



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL MEETING

In camera meeting: 3pm to 4pm

Meeting 1: **Wednesday 4pm to 7pm, 4 March 2020**

Black Mountain Meeting Room (Ground Floor), ESA Headquarters

9 Amberley Avenue, FAIRBAIRN ACT 2609

Attendees:

Members

Sarah Ryan – Chair, ACT Bushfire Council

Natarsha Jakubaszek – Deputy Chair, ACT Bushfire Council

Tony Bartlett – Member

Steve Angus – Member

Margaret Moreton – Member

Cathy Parsons – Member

Bhiamie Williamson – Member

Marion Leiba – Member

David Snell – Member

Kylie Coe – Member

Jeremy Watson - Member

Invited Guest(s):

Neil Cooper (Presenter)

Steven Gianarkis (Presenter)

Scott Seymour (Presenter)

Apologies: David Snell

Officials

Georgeina Whelan – ESA Commissioner

Joe Murphy – Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service

Mark Brown – Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue

Justin Foley, Acting Executive Branch Manager,

Parks and Conservation Service, Environment,

Planning and Sustainable Development

Directorate (EPSDD)

Meeting Information

Delegated Authority under the

Emergencies Act 2004

Call-In Number: 02 6207 7160

Secretariat:

Lynda Scanes – Executive Officer, ACT Bushfire

Council

Minutes	
Item	Presenter
In camera session for Council members to share and consolidate feedback to ESA for the consolidated whole of agency after action review into fire operations this season.	Chair
1. Acknowledgement of country	Chair
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 acknowledged and welcomed other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting.	
2. Welcome (Introductions, apologies and nomination of member to monitor the performance checklist)	Chair
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and apologies were noted. The March meeting was the first meeting for 2020 as the February Meeting was cancelled due to the heightened bushfires operations.	
3. Declarations of interest	Chair
Jeremy Watson advised of his working relationship with JOSS and DAC requests and if a conflict is raised throughout the meeting, he declares the conflict and will step out of the meeting.	
4. Acceptance of minutes and actions from previous meeting	Chair
The minutes from 4 December 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Actions were reviewed and updated as per Appendix A .	
5. Correspondence for noting	Chair
Nil.	

6. Report on activities attended on behalf of Council since the last meeting, including report on BFC 80th Birthday Dinner **Chair**

The text from the speech presented at the 80th Anniversary of the formation of the Bushfire Council was noted. The Chair thanked the Commissioner and Chief Officer ACTRFS for organising the celebration dinner.

Action item 20200304–06: Tony Bartlett to provide Council Members with a copy of his speech.

7. Current bushfire status and consolidated Council members feedback on observations on the fires and fire operations this season **Commissioner**

Council members thanked the Commissioner for the two briefings provided to them during the Orroral Valley fire.

The Commissioner thanked Council members for their comments and support during the very busy season for the Agency and ACT Government. This season had some significant weather and fire events including the Orroral Valley fire that is now out. The ESA has now transitioned into a very significant recovery phase led by EPSDD.

The Commissioner advised that After Action Reviews (AARs) have commenced both within ESA and in a Whole of Government review. Independent consultants have been engaged to facilitate the AAR process to ensure a qualitative review of actions taken to respond to the fire and a Council Member has been invited to assist. This process will look at the expanded Incident Management Team conduct of operations to enable a constructive learning outcome to identify best practices, gaps and lessons learned which will then link to the actions in the SBMP4 for preparedness and response. All the Incident Action Plans will be used as part of the AARs.

The ACT Government are looking at the cost of the operational response and funding lines for cost recovery from Commonwealth funding.

Council members advised they commenced their after-action review process via an in-camera meeting. A verbal overview was provided in relation to the fire operations over the 2019-2020 bushfire season.

The Chair highlighted that the overall outcome from this fire season for the ACT was excellent, considering the extreme level of risk. Council members agreed to categorize and context their written report and provide it to the Commissioner out of session.

Action item 200304–07: Council members to provide ESA with a consolidated report, highlighting the key points in relation to the recent fire operations.

8. Revised Business Plan and summary of Objectives and Actions in SBMP4 **Chair**

Council members discussed the revised content in the business plan that included presentations and the need for focus topics for the Council meetings in 2020. Council members decided that the schedule required some fine-tuning due to one Member's predicted absence and the Chair and ACTRFS CO agreed to meet out of session to produce a revised plan ready for next Council Meeting.

The Chair highlighted the importance for members to articulate their requests for information and requirements for presentations to Council. Council members agreed to each provide a summary of critical knowledge requirements/questions for all presentations for future meetings.

Action item 200304–08: Chief Officer ACTRFS and Chair to meet out of session to review the Business Plan and circulate to the Council members.

9. SBMP Focus Objectives

9.1. Land use planning – Objective 10

Presentation:

EPSDD Planning

1) ACT Planning Strategy (2018) Western Edge Investigation

Mr Gianarkis

The meeting paper for this item was taken as read.

The presentation responded to Objective 10 in the SBMP – Land Use Planning. The ACT Planning Strategy 2018 is to investigate the potential for new residential areas of the ACT to meet future housing requirements. The breakdown of the strategy sets a percentage of new housing within the existing urban footprint and housing in new areas.

EPSDD have commenced a two-year process of preliminary high-level investigations into the Western Edge of the ACT. An external consultant will be engaged to undertake a bushfire exposure/threat assessment.

Council asked about the implications for the bushfire abatement zones in the longer-term strategic assessment. Council requested a future presentation on what the fire protection strategy is for the new suburbs, including the suburb of Wright. The Chair asked that this subject be taken on notice and considered for including in the business plan. The Chair thanked Mr Gianarkis for the presentation.

2) Update on the review of the bushfire general code

EPSDD are working on scoping the review of the bushfire general code in the Territory Plan this financial year and will be working on the documentation. The review will be done in consultation and in conjunction with ESA. Council will be updated with the timeframe for delivery in due course.

9.2. Fire Management Zone Review

Scott Seymour

Mr Seymour advised the project was delayed due to the recent bushfire activity and response. A report was tabled at the meeting and an electronic version will be circulated out of session. The report provided Council with an update on the project delivery.

The project governance is made up of a project board with representative from EPSDD, PCS and ESA. An explanation was provided in relation to zone variation, zone review and validation, new estate zone identification, new asset identification and assessment of zone variations. An explanation of where and how the data has been captured was provided

A gap in action 10.2 of the SBMP was identified that initiated this project to provide clarity on the SBMP Zones for land managers and developers. A communication strategy will be developed by the end of April 2020 and project delivery is scheduled for the end of September 2020.

All implications will be quantified by November 2020 for inclusion in the 2021-22 EPSDD BOP.

The Chair thanked Mr Seymour for the update on the fire management zone review.

Action item 200304–9.2: Secretariat to circulate the Fire Management Zone Review report out of session.

9.3. Firefighting Operations – Objectives 4, 5 and 6

CO ACTRFS

Presentation: Role of the ACT Strategic Bushfire Capability Statement in setting

targets for these objectives

The meeting report 'Role of the ACT Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework' was taken as read.

The presentation explained the purpose of the ACT Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework which sets a series of benchmarks for the preparedness and suppression of bushfire and thereby determines the level of capability that needs to be provided by the ACT Government. An explanation was provided of how capability requirements are determined by considering the targets and measures for shift and vehicles crewing, AIIMS maximum/minimum span of control and three levels of bushfire complexity.

The Commissioner spoke about the possibility of moving from a 12-month cycle to an 18 month cycle for season preparedness. ESA is investigating revising its training needs analysis to support future capability and capacity requirements for the Service. Discussions are occurring regarding the possibility of employing qualified seasonal/part-time staff due to fire seasons getting longer and off seasons shorter.

The ACT volunteer workforce is highly capable and through the National Resource Sharing Centre (NRSC), the ACT was the highest contributor to cross border tasking.

The Chair thanked the CO ACTRFS for the informative presentation.

10. EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan Quarterly Report

EPSDD PCS

The EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan Quarterly Report was tabled and a verbal report provided.

The report has been delayed due to staffing constraints because of response to the bushfire activity in recent months; however, it continues to be a priority.

The reporting on the BOP and prescribed burning program over the autumn months, doesn't reflect how effective the work conducted on delivering of the BOP has been during the drought. Early evidence of fire severity mapping in Namadgi suggests the effect was marked.

Action item 200304-10: EPSDD PCS to provide the Secretariat with an electronic version of the BOP Quarterly Report to be circulated to Council members out of session.

11. SBMP v3 Effectiveness and Evaluation Report for noting

Chair

The SBMP v3 Effectiveness and Evaluation Report was taken as read.

12. **Standing item** - Update Draft Regional Fire Management Plan

EPSDD

This project has been delayed due to bushfire activity over the season.

An RFMP 2019-2028 development paper and map, post Orroral Valley Fire 2020, was tabled.

Mr Cooper presented an overview and map of the proposed RFMP prescribed burn area with adjustments that take into account the area burned in the Orroral Valley fire. A rapid damage assessment for recovery and land management strategy for the area is currently under way. Prescribed burns in unburnt areas to the north and north west of Canberra remain very important. PCS will focus on public messaging as smoke will be a challenge when they conduct fuel management in these areas.

The Chair highlighted the report on the rapid assessment and its conclusions and the fire severity map within the report that PCS circulated out of session.

It was agreed that Mr Adam Leavesley be invited to present his work on fire severity and prescribed burns at the August Bushfire Council Meeting.

Council members thanked PCS for the update.

Action item 200304-12: Secretariat to include a presentation at the August Council Meeting from Mr Adam Leavesley regarding his work on fire severity and prescribed burns.

13. **Standing item** - Reports from Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Governance Committee **CO ACTRFS**

Project delayed due to bushfires activity over the season.

14. Guidance for BFC members on public comment on fire-related issues. **Chair**

Due to time constraints Council agreed to postpone this discussion to the next meeting.

Action item 200304-13: ESA to provide formal advice on public comment conflict of interest for Council members.

15. Officials' reports for noting: **Officials**

15.1. EPSDD Report **EPSDD**

A verbal briefing was provided that highlighted Parks and Conservation Service activities during the State of Alert and now that the service has gone into fire recovery planning. The Rapid Risk Assessment Report developed out of the Incident Management Room which identified that there are key risks that require managing. EPSDD are in the process of developing a recovery plan which will guide work in the fire zone. It was agreed that the fire recovery plan would be presented at the April BFC meeting.

Action item 200304-15.1: EPSDD to present the Fire Recovery Plan at the April BFC meeting.

15.2. Commissioner's Report **Commissioner**

This was an unprecedented bushfire season with the ACT declaring 24 days of Total Fire Ban from 1 October 2019 to 27 February 2020. In comparison, the 2018-19 season had five Total Fire Ban Days. The Orroral Valley Fire started on Monday 27 January 2020 was declared out on Thursday 27 February 2020, after 32 days.

A verbal briefing was provided that highlighted the activities during this extremely busy time for the ESA and participating Government Directorates who have been very keeping Canberra safe. After Action Reviews are being conducted throughout the ESA as business units transition back into business as normal.

15.3. Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service Report **CO ACTRFS**
The report was taken as read.

Bushfire Council Members thanked volunteers and staff from EPSDD and ESA for their great work during the State of Alert.

16. Any other business

Council Members congratulated Mr Angus on being awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal at the Australia Day Awards.

17. Review and adoption of action items from this meeting

18. In camera meeting if required - Yes

19. Council's performance checklist - completed

20. Close

Next meeting: 4pm, 1 April 2020

Appendix A

ACTION ITEMS – ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

Action Items (OPEN)			at 4 March 2020	
Ref	ACTION	DUE	ACTION OFFICER	STATUS UPDATE
2018	Find a replacement for the vacant Bushfire Council Member	ASAP	CO ACTRFS	An update provided Progressing
20191002-2	Documents from June to December 2018 to be put on SharePoint	June 19	CO ACTRFS	Pending access by all Members
20191204-8	Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service to liaise with the Assistant Director, ACTRFS Community Bushfire Protection to review the 2019-20 BOP and follow up the proposed treatment for Block 403 Denman Prospect and provide a response to Council as soon as possible.	December 2019	Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service	
20191204-9	Action: ESA to advise Council if they provided comment on the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan, and if so, provide a copy of those comments to Council.	April 2020		
20191204-10	Action: Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service to provide an update on the trail upgrade and maintenance program at the February 2020 BFC Meeting.	1 April 2020	Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service	
20200304-06	Tony Bartlett to provide Council Members with a copy of his speech.	1 April 2020	Tony Bartlett	
200304-07	Council members to provide ESA with a consolidated report, highlighting the key points in relation to the recent fire operations.	1 April 2020	Council members	
200304-08	Chief Officer ACTRFS and Chair to meet out of session to review the Business Plan and circulate to the Council members.	1 April 2020	CO ACTRFS	
200304-9.2	Secretariat to circulate the Fire Management Zone Review report out of session.	1 April 2020	Secretariat	

200304-10	EPSDD PCS to provide the Secretariat with an electronic version of the BOP Quarterly Report to be circulated to Council members out of session.	1 April 2020	EPSDD	
200304-12	Secretariat to include a presentation at the August Council Meeting from Mr Adam Leavesley regarding his work on fire severity and prescribed burns.	1 April 2020	Secretariat	
200304-13	ESA to provide formal advice on public comment conflict of interest for Council members.	1 April 2020	ESA	
200304-15.1	EPSDD to present the Fire Recovery Plan at the April BFC meeting.	1 April 2020	EPSDD	

Action Items (CLOSED)		at 4 March 2020
Ref		
20191002-9	The Chair of the Fire Management Zone Review Panel be asked to provide a written update to Council on progress to date and to attend the November Council meeting to answer any further questions.	
20191204-9	Action: Secretariat to arrange an out of session meeting with Mr Bartlett and Mr Seymour to review the Strategic Bushfire Management Zones Action: Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service to follow-up with the appropriate section within EPSDD and advise Council if the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan was circulated to Government Directorates for comment.	
20191204-11	Action: Secretariat to complete the first draft of the 2020 BFC Business Plan and email to the Chair.	
20191204-12	Action: Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service, to provide a short update on the Draft Regional Fire Management Plan at the February 2020 meeting.	