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION :

The RFS will develop formal proposals for the Commissioners’ signature, seeking CFA, DSE and the Bushfire CRC support on a programmed field trip of the bushfire affected areas. Council members are requested to provide detail of what they would like to see and information they would consider useful in helping them with future deliberations of Council. This information can then be included in the request and allow our Victorian counterparts to program a route and suitable hosts for the tour if they are supportive.

SOURCE: Kevin Jeffery

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

Advise the Commissioner on what we can get out of the field trip that relates to our role.
Some points that were raised included: Stay or Go policy, understanding the recommendations and early findings of the Royal Commission, Point of origin of the two main fires, how it was controlled, drive through the country that was burnt over, get a picture of how the fire intensity moved and changed, how they controlled it, township interface impacts.
Council Members agreed that a trip at this time may be premature. Wait for the key findings of the Royal Commission and base trip around these. Realistically, members conceded that it would be best to wait for the report in August and to formulate a proposal for the trip at its September meeting.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Tim to contact the two agencies verbally. Trip is appropriate however, not until Sept/Oct 2009, realistically allowing for the agencies to be able to assist and follow key recommendations being handed down from the Royal Commission.

At the meeting of 8/7/09 it was decided that the trip to Victoria be postponed until at least March 2010. This is due to the original timeframe being during the bushfire season and also will not give enough time for the Royal Commission findings to be published.

Moved: MIL Seconded: CG

AGENDA ITEM:	6.2
DATE:	3rd June 2009
LOCATION:	ASOC Fairbairn
SUBJECT:	Discussion on Brigade Membership

BACKGROUND:

A number of issues have arisen in Southern Brigade area where landholder members have raised concerns over the bureaucratic processes involved in accessing RFS training and resources, and the formalities of police checks and medical assessments before being identified as members.

These members of the community reflect the traditional element of volunteer bushfire brigades, whose primary objective is to manage fire on their own land and support their neighbours.

The Captain of the Brigade considers these landholders as valuable and skilled contributors to the brigade and the community and proposes that they should be provided wider access to Government equipment and training without the need to formalise brigade membership as is the case with other active volunteer members.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Rural Fire Service has to account for and manage training qualifications, equipment and PPE supplied to its members.

The RFS is also required to maintain records and numbers of its members to provide annual returns for insurance and reporting purposes.

The requirement for new members to undertake initial medical and police checks was implemented some years ago as a risk management process to ensure that government was not inheriting or accepting members unfit for service.

RECOMMENDATION :

Council members consider these issues and recommend actions that may resolve this impasse and maximise the support of our experienced and valuable landholder constituents.

TM opened the discussion by referring to correspondence and discussions that he has recently had with the Captain of the Southern Brigade. Southern Brigade is recognised as one of the remaining brigades that still have quite a number of traditional type members; that is landholders that conduct hazard reduction burning on their properties and come together to assist each other in fire management and control. Whilst these members may have high levels of experience and local knowledge, many have not undertaken requirements of formal membership and have no records of qualification for the roles that they may undertake.

The enactment of the ACT Workcover Act on 1 October 2009 presents some worrying conflicts for senior officers on the fire ground and within IMT's given that the fire ground is considered a work place. Potential liability of these officers is a concern if one of these unqualified members happens to be injured or killed whilst undertaking work on the fire ground, under the direction of a brigade officer or staff member.

MIL advised that there were 42 members of the Southern Brigade that don't have qualifications but were valuable contributors to the brigade.

CG. Indicated that formality of qualifications reflects professionalism and capability of the brigade.

SK. We've moved on and can appreciate the need to establish standards for training and qualifications.

Captains need to lead this process.

PK. The COAG inquiry recognised this issue and the need to appreciate the differences in brigade make up according to their location and motivations. See COAG report for wording and recommendations.

TF. The bottom line is that people need to be capable of performing the tasks that they are given.

KB. Need to establish a process of recognising prior learning based on the brigades recommendations.

TB. There is merit in categorisation of membership as long as it is linked with RPL; the world has changed and we need to balance sensibility with practicality.

CB. The model needs to enable the organisations capacity to allow other personnel to assist with events as they are happening.

GM. We need to find a category that will enable assistance from general members of the public as necessary but this needs to be considered within the various parameters of the law. These people also need to operate within a command and control structure. The volunteer profile is changing and we need to change strategies accordingly. We need to look at a way of facilitating buy in by these types of landholders and community people. In doing this we also need to consider the ramifications of Work Cover and how they would consider another category of membership.

SOURCE Kevin Jeffery

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

Council recommend that the Commissioner provide further advice after researching different agency models and to suggest some possible solutions which recognise a separate category of fire-fighters. Such a model should also ensure that they are adequately covered in the event of a fire.

Recommend that the Commissioner report back to Council with a decision around Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

MOTION MOVED:

NIL

MOTION SECONDED:

NIL

ACTION REQUIRED:

Recommend that the Commissioner report back to Council with a decision around Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

RFS investigate models used interstate to classify their various brigades and membership and see if there is a relevant model that would allow for wider inclusion of the more traditional members such as the landholders in the Southern Brigade area.

AGENDA ITEM: 6.3

DATE: 3rd June 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: Council discussion and finalisation of the Bob Smith Report and advice to the Minister

BACKGROUND:

Bob Smith has delivered his final draft version of the report into the recommendations of the McLeod and Doogan Enquiries into the 2003 Canberra Bushfires. Council and the ESA Commissioner have provided final edits and changes to the report.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Members now need to officially agree on final product and advice which Council will provide to the Minister.

RECOMMENDATION :

SOURCE: Kevin Jeffery

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

The Report has been finalised and Council is ready to sign-off as soon as possible.

MOTION MOVED:
NIL

MOTION SECONDED:

ACTION REQUIRED:

- (1) Council to officially sign off on the Report.
 - (2) Kevin to sign letter to Minister reiterating willingness for Council to meet with him. Gregor to liaise with Kevin regarding the letter to the minister accompanying the report.
 - (3) Gregor to follow up the status of the previous letter to the Minister.
 - (4) All correspondence should go through the secretariat so that a record is kept of Councils' correspondence and actions.
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AGENDA ITEM: 7

DATE: 3rd June 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: Other Business

1. Brian Parry's replacement and future structure of ESA:

GM. Advised members that he had met with Brigade Captains and other relevant people and had discussed his findings with the Minister. He needs to meet with the Minister again to finalise a structure and ensure the Ministers endorsement.

2. ESA Victorian Bushfire Debrief Report: GM indicated that the After Action Review of the ESA Victorian Bushfire Deployments was nearing finalisation and a copy would be made available to Council members.

3. BOM seasonal report. KB presented a brief report on the seasonal outlook suggesting a strong possibility of a return of El Nino conditions and a dry summer ahead. Ken tabled the BOM report.

4. CG. Reported on the good roll up at the SBMP2 presentation and information session at Rivers Shed last week.

5. GM. Advised Council on the additional pressure ESA is experiencing with the Swine Flu out break. This includes business continuity planning, ESA commitments, potential impacts, and actions to mitigate.

GM. Advised Council of the progress with the ESA building projects at Fairbairn and Hume and that the Minister would be turning the first sod next week at Fairbairn. He indicated that there was around \$1Million being spent currently on RFS and SES shed R&M and \$ 2 Million on upgrades at Rivers and Jerrabomberra stations.

6. TB sought advice on the inquests into the death of the ESA fire fighter during the Victorian deployments.

CB. Advised Council that there were currently three separate investigations underway. These included the joint ACT/DSE/CFA investigation, the Coronial investigation and the Victorian Workforce investigation. No information or advice was yet available for Councils' consideration.

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

MOTION MOVED:

MOTION SECONDED:

NIL

ACTION REQUIRED:

1. Council would like an informal meeting/ gathering with Brian Parry to thank him for his work over the past two years and to reiterate his contribution to the organisation.
 2. TB. Would like the After Action Review of the Victorian Deployments put on the agenda for discussion at next meeting.
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AGENDA ITEM: 8

DATE: 3rd June 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: Outstanding Items/ Issues

Nil

Time and Date Next Meeting:

8th July 2009 1600 Hours Fairbairn.