



ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 2 November 2022

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
Chair	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
Attendees	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council (online) Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member (online from 4.50pm) Marta Yebra – Member
Apologies	Kylie Coe – Member Stephen Alegria – EBM, EPSDD
Guests	Wayne Phillips – Assistant Commissioner, ESA (online) Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (online) Matthew Mavity – Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue (online) Justin Foley – Senior Director, PCS FFR, EPSDD Tony Scherl – RFMP Coordinator, EPSDD Julian Seddon – Deputy Director, Conservation Research Branch, EPSDD Scott Seymour – ACT Emergency Services Jessi Claudianos – ACT Regional Manager, Australian Red Cross (online) Diana Bernardi – Australian Red Cross (online) Bill Gemmell – Weston Creek Community Council (online)
Secretariat	Lianna Luton – ACT Emergency Services Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Deputy Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which the council was meeting, the people of the Ngannawal and Ngambri nations, and paid his respects to elders past, present and emerging.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from 5 October 2022 meeting

The draft minutes were accepted with no amendments.

4. Review of Council Action items

Council action items were reviewed and updated.



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5. Correspondence for noting

Nil received.

6. Discussion on MHAC Terms of Reference

The Council discussed the draft MHAC Terms of Reference and noted the following points:

- The Council is to provide written advice at least once a year to the Minister.
- A quorum is required of 2/3 of the Council members. Members were reminded to review the provisions around attendance.
- It is not clear if there is any obligation for Government representatives to prepare papers for presentation to the Council. The Council noted that papers form a record for the Council and assist with the discussion of issues. They also provide clarity on where decisions need to be made or where the Government is seeking MHAC endorsement or recommendations.
- More clarification is required on the expectations around engagement with the CALD community, i.e. which groups are a priority cohort and how the Council can service this requirement. Dr Troy noted the wording may need to be consistent with Government definitions and be as flexible as possible. Mr Morris will provide an alternative definition for consideration. Dr Troy also proposed the Council write to the Minister seeking more guidance on how best the Council can fulfil the requirements around engagement.
- The provisions around Council members providing comments to the media are unclear. The Council noted that they are bound by code of conduct rules and any comments have to be cleared through the Chair and the Minister. Dr Troy proposed the Council write to the Minister requesting herself and Dr Bartlett be allowed to speak to the media on the 2003 bushfire anniversary and that they provide talking points to the Minister with their comments.

Dr Troy advised she will be discussing the TOR further with the Commissioner and the Minister's Office. She also suggested a timeline be developed to allow for ministerial clearance of comments in relation to the 2003 bushfire anniversary. Dr Bartlett proposed a separate meeting of the subcommittee for the 2003 bushfire management report in order to determine timelines and responsibilities, with plans for a paper to be circulated to Council members in the first week of December.

Dr Troy advised a meeting was held with the Weston Creek Community Council to discuss community resilience. The WCCC has also offered to facilitate the Council's draft report on community resilience, once completed, with the broader group of Community Councils.

Action: New wording to be provided in relation to CALD groups.

Person responsible: Mr Len Morris

Action: Discussions to be held with the Minister's Office concerning Council's comments on the Terms of Reference and the clearance arrangements for the media provisions.

Person responsible: Dr Troy



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Action: Bushfire subcommittee to meet to discuss timeframes and responsibilities.

Person responsible: Bushfire subcommittee members

7. Presentation on Community Resilience

The Deputy Chair welcomed Ms Jessi Claudianos and Ms Diana Bernardi from the Australian Red Cross to the meeting.

Ms Claudianos outlined the Red Cross' role in assisting with recovery and evacuation centres in emergencies and the key responsibility they have for registrations and psychological first aid. She noted the issues the Red Cross faces around community preparedness and expectations for emergency assistance, and the importance for taking a multidisciplinary approach. She also identified some issues with federal and local Government agencies not intersecting enough, which prevents sufficient information being effectively distributed to vulnerable cohorts.

Ms Bernardi outlined Red Cross' efforts to encourage people to register if they are evacuating, remaining in place or staying with others, in order to develop a plan for assistance. She advised that communities' ability to understand arrangements and access information helps their decision making around what to do ahead of time. The Red Cross has tried to address this through connections with service providers and leaders in different communities, and through training to community groups to encourage people to understand risks and have a plan for emergencies. Some of the initiatives include focusing on caravan parks in flood plains and the Pillowcase program for school children.

8. Discussion on Community Resilience

The Council questioned whether more information was available on where Red Cross initiatives were done and how successful they had been. Ms Claudianos provided some resources and links. Ms Bernardi also identified some measures to support communities to raise funds for specific resources. There has also been some work with First Nations groups to improve preparedness.

Mr Bill Gemmell, from the Weston Creek Community Council, observed that his organisation had also encountered issues with people being reluctant to seek assistance or leave property. Ms Claudianos noted the need for information to be simple and relevant to the person and for people to be given the opportunity to join the conversation and determine their own plans.

The Deputy Chair thanked the Red Cross for their presentation and discussion. The information resources Ms Claudianos provided can be accessed here:

- [Resources to help you | Australian Red Cross](#)
- [red-cross-rediplan-disaster-preparedness-guide.pdf \(redcross.org.au\)](#)
- [preparedness-report-july-2021.pdf \(redcross.org.au\)](#)
- [Community Recovery Network \(redcross.org.au\)](#)
- <https://register.redcross.org.au/>

Any further questions from the Council to be sent to Jessi Claudianos - jclaudianos@redcross.org.au or Diana Bernardi - dbernardi@redcross.org.au. Dr Troy also thanked Mr Gemmel for attending and contributing to the discussion.



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9. EPSDD Update on Prescribed Burning

The Deputy Chair invited representatives from the EPSDD to provide an update on prescribed burning, land management and the coming bushfire season. Mr Justin Foley acknowledged the traditional custodians and their critical role in the land management of fire. He introduced Mr Tony Scherl and Mr Justin Seddon and advised their combined discussions would cover strategic planning, processes for operational delivery and the work being undertaken with conservation research.

Mr Tony Scherl outlined his Unit's role in assessing fire in the landscape and the current focus on climate change. He highlighted the impact of increases in population, the growth of the ACT, bushfire frequency and intensity and outlined the modelling being used to improve fuel management in different areas. The Unit's objective is to reduce the detrimental impact on ecosystems, with a focus on understanding how fuels react and improving fire management practices. He explained that prescribed burnings are used for fuel and hazard reduction but also for ecological purposes and to support cultural burning initiatives. They are also generally done as cool burns, rather than at times of high intensity.

Mr Scherl further advised that the Unit keeps up to date with national authorities' research and recommendations and is responsible for producing the Regional Fire Management Plan, based off the SBMP. Modelling is used to measure residual risk of fire frequency and intensity, and areas within the ACT are given a burn unit score to determine the biggest benefit for risk reduction. If fire management is conducted the residual risk of a major fire event drops by 35-40%, whereas if prescribed burns are not conducted the risk increases by 70%.

10. EPSDD Update on Land Management

Mr Seddon then outlined his area's responsibility for assessing ecological risk and providing input into Territory land management planning, including the SBMP and RFMP. This includes looking at Tolerable Fire Intervals and post-fire growth stage diversity to determine how long after a fire an area can sustain another fire without risking sensitive species. Mr Seddon presented a map of the Tolerable Fire Intervals in the ACT and explained how this information helps determine plans on how to implement burns in areas of higher risk. Growth stage diversity is also used to identify habitat changes over time and assess the metrics of old, medium and new growth.

Mr Seddon identified some areas in the ACT where caution needs to be taken with burns due to other risks like erosion. As well as providing advice on mitigation measures, his area conducts research and monitoring on the efficacy of these measures and provides feedback on this to both strategic and operational planning.

11. EPSDD Update on Seasonal Outlook

Mr Foley then explained that the Bushfire Operational Plan is the annual delivery of strategic priorities for bushfire management. The Plan is negotiated closely with the Conservation Branch and Park Managers and reports on the completion of actions to deliver on bushfire operations. The Plan highlights the specific actions required, what can be achieved and completion rates to date. The 2022/23 BOP has just been approved by the Commissioner.

Mr Foley further noted it has been a difficult year to conduct prescribed burnings and slashing due to the weather and he identified that residual risk is climbing. There have also been issues in managing smaller crews due to Covid restrictions. Climate change may also alter what will work in the ACT in future. He noted



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that a pressing issue is access and the roading network due to the impact of fire, the absence of cover and significant wet weather. What previously worked for asset management is no longer viable and plans are being developed to reinstate access and repair crossings. An infrastructure officer is joining the team to undertake a strategic review of network requirements in a tenure blind way. The plan is to build back better and establish lifecycle plans for each asset.

The Council queried the availability of funding for planning activities. Mr Foley confirmed it was mostly from the ACT Government, with some leveraging of Commonwealth and insurance funding too. The Council also questioned whether the rapid drying of fuels due to climate change was being factored into models. Mr Scherl advised they are using standard risk measures but that other tools and any changes in gradient will be reviewed. Mr Seddon confirmed that the Phoenix modelling was not yet taking into account climate change due to the underlying information available. Once more information is collected this could be factored into projections in future. Weather stream scenarios would also be useful to explore the impact of climate change on fire risk.

Dr Bartlett advised that there are further matters the Council needs to follow-up on for the 2003 bushfire anniversary report. This includes information in relation to the budget and the challenges with the roading network. Mr Foley confirmed he would be happy to provide more details through email or through out of session meetings.

12. SBMP v4 & 5

The Deputy Chair invited Mr Scott Seymour, from the Operations Branch of ACT Emergency Services, to provide an update on the SBMP.

Mr Seymour explained that measuring and monitoring of delivery of the SBMP v4 was being conducted through the Dashboard which was updated in July with progress against the 12 objectives. A handout has also been developed to outline how objectives are being achieved. He highlighted a 'red action' to align the definition with the bushfire prone area with the ACT building code, which is currently being addressed through the Territory plan. Other actions continue to be delivered, though ongoing actions have no specific date for delivery.

Mr Seymour advised the SBMP v5 is scheduled to be completed before the next ACT election in 2024. A steering committee has been established with key players in bushfire management across the Territory, including the indigenous community and the Chair of the MHAC. He also provided an outline of the times when the MHAC would be able to engage in the process and when draft plans, public consultation, feedback opportunities and plans for launch could be factored into the MHAC program.

The Council queried the representation on the Steering Committee and whether representatives from the CSD, Education and Health Directorates should be included in order to provide different perspectives and consider broader issues on preparedness and vulnerable communities. Mr Seymour took this suggestion on board to take back to the Governance Committee. He confirmed the Dashboard is available to the MHAC through the Chair's attendance on the committee. Dr Bartlett noted that some actions have not been updated this year on the Dashboard and that the Council would need further confirmation on their status for the 2003 report. Mr Seymour took on board to check what has been updated since July.

13. Council member Updates



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No verbal updates were provided. Dr Troy provided two written reports with the agenda papers: 1. key points from her attendance at the 2022 conference held by the Australian and New Zealand National Council for fire and emergency services (AFAC), and 2. summary of the meeting she and Dr Bartlett held with the Chair and two members of the Weston Creek Community Council.

14. Review of Council Meeting effectiveness and efficiency in past 12 months

Dr Troy requested Council members consider how the Council was functioning and any areas for improvement, with a further discussion to be held on the issue at the next meeting.

Action: Comments to be provided to the Chair on ways to improve the Council meeting prior to the next meeting.

Person responsible: Council members

15. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

No other business was presented. The next meeting will be on 7 December at ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, with the room location to be advised.

16. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

On 2 November 2022, the ACT Multi-Hazard Advisory Committee met with officials from the ACT Government's Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, including Julian Seddon, Justin Foley and Tony Scherl, as well as Scott Seymour, from Emergency Services ACT, to discuss land management and the strategic and operational nature of fire planning in the ACT.

In addition, the Council met with Jessi Claudianos and Diane Bernardi, from the Australian Red Cross, and Bill Gemmell, Chair of the Weston Creek Community Council, to discuss current and planned initiatives that could contribute to community resilience to natural disasters.

17. Meeting Close

Next meeting 7 December 2022 – ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn