



ACT
Government



MEETING MINUTES – ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

MEETING INFORMATION

Date:	5 December 2018	Location:	Ground Floor ESA Headquarters, Black Mountain Meeting Room
Time:	16:03	Meeting Type:	Council
Call-In Number:	02 6207 7160	Call-In Code:	N/A
Attendees:	See list page 2	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 expressed respect to elders past and present, and acknowledged and welcomed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting.

Presenter: Chair

2 Welcome, introductions, apologies and nomination of member to monitor performance checklist

The Chair welcomed all meeting attendees and noted apologies listed on page 2.

MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS – ATTENDANCE LIST

Meeting 16.00 to 19:00, Wednesday 5 December 2018

Black Mountain Meeting Room, ESA Headquarters

Council Members	Sarah Ryan (Chairperson)	Marion Leiba	
	Natarsha Carney (via teleconference)	Jeremy Watson	Bhiamie Williamson
	Cathy Parsons	Margaret Moreton (via teleconference)	
	David Snell	Kylie Coe	

Officials

Daniel Iglesias, Executive Director, Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (PCS, EPSDD) (departed 5:55pm)

Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue (ACT F&R), ESA

Joe Murphy, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), ESA (arrived 5:02pm)

Dominic Lane, Commissioner, Emergency Services Agency (ESA) (departed 5:10pm)

Secretariat

Victor Khaw

Apologies

Steve Angus, Member ACT BFC

Tony Bartlett, Member ACT BFC

Ian Walker, Executive Director Environment Division, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Lynda Scanes, Executive Officer, ACT BFC

Invited Guests

Anna Mitchell, Senior Manager, SBMPv4, ESA

Neil Cooper, Manager, PCS, EPSDD

Presenter: Chair

3 Declaration of Interest

No declarations of conflict of interest were received.

Presenter: Chair

4 Acceptance of minutes from the 7 November 2018 meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

Presenter: Chair

5 Review action list

Action: 1808-04 – EPSDD update on Morgan Review – Complete, contained in these meeting papers

Action: 1811-06---BFC 2019 Business Plan to include EPSDD 2019-20 BOP in detail – Complete, in the business plan being considered at this meeting.

Action: 1811-08---Secretariat to distribute Strategic Bushfire Management Plan version 3 (SBMPv3) closure reports to BFC out of session- The Commissioner acknowledged that the Council had not yet received any closure reports. He has been impressed by the amount of work that has been undertaken and wants to make sure all aspects are being managed through the appropriate records management system. The Commissioner gave an explanation of the timeframe for SBMPv3, it was presented in the legislative assembly in September 2014 and will conclude at the end of the five years in September 2019. Finalisation of the plan is underway, however it is difficult to assess a five year plan when there is still almost a year to go on it.

One thing that has been recognised with the 71 actions, is that some are large bodies of government investment such as annual BOP expenditure and some may be more policy and process driven. The new version will look at recognising those differences. The intention of commencing closure of the actions from SBMPv3 is to inform production of SBMPv4.

Action: 1811-10---EPSDD PCS quarterly BOP report carried over to December – Complete, will be covered this meeting

Action: 1811-12.3---CO ACTRFS to provide BFC with a summary of the Pierces Creek AAR – Complete, will be covered this meeting

Action: 1811-14.1---The Chair and Secretariat to meet out of session to refine Business Plan. BFC to endorse in December – Complete, will be considered this meeting.

Action: 1811---CO ACTRFS filling vacant position on Council and report back to BFC – The Chair had a discussion with the Commissioner and Chief Officer ACTRFS. It was agreed to postpone until next year due to the focus on the current bushfire season.

6 Update on the SBMP V3 Closure Reports

Noted: Agenda items 8.2, 9 and 10 were brought forward to this point.

The Commissioner's points around establishing effective records management for SBMPv3 closure reports were noted.

Action: Nil.

7 EPSDD PCS quarterly BOP Reports

The level of access management activity in the report is incorrect and they will likely finish that work by the end of the year and will use the machinery elsewhere.

PCS have transitioned to a digital records keeping system for personnel training and qualification information. This has enabled them to have an integrated system that supports planning and has placed PCS in the best position for staff resource management and conducting training. The integrated data allows training data to be used when resourcing, planning and doing fatigue management so they are able to ensure compliance across the board.

The Bushfire Council is generally comfortable that PCS is tracking well. When the Chair joined three or four years ago they were digitising ACTRFS personnel records and now PCS have made that transition and it is a good step forwards.

Action:

8 Officials' reports for noting

8.1 EPSDD Report

Report as tabled. The current focus of work has shifted to preparedness and assisting with the Queensland fires. 12 PCS personnel are assisting with QLD plus several more in IMT roles. The focus was allowing ACTRFS volunteers to go, particularly with the first deployment being over the weekend and their ability during weekends.

ACT Bushfire Council members will attend a stakeholder engagement meeting at the Stromlo Depot for the Regional Fire Management Plans on 11 December 2018. The Chair will follow this with a visit to ESA HQ to view the Incident Management Exercise.

Council asked for a comparison between North American arrangements and Australian ones following a visit mentioned in the PCS report. Canada and Australia have a similar strategic approaches, however the USA have greater challenges balancing the priorities of their 50 states. Neil handed his US counterparts our national policy on fire and how fire can be used in the landscapes. There are close ties and they are working towards a unified standard of training. The risk management approach being used in the USA is small compared to what is used in Australia, but decision making tools are becoming more valued.

8.2 ESA Commissioner's Report

The Commissioner noted the very good collaboration across government recently with the Pierces Creek Fire Emergency Coordination Centre and Public Information Coordination Centre and in response to recent reviews and reports.

The Commissioner provided a short presentation on the Bushfire Preparedness Project, acknowledging the difficult dry conditions that lead to an early start to the bushfire season. The project was established to provide assurances in the lead up to a very concerning bushfire season for the ACT.

There was nothing surprising about what was being expected in the lead up to the current season given the dry conditions. It was important to share the responsibility of preparations across the agency, to support each other and not just rely on the same few people to complete them each year.

The Commissioner's presentation focused on:

- Infrastructure
 - Fire towers
 - Large Air Tanker refilling base at Canberra International Airport
- People
 - Additional training courses for ACTRFS volunteers
 - Employer recognition and graduation of new bush firefighters
 - The Bushfire Council Chair attended the employer recognition and graduation evening. She expressed surprise at how young some graduates were and questioned the entrance age of recruits. The Commissioner replied that all new recruits were appropriately mentored and developed by experienced personnel and that any crews attending incidents had the appropriate balance of skills and experience in their crews.
 - CFU volunteer recruitment increased following CFU Saturday and Pierces Creek fire. New units are planned for:

- Denman x2
 - Molonglo x2
 - Uriarra x1
- Increase in Remote Area Firefighting Team capability
- Incident Management Team training, recently completed level 2 and current conducting level 3 course
- Community Preparedness
 - CBR Be Ready Doorknock campaign has met its 5000 household target
 - ESA Open Day – Engagement of ACTRFS conducting exercises for public to see
- Intelligence
 - The Specialist Information Gathering helicopter has been engaged and will be arriving shortly. Its capability will be expanding in January 2019 when additional equipment is delivered to link into the Territory Radio Network.

The whole of agency has put a lot of work into the preparedness project and the Commissioner feels more reassured as a result.

The Chair noted that the preparedness project makes the job of Council a lot easier for their annual report to the Minister. This identifies priorities and provides assurance that everything has been looked at and what has been done. They would suggest this continues in future in some form or other.

Potter's Hill Review – the Commissioner stated that it is important to recognise transparency in the process and the review was conducted professionally by AFAC. Nearly all recommendations were agreed, some in principle and further work will be done on nuances. The Commissioner thanked everyone in the process. The ACT is fortunate with the work that land managers do in relation to mitigation work. The ESA greatly appreciates the work Daniel, Neil and PCS do. Work is being led by Deputy Director-Generals from both directorates to progress actions against the recommendations.

Daniel said that PCS need to keep pushing itself to keep engaging with colleagues from ESA. The Commissioner noted that the Potter's Hill Review found that we need good land managers with the appropriate capability but we also need the right collaboration with emergency services to provide bilateral support.

The Bushfire Council Preseason Preparedness Report 2018-19 is being released to the ABC. The Commissioner has always appreciated frank and honest advice from Council, but in the current environment these reports are increasingly being made public. Last year parts of the report were taken out of context in relation to burning. The Chair noted that media are likely to pick up the difficulties with shortening burning windows, however all other target are being very well met.

There has been some criticism of Queensland land managers in relation to the recent bushfires there, so there may be more focus on land management from the media. The Commissioner is very impressed with the work that PCS are doing. He recently visited the Lower Cotter Catchment commended the work that PCS has been doing through there.

Prescribed burns and the shrinking windows of opportunity to burn safely due to weather conditions were discussed. The Commissioner noted that it often gets viewed as negative that the burning targets in the ACT are not met, however there is nothing wrong with setting a high target or standard that is subject to the weather. It would be his preference to set great targets and work hard to achieve that, rather than the alternative of setting easy targets.

It was noted by the Council that the Potter's Hill Review was thorough. There was a discussion around the balance between relying on the data/decision making tools and experience. There are not mechanisms to put metrics to experience but the decision making tool did not exist two years ago and they are still integrating the two and the limitations of the tool.

Pierces Creek Bushfire After Action Review (AAR)

The handout provided was the result of an open forum with frank feedback that was conducted within the AIIMS structure. It provided a sense of what people were thinking, what was done and what could be done better. There was a sense of continuous improvement. Overall the outcomes weren't surprising in terms of fire behaviour given the conditions.

The Chief Officer of ACT Fire & Rescue is coordinating an Incident Management Exercise (IMX) on 11 December. One thing they want to do in the IMX is to address issues arising from the Pierces Creek AAR.

The Bushfire Council Chair noted the good work that was done with the Pierces Creek Bushfire AAR.

Despite the recent rain conditions are still very dry, more so than 2002 and 2003.

8.3 ACTRFS Chief Officer Report

There have been a few deployments to Queensland, two deployments of firefighters and a deployment of specialists. Thanks were expressed to PCS and ACTF&R in providing crews. There was a full stop on any further deployments due to rain on the fire grounds. The current weather patterns are indicating that the rain is maintaining.

Chief Officer ACTRFS presented on a hydration guide that was introduced by Dr Anthony Walker from ACTF&R. 15 firefighters suffered heat related injuries. Two were from ACTRFS but were only minor and recovered quickly. The new hydration guides will help to prevent those instances from occurring.

ACTRFS had a liaison officer in with NSWRFs over the entire duration of the Queensland deployments to provide joint coordination of crews. There were great connections through to Queensland and situation reports occurred twice a day.

Chief Officer ACTRFS will put a more formal report on the Queensland deployments together once data is collated.

ACTRFS has been recruiting staff over the last few weeks. The Manager, Operations is being finalised, the Learning Coordinator will be done soon.

Five brigade captains' workshopped level 1 incident control. During the workshops the Chief Officer shared his intent for the brigades at an incident. He talked about human behaviours and expectations.

Other items covered in the report were:

- Awards
 - Director-General awards
 - Employer recognition awards.
- Annual report hearings.
- Minister's Meeting with the Volunteers.

- Newly marked up RFS Molonglo tanker LGBTQI
- Mentoring program to be established for new recruits.
- Queensland, welfare, ops.
- Pierces Creek Fire. IMT was activated and ECC.

Action: Provide Council with the formal report on the Queensland deployment once it has been finalised.

9 Correspondence for noting

9.1 Email from ESA Commissioner re EPSDD 2018-19 BOP

Council suggests that there needs to be a strong rationale for continuing to carry out hazard reduction burns in the same way as in the past, given the warming climate and the shortening windows for burning that have led to burning targets not been met in some of the recent years. PCS noted the BOP and the RFMPs are long term plans and it is already recognised that they may not be able to complete individual season targets.

With the public release of the Council's Preparedness report it is becoming more important to be able to clearly explain the basis for setting and expressing targets, and reporting on performance against those targets. There was a suggestion of having realistic targets and aspirational targets.

10 Update on progress of SBMPv4

A presentation on timeline and progress was provided. The key focus over the last couple of weeks has been the analysis and outcomes out of the SBMPv3. Work is being progress across core themes. The input has been received on some of those and they are being refreshed. The rest is expected in the middle of December. The Senior Manager of SBMPv4 has been working with AFAC and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. The review of actions from SBMPv3 is being progressed and will be identifying some things that will not roll over to the next version and some that do. They will also identify follow up actions, and review the status and currency of legislation and policy to capture and reflect changes in those areas. Government commitments, audits, recommendations and the like will be reviewed and documented for the next version of SBMP.

The Senior Manager of SBMPv4 has been looking at a number of options for the layout and options. She has been exploring online platforms that will enable viewing and possibly interaction in a more cohesive way.

The Cabinet process has been initiated and briefings and a date has been set.

A key priority is completion of the first draft of SBMPv4 by end of January 2019. A number of inputs are still required. Part of the challenge is that a number of resources have been diverted to assisting with efforts in Queensland.

Council is a little disappointed that they haven't been asked for input into the review of SBMPv3 or the draft of v4. David Snell commented that the *Emergencies Act 2004* was drafted so that when the plan was being prepared it was to be done in consultation with Bushfire Council and that they are intended to be interacted with rather than simply being provided a completed draft.

The Senior Manager of SBMPv4 noted that all 71 action items from SBMPv3 are being brought forward

to BFC for comment out of session. The current work that is being done is to provide something to Bushfire Council and it is not at that stage yet. David Snell noted that consultation of Bushfire Council as outlined in the *Emergencies Act 2004* also did not mean that Council look over the shoulder of those drafting.

The Chair noted that they will not have an opportunity to review and comment on version 3 or have a say on version 4 before it is drafted by end of January 2019. The SBMP does not finish version 3 until September 2019. There are challenges noted by the Manager PCS and Senior Manager SBMPv4, that it is difficult with SBMP and RFMP to transition to the next version with timing for consultation and no transition period.

The next SBMPv4 Board meeting has been cancelled because there is a lot of new research, reviews and inputs that need to be incorporated. The SBMPv4 Board will meet on 23 January 2019.

The Chair expressed concern about not having seen any material for all of this time. Even at the top level they would like to have input into strategies and high level documentation prior to a draft. The Senior Manager SBMPv4 will discuss with the Commissioner about bringing forward a briefing.

It was agreed that the February Bushfire Council meeting will provide an opportunity for PCS to present on the draft RFMP. Council will also consider a session on SBMP v3 at the February meeting. Council may need to have a discussion around what consultation means and clarify expectations. David Snell noted that the Act placed the Council in a position to help the process rather than hinder it.

Action: Chair to convey to the Commissioner Bushfire Council's concerns about lack of consultation in the review of SBMPv3 in preparation of SBMPv4 and what opportunities there may be for further consultation.
PCS to present on RFMPs during the February 2019 meeting

11 Bushfire Council Business

11.1 Approve topics for the 2019 ACT BFC Business Plan

Bhiamie suggested assigning Council members to SBMP objectives early in the year. So that they know what areas they are expected to be thoroughly across when drafting the report at the end of the year. This approach will assist in presenting to Council. Council members agreed.

Cathy Parsons:

- Objective 10 – Land Use Planning

Kylie Coe:

- Objective 9 and 11, noting the link between the two
(9) A community that is prepared for bushfires
(11) Effective land-use policy and planning that reduces bushfire risk

Margaret Moreton:

- Objective 12 – The community and government recover from the effects of bushfires

Bhiamie Williamson:

- Objective 8 – Adaptive management to provide continuous improvement in bushfire management
- Jeremy Watson:
Objective 2 – Effective firefighting operations by skilled and motivated personnel

Marion Leiba:

- Objective 9 – A community that is prepared for bushfires

Steve Angus:

- Objective 3 and 5 – (3) The necessary equipment and resources to respond to and extinguish bushfires (5) Planned fire management on rural lands

Natarsha Carney:

- Objective 5 – Planned fire management on rural lands

David Snell:

- Objective 1 and 4 – (1) A reduction in bushfire ignitions (4) Extinguish fires when they occur

Tony Bartlett:

- Objective 6 and 7 – (6) Broad Area bushfire fuel reduction across the natural and rural landscape of the ACT (7) Access for vehicles and firefighters to undertake bushfire fighting and fuel reduction

Presenter: Chair

12 Review and adoption of action items from this meeting

- Action from agenda item 9.1 – PCS will meet with the Chair and Jeremy for a discussion on how burning targets are being expressed.
- Action from agenda item 10 – Chair to convey to the Commissioner Bushfire Council's concerns about lack of consultation in the review of SBMPv3 in preparation of SBMPv4 and what opportunities there may be for further consultation.
- Action from agenda item 10 – PCS to present on RFMPs during the February 2019 meeting
- Action from agenda item 8 – Provide Council with the formal report on the Queensland deployment once it has been finalised.

Presenter: Chair

13 Next meeting 6 February 2019

Action: Nil.

Presenter: Council members

14 In camera meeting Not required.

15 Performance Checklist Jeremy completed the checklist and was happy with no issues to report.



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ACTION ITEMS – ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

Action Items (OPEN)			at 1 February 2019	
Ref	ACTION	DUE	ACTION OFFICER	STATUS UPDATE
1808-04	EPSDD to provide an update on action taken against Morgan Review table.	5 December 2018	ED, PCS, EPSDD	Pending
1811-08	Secretariat to distribute closure reports to ACT BFC out of session. ACT BFC to provide endorsement within one week of receiving the SBMPv3 closure reports.	Prior to 5 December 2018	Secretariat and ACT BFC members	Ongoing
181205-8	Provide Council with the formal report on the Queensland deployment once it has been finalised.	6 February 2019	CO ACTRFS	
181205-9.1	PCS will meet with the Chair and Jeremy for a discussion on how burning targets are being expressed.	January 2019	PCS and Chair	Complete
181205-10	Chair to convey to the Commissioner Bushfire Council's concerns about lack of consultation in the review of SBMPv3 in preparation of SBMPv4 and what opportunities there may be for further consultation	6 February 2019	Chair	Complete
181205-10	PCS to present on RFMPs during the February 2019 meeting	6 February 2019	PCS	On agenda 6 Feb

Action Items (CLOSED)			at 1 February 2019	
Ref	ACTION		ACTION OFFICER	Date closed
1811-06	ACT BFC 2019 Business Plan to include time for Council to review the EPSDD 2019-20 BOP in detail.	5 December 2018		Completed December
1811-10	EPSDD PCS quarterly BOP report to be carried over to the December ACT BFC meeting.	5 December 2018	Secretariat and EPSDD	Completed December
1811-12.3	CO ACTRFS to provide ACT BFC with a summary of the Pierces Creek After Action Review.	5 December 2018	CO ACTRFS	Completed December
1811-14.1	The Chair and Secretariat to meet out of session to refine the final draft 2019 ACT BFC plan for final approval at the December ACT BFC meeting.	5 December 2018	Secretariat	Completed
1811-14.2	CO ACTRFS to progress filling the vacant position on Council and report back at the December ACT BFC meeting.	5 December 2018	CO ACTRFS	Completed