



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 3 February 2021 4pm-7pm

WebEx and EPSDD Stromlo Depot

Members Present

Sarah Ryan – Chair
Natarsha Jakubaszek – Deputy Chair (WebEx)
Tony Bartlett – Member
Cathy Parsons – Member
David Snell – Member (WebEx)
Jeremy Watson – Member (WebEx)
Nick Lhuede – Member
Bhiamie Williamson – Member (WebEx)
Kylie Coe - member (WebEx)

Invited Guest(s):

Tony Scherl, RFMP Coordinator, EPSDD
Neil Cooper, Senior Director – Fire, Forests and Roads, EPSDD
Julian Sneddon, Senior Fire Ecologist, EPSDD
Scott Seymour, ESA

Apologies:

Ray Johnson – ESA Deputy Commissioner
Glenn Brewer – A/g Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue
Steve Angus - Member

Officials Present

Georgeina Whelan – ESA Commissioner (WebEx)
Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) (WebEx)
Daniel Iglesias, Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)

Secretariat:

Tara Bucknall – Executive Officer, Commissioner's Office (WebEx)

Minutes

Item

Presenter

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 all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting.

2. Welcome (Introductions, apologies, and nomination of member to monitor the performance checklist)

Chair

Deputy Commissioner Johnson, Glenn Brewer A/g Chief Officer, Fire and Rescue and Steve Angus were apologies. The Chair welcomed all back to 2021 and acknowledged that the Council had a number of ups and downs over the last few months as reported in the press. She acknowledged that all members of the Council and others in attendance would treat each other with respect.

3. Declarations of interest

Chair

Nil.

4. Presentation on Bushfire Management Zones

Scott Seymour

Action Item 0302-01	Action Officer/ Due
Council requested a copy of the "Guide for identification and mapping of bushfire prone areas" document.	Secretariat On public release

Action Item 0302-02	Action Officer/ Due
Council requested a copy of the changes to Bushfire Management Zones as a result of this process	ESA On finalisation of this action within SBMP

Scott Seymour provided a comprehensive presentation on the review of the ACT Bushfire Management Zones. He detailed the overarching framework and the process for their review, including the upcoming public / community engagement strategy.

The Chair asked if the Council was able to be provided with a copy of the "Guide for identification and mapping of bushfire prone areas" document referred to in the presentation.

Council asked about the linkages between building codes (AS395) and bushfire prone mapping in accordance with the SBMP. ESA and EPPSD officials confirmed that there is a difference and there is ongoing work within ACT Government to resolve the differences. The differences are due to differing definitions within two pieces of legislation and there is no identified timeline within ACT Government to remediate this.

Council members asked about the information available online as it does not appear to be current. EPSDD noted that the information is correct as at the last approved update and new information will be loaded on the completion of the current process. It was noted that the public consultation process is not to seek approval for changes to the zones, but rather to seek feedback regarding the proposed changes. Council requested a that an updated table of the details of the changes to each zone category be provided.

5. Presentation on the Draft Regional Fire Management Plan

Tony Scherl

Julian Sneddon

Neil Cooper

Action Item 0302-03	Action Officer/ Due
Council requested a copy of both presentations be made available to members.	Secretariat To be loaded within MSTeams

Action Item 0302-04	Action Officer/ Due
Council to provide consolidated feedback as part of the public consultation phase.	Council April meeting

The EPSDD team provided a comprehensive presentation on the Draft Regional Fire Management Plan. They detailed the process for its development, the research and analysis undertaken and the process for finalisation of the RFMP, including the upcoming public / community engagement strategy.

The Council had some questions regarding the detail for planned burns and some other activities . There were also questions about the planned community engagement strategy and the opportunity for targeted groups to be involved. EPSDD indicated that there was intended to be a number of community meetings where only interested

group were to be invited to send representatives in order to meet Covid processes and restrictions. EPSDD invited feedback on the draft RFMP from Council and Council undertook to do so and present it at the April meeting.

The Chair thanked all presenters for their time and presentations.

6. Quarterly BOP report

Neil Cooper

Neil Cooper outlined the key components of the last quarterly BOP report. He advised that training activities on the whole were still impacted by Covid restrictions. The first pass of slashing has been completed with a second pass commenced.

The Chair thanked EPSDD for the Quarterly BOP

Council took a 5 min break

7. Acceptance of minutes and actions from previous meetings (November and December 2020) Chair

December 2020

7.1 The Chair handed over to Tony Bartlett who outlined a proposed change Item 7 to clarify the questions put to Dr Lewis and her response.

Council agreed to the change.

7.2 Tony Bartlett also proposed a change to item 10 to confirm the presentation and follow on action item (0212-04).

Council agreed to the change.

7.3 The Chair confirmed Item 5: Correspondence for Noting should include

Letter to the Minister enclosing Council's Annual Preparedness Report (sent 10 November 2020).

7.4 The Chair confirmed that Item 13: Finalisation of Annual Preparedness Report should be updated to reflect the above.

November 2020

7.5 Council discussed and agreed that the following from Item 14, 2 December 2020 minutes occurred during the November, not the December, meeting:

Item 14: Any other business.

Action Item 0212-05	Action Officer / Due
Council requested an update on the preparation of the Statement of Resources and Capabilities for SBMP4, as required by Section 76 of the Emergencies Act, noting that previously Council had been advised that this would be presented to Council in October 2020.	CO RFS

Council agreed that the item is to be included in Item 12.2 (formerly 16.2) , 4 November 2020 minutes.

7.6 Council agreed that the revised November and December minutes be recirculated and approved out of session.

Action Item 0302-05	Action Officer/ Due
Minutes for November 2020 and December 2020 to be re-drafted in accordance with Council agreement and circulated for out of session approval.	Secretariat Within 7 days of council meeting

7.7 Action items were updated in accordance with Annex A to these minutes.

8. New Agenda Item: Verbal update by CO RFS on grass fire risk

CO RFS

Action Item 0302-06	Action Officer/ Due
Out of session presentation of the new interactive grass fire risk map to those council members interested.	CO RFS
Additional presentation to occur at next meeting	When staff available March meeting

The CO RFS provided a verbal update on the identified grass fire risk within ACT in the current season. Of the identified 14 most risky sites, 11 have had mitigation applied. The remaining 3 have not had extra treatment due to nearby roads providing significant fire breaks, although roadside slashing has occurred. The risk analysis is managed through an interactive map which is nearly at completion and able to be presented to the council at the March meeting.

Council members indicated that they would be interested in an out of session presentation of the map before the next meeting and this was agreed.

9. Agenda Item 8: Correspondence for noting

Chair

The Bush Fire Council wrote to Commissioner on 11 Dec 2020 in response to her letter of 22 September 2020

10. Agenda Item 10: Report on activities attended on behalf of Council since last meeting

Chair

- The Chair sat on the selection panel for CO RFS (7-8 Dec 2020) and congratulates Rohan Scott on his appointment on behalf of Bush Fire Council.
- The Chair met with Dr Sophie Lewis on 21 Dec before Dr Lewis's first attendance at an SBMP Governance Committee meeting, in order to brief her on the activities of the Bushfire Council relating to the SBMP.
- On 22 December the Chair attended the SBMP Governance Committee meeting.
- On 21 Jan 21 the Chair and Council member Cathy Parsons met with the Commissioner to follow up on the contents of the correspondence in December and the issues that had been aired in the media.

11. Agenda Item 9: BFC Operations

Chair

The Chair indicated that she had met with the new secretariat but was still to finalise all arrangement going forward. As such there were no papers or further information available for this agenda item, but this would be confirmed in the upcoming period.

12. Agenda item 11: Standing Item – ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan

Agreed presentations for March:

Action item 0212-01: Presentation from Commissioner ESA for a current status update on the overview of arrangements in place to complete the recommendations from all reviews and inquires.

Presentation on ESA Operational Review.

Consolidated report on progress with SBMP actions – SBMP Governance Committee

End of season report - RFS

Additional presentation in accordance with Action Item: 03-02-06: Presentation on Interactive grass fire risk map.

The Council Business Plan will also be amended to include some scheduled in camera meetings through the year, as previously agreed

13. Agenda item 12: Standing Item – Reports from Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Governance Committee **Chair**
CO RFS

The Chair advised that she was unable to attend the last committee meeting and handed over to CO RFS who provided the following briefing:

- All but 3 action descriptions are confirmed
- Currently going through first annual cycle of reporting with all expected to be completed by the next Governance Committee meeting
- Reporting is managed through the Committee Sharepoint site.

14. Agenda Item 13: Officials’ reports for noting:

14.1 EPSDD Report **Neil Cooper**

This report was taken as read.

14.2 Commissioner’s Report **Commissioner**

Commissioner indicated nothing of significance occurred over a quiet stand down period. Staff were returning to work after a well earned rest.

14.2 Chief Officer Rural Fire Service Report **CO RFS**

The CO RFS also indicated a quiet Christmas period with staff availability being maintained whilst still having time with family.

He reported that support had been provided to Jervis Bay over the standdown.

The Fire Camera trial is still proceeding with promising results.

Farm Firewise is continuing to work with 24 properties identified for support and mitigation processes.

15. Agenda Item 14: Other Business

Tony Bartlett raised a previous discussion with EPSDD about the possibility of a presentation from EPSDD on the Aboriginal Fire Management Zones and how this is going to be treated within the RFMP.

Council agreed to request such a presentation from EPSDD with a date to be confirmed against the Council Business Plan.

Action Item 0302-07	Action Officer/ Due
Council to request, through EPSDD, a presentation on the Aboriginal Fire Management Zones and how these are going to be treated within the RFMP.	EPSDD TBC

16. Agenda Item 15: Review and adoption of action items from this meeting

Secretariat

Secretariat to confirm new action items and update of action items as per Annex A.

17. Agenda Item 16: In camera meeting if required

Tony Bartlett requested an in camera meeting.

18. Agenda Item 17: Close meeting at 7.10 pm

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all who contributed to the meeting.

Next meeting: 4pm, 3 March 2021

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Action Items			At 2 December 2020	
Ref	ACTION	DUE	ACTION OFFICER	STATUS UPDATE
0302-07	Council to request, through EPSDD, a presentation on the Aboriginal Fire Management Zones and how these are going to be treated within the RFMP.	TBC against Council Business Plan	EPSDD	0302 – Action Opened
0302-06	Out of session presentation of the new interactive grass fire risk map to those council members interested. Additional presentation to occur at next meeting	TBC March meeting	CO RFS	0302- Action Opened
0302-05	Minutes for November 2020 and December 2020 to be re-drafted in accordance with council direction and circulated for out of session approval.	10 Feb 21	Secretariat	0302- Action Opened
0302-04	Council to provide consolidated feedback with respect to RFMP as part of the public consultation phase.	April Meeting	Council	0302-Action Opened
0302-03	Council requested a copy of presentations from February meeting be made available to members.	As soon as possible	Secretariat	0302 – Action Opened Secretariat advised that these would be loaded into MS Teams for Council to access
0302-02	Council requested a copy of the changes to Bushfire Management Zones as a result of this process	TBC	ESA	0302 – Action Opened
0302-01	Council requested a copy of the “Guide for identification and mapping of bushfire prone areas” document.	On public release	Secretariat	0302- Action Opened
0212-05	Council requested an update on the preparation of the Statement of Resources and Capabilities for SBMP4, as required by Section 76 of the Emergencies Act, noting that previously the Council had been advised that this would be presented to Council in October 2020.	February meeting 0302 Updated to April meeting	CO RFS	0212 – Action Opened 0302 Action item 0212-05 moved to November 2020 meeting on agreement of Council. Reference Agenda Item 7, ACT Bushfire Council 3 February 2021 Commissioner clarified that this report would be provided post budget confirmation by Government. Commissioner agreed that this could occur in April meeting
0212-03	An agenda item for February meeting – review of membership status of members	February Meeting	Chair	0212 – Action Opened 0302 – Chair advised she would write to the Minister with a recommendation that current members terms be extended to 31 Dec 21 to

				<p>allow finalisation of Preparedness report prior to handover to new council members.</p> <p>Chair flagged to matter to secretariat for commencement of administrative process for new council members.</p>
0212-02	<p>Council have requested a report on the NSW Inquiries recommendations. Noting that AFAC have completed some work in this previously.</p> <p>0302 Action Item amended to reflect:</p> <p>Council has requested a presentation from EPSDD with regards to the recommendations within the NSW Independent Inquiry that have an Impact on Land Management.</p> <p>Council has requested to be provided with a copy of the AFAC report with consolidated recommendations from all reviews conducted as a result of the 2019-20 Bushfire Season.</p>	TBC	EPSDD/ PCS	<p>0212 – Action Opened</p> <p>0302 – EPSDD confirmed that they could provide a presentation of those recommendations within the NSW Independent Inquiry that have an impact on Land Management</p> <p>Commissioner confirmed that ESA consideration of implications from other jurisdiction Inquiries and the Royal Commission is a body of ongoing work with ESA.</p> <p>Secretariat to provide a link to the finalised AFAC report when available.</p>
0212-01	<p>The Chair to make a formal request to the Commissioner for a current status update on the overview of arrangements in place to complete the recommendations from all reviews and inquires. Due for February meeting</p>	<p>February Meeting</p> <p>0302 – updated to March meeting</p>	Chair	<p>0212 – Action Opened</p> <p>0302 – Chair confirmed that she had formally requested this of the Commissioner and it will occur at the March Meeting, dependant on the agreement from the minister of ESA recommendation of actions to be undertaken.</p>
0411-09	<p>The Chair and CO RFS will further discuss how to develop an approach to evaluating achievement of SBMP objectives.</p>	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>0302 – to occur during 2021</p>	Chair/ CO RFS	<p>0411- Action Opened</p> <p>0212- Still open. Date to be determined in early 2021.</p> <p>0302 – Agreed to occur in 2021 with Chair of SBMP Governance Committee to be included.</p>
0411-08	<p>Council requested review and discussion on Operational Review and Royal Commission in February</p>	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>0302 – updated to March Meeting</p>	Commissioner	<p>0411 – Action Opened</p> <p>0212 – ongoing</p> <p>0302 - Chair confirmed that she had formally requested this of the Commissioner and it will occur at the March Meeting</p>
0411-04	<p>When producing the business plan for the December meeting, BFC members to include a schedule of in-camera meetings</p>	<p>PRIOR TO Next Meeting</p> <p>0302 – updated</p>	ALL	<p>0411 – Action Opened</p> <p>0212 – Ongoing</p> <p>0302 – Chair confirmed update in March will include in-Camera meeting schedule</p>

		to March meeting		
0411-01	The Council requested a copy of the Annual Report from Conservation Team on Research Monitoring.	Next Meeting 0302 – updated to when available	Daniel Iglesias	0411 – Action Opened 0212 – The Chair passed this on to Daniel Iglesias. Ongoing. 0302 – EPSDD advised not yet available
0209-04	Justin Foley invited Council member Steve Angus to discuss recovery with him in an out of session meeting to address some of Steve’s concerns. Justin noted that recovery is his jurisdiction. Council member Nick Lhuede and Deputy Commissioner to be included in this process.	Next Meeting	Justin Foley	0209- Action Opened 0411 – Has not yet finalised, timing to be arranged. 0212 – ongoing 0302 – EPSDD to confirm status of matter
0209-02	Justin Foley to provide Council with an overview of what goes into drafting a BOP when available.	Next Meeting 0203 – TBC by EPSDD	Justin Foley/ CO RFS	0209 – Action Opened 0411 – Ongoing 0212 – The Chair asked for a 10-minute overview for this item next time PCS provide a presentation on a BOP. This will occur after Jan 2021 0302 – date of presentation to be confirmed with EPSDD
20200406-13	The CO ACTRFS to seek further advice in relation to making BFC reports into the level of bushfire preparedness (each bushfire season) that are provided to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services be publicly available on the ESA website; including any restrictions on reports from recent years.	Ongoing	Commissioner and CO ACTRFS	Commissioner advised this is ongoing– Tony Bartlett to provide details to publish. 0508- SR to discuss with MO 0209 – Ongoing 0411 – Ongoing 0212 – Awaiting response from MO

Action Items (CLOSED)

Ref	As at 3 February 2021
0212-04	<p>Council requested a verbal report on grassland risk and mitigation follow up at the February meeting.</p> <p>Closed February 21 – verbal update provided</p>
0411 - 06	<p>RFMP presentation due in February Council meeting due to time constraints</p> <p>Closed February 2021 – presentation provided by EPSDD</p>
0209-04	<p>The Chair to officially write to the Commissioner to explore the option of having an applicant from the previous round of Council appointments possibly fill the position recently vacated by Margaret Moreton</p> <p>Closed February 2021 – closed as no longer required (see Action item 0212-03)</p>
0209-03	<p>In relation to the Operational Review, Council will consolidate their comments and discuss them with the Commissioner and mention them in the preparedness report.</p> <p>Closed February 2021 – closed with presentation of Annual Preparedness Report</p>

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