



ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 4 October 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
Chair	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
Attendees	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council (online) Nina Allen – Member Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Romain Gaubert – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member Nicola Smillie – Member Marta Yebra – Member (online)
Apologies	Wayne Phillips – Assistant Commissioner Jon Peach – EGM, SEMD Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACTRFS
Guests	Scott Seymour – Project Manager, Assurance SBMPv4 Bren Burkevics – EGM, EPSDD
Secretariat	Lianna Luton – Executive Officer Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

1. Welcome and Apologies

On behalf of the Council, the Chair acknowledged the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, the traditional custodians of the land on which they were meeting. She paid respects to elders past, present and emerging and acknowledged the traditional owners' continuing connection to the land, which they have cared for since time immemorial.

2. Declarations of Interest

Mr Morris advised he had commenced employment with NEMA and that, at times, there could be conflicts of interest between his new role and council business. He will flag in advance if anything on the agenda may be a conflict. Ms Naznin has also commenced a new position and will do the same. Dr Yebra advised she could have a conflict of interest in relation to Item 7 - Evaluation of the SBMPv4 due to her involvement in the ignition detection program.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from 6 September 2023 meeting

The draft minutes were accepted with no amendments.



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4. Review of Council Action items

Council action items were reviewed and updated.

It was noted the response received in relation to the slashing program (Item 2023-09-04) provided only general information and that more information is required on what is being done in addition to normal activities. It was also suggested that where requests for information are made, the relevant section from the minutes be provided to explain the context of the request. Mr Bren Burkevics advised he would see what further information could be provided on the slashing program. He also undertook to see what further information could be provided in relation to development approvals (Item 2023-09-02).

Mr Morris noted the Council member profiles listed on the website (Item 2023-09-01) should be alphabetical. Council members were asked to provide any further updates to the Secretariat.

A response has not yet been received from Justin Foley (Item 2023-09-06). The Secretariat will follow this up.

5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined correspondence received by the Secretariat:

- Copy of advice from Christian Bihlmaier to Rohan Scott concerning roadside slashing.
- Advice from the Senior Planning Officer of the NEMA 2023-24 National Preparedness Summit confirming a member of the MHAC will not be able to attend.

Dr Bartlett suggested notes from the meeting some Council members attended with Dr Sophie Lewis, ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, and Professor Jason Sharples, Professor of Bushfire Dynamics at UNSW Canberra, be circulated to other members as part of Council member updates.

6. ACT Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy Action Plan (TWRA Implementation)

The Council discussed the brief on the ACT Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy Action Plan provided by the Security and Emergency Management Division of the Justice and Community Services Directorate. Council members noted the reference to the Territory Wide Risk Assessment 2022 which does not appear to have been finalised yet. The brief also refers to an Exploration Report on the systemic factors making the ACT vulnerable to disasters.

The Council agreed it would be good to have further discussions with JACS to gain a better understanding of how the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Action Plan relates to the ACT Disaster Resilience Strategy and other documents that are national, ACT-based or related to the Emergency Act. It was proposed a copy of the Exploration Report be requested by the Council. Further questions were raised on the risks identified by the TWRA and how they have been determined. It was suggested more information also be sought on the participants in the workshops for the Exploration Report to better understand whether alternative sources should have been consulted too.

Action: Copy of the Exploration Report to be sought and further discussions to be organised with JACS.

Person responsible: Chair and Secretariat



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7. Evaluation of SBMPv4

The Chair welcomed Scott Seymour to the meeting.

Mr Seymour provided a presentation on the delivery of objectives under the SBMPv4. He noted the significant progress made against initiatives over the last 12 months due to partnerships with research institutions and investments in technology around fire detection. Improvements have also been made in strategic planning and through input into the revised Territory Plan design guides. Mr Seymour provided an overview of the activities completed under each Objective in the Plan and responded to questions raised by the Council.

Action: Presentation from Scott Seymour to be circulated to the Council

Person responsible: Secretariat

In relation to Objective 2, the Council queried how planned fire management on rural lands is evaluated. Mr Seymour advised that internal assessments are made based on reporting from the Rural Fire Service. Some progress has been made to coordinate plans across rural corridors but further monitoring of this is required.

In relation to Object 3, the Council questioned how community preparedness is being measured. Mr Seymour confirmed that some actions require a subjective assessment and have been difficult to measure. The Council discussed how this will also be a challenge for the next iteration of the plan. They agreed there should be more focus on establishing mechanisms to monitor how actions are implemented, whether they meet the Objective, and at what time actions become business as usual. Ms Naznin also suggested volunteer fire-fighters be referenced as a group within the community.

In relation to Objective 7, the Council discussed fuel reduction across the natural and rural landscape. Ms Allen questioned what is being done to remove African Love Grass and prevent its dispersal by slashing machines. Mr Seymour advised he would raise this issue with TCCS.

Action: Scott Seymour to consult with TCCS on measures to remove and reduce the dispersal of African Love Grass.

Person responsible: Scott Seymour

In relation to Object 8, the Council noted the recent media reports around fire trails in Namadgi National Park and questioned whether tracks are meeting bushfire standards. Mr Seymour advised he would check on the status of access works for the trail network.

Action: Scott Seymour to check on the status of access works for the trail network.

Person responsible: Scott Seymour



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In relation to Objective 11, the Council queried whether the change made to planning arrangements to include an edge road in new developments would also include the Denman Prospect area. Dr Bartlett also questioned whether there is a map available to show this.

Action: Secretariat to seek a map of Denman Prospect from the Planning section of EPSDD to determine if there is an edge road in the final plan.

Person responsible: Secretariat

Mr Seymour advised that of the 92 actions, 17 actions have clear measurable actions that can be completed in the life of the Plan. Five are dependent on external agencies and factors and 70 are open-ended and ongoing. He also noted the problem of assessing climate change versus seasonal weather. He advised it is anticipated the next iteration of the Plan will be quite different as it will require Treasury approval and the involvement of other directorates.

The Council discussed the need for SBMPv5 to have more focus on developing a monitoring and evaluation framework, and to establish baselines and a theory of change. They suggested the next SBMP have:

- Measures for each Objective or a clear definition for each Objectives to enable them to be measurable
- Measures for the achievement of actions
- A separation of new initiatives from business as usual tasks
- A separation of ongoing actions with mechanisms to monitor these actions
- Clarity on the role of the ACT in representing or influencing national mechanisms and partnerships
- Clarity on the role of the ACT in distilling the outcomes of national initiatives for the ACT region

Council members thanked Mr Seymour for his very helpful and informative discussion.

8. Update for noting on SBMPv5

The Chair highlighted the update provided in the meeting pack concerning the development of the SBMPv5. The Council noted a complete rewrite is being undertaken and suggested clarification be sought on the direction being taken, including the expected timelines, structure and scope. The Council also noted the frustration of members who spent considerable effort providing their feedback to consultants, which does not appear to be reflected in the information received so far.

The Council emphasised their interest in early engagement with the project team to discuss its design and the strategic focus of the plan, rather than receiving a completed report for comment. They considered the SBMPv5 to be a key document for the Council to be involved in over the next 15 months. They also noted it would be good to understand the problems perceived with the current plan and what changes are being considered to the existing framework, which has been in place for 20 years.

Mr Seymour advised he would contact the working group and explain the Council's offer of assistance and their request for more involvement as early as possible.



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Action: Scott Seymour to raise the Council's request for further consultation and engagement with the SBMPv5 working group. SBMPv5 Project team to be invited to provide advice on expected timeframes, structure and scope.

Person responsible: Scott Seymour, Secretariat

9. Response to questions on BOP implementation

Item not discussed as advice from Justin Foley not yet received.

10. Presentation on quantitative analysis on disaster resilience in the ACT

Mr Morris provided a presentation to the Council on disaster resilience in the ACT, based on information from Natural Hazards Research Australia. His analysis included consideration of sociodemographic features, indicators used by the Australian Disaster Resilience Index and comparisons between different Australian jurisdictions.

Mr Morris identified that the ACT does not conform to national trends for metropolitan areas and received the second lowest score in relation to disaster resilience. The Council discussed the need to understand the different variables that might be a factor and whether these variables apply across all the ACT. They noted further work was required to better understand the data and the ACT community.

Mr Morris advised he would circulate the data he used and relevant journal articles explaining his methods. The Chair suggested Council members read the information and a further discussion be held at the next meeting.

Action: Mr Morris to circulate information in relation to his presentation on disaster resilience in the ACT. Item to be added to the agenda for next meeting.

Person responsible: Len Morris, Secretariat

11. Discussion on MHAC function and Annual Report

The Chair raised the issue of the MHAC's function and the discussions that have been held with JACS, ESA and other parties to clarify the role of the Council. She noted that, with the broader remit of the Council, there is now more involvement in policy than operational work, but that the focus of council business is currently quite reactive. This is not giving the Council the opportunity to consider more strategic work and provide advice to the Minister, the Commissioner and the public.

The Chair suggested the Council aim to give one significant piece of advice to the Minister each year and questioned whether the Council's annual report could be the mechanism for this. Council reviews of existing Government processes could also be more focused on lessons learned rather than ensuring the completion of tasks. She proposed Council members give the issue some thought and for a further discussion to be held at the next meeting with the aim to develop a clear plan for 2024. The Council members discussed the need to balance strategic work and operational issues and agreed it would be good to consider different options. The Chair will be meeting with the interim Commissioner and will also prepare a paper for the next meeting for further discussion.



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Action: Chair to prepare a paper on MHAC functions for discussion at the next meeting.

Person responsible: Chair

12. Council Member Updates

Council members were asked to provide any updates to the Secretariat by the end of the week for distribution. This will include a summary of the meeting with Dr Sophie Lewis and Professor Jason Sharples.

13. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

The next meeting will be held 220 London Circuit and will be followed by the Council dinner. The email address for the Council has also changed to MHAC@act.gov.au.

14. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed:

On 4 October 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazard Advisory Council were provided an update on the ACT Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy Action Plan. The Council also received an update on the evaluation of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan version 4 and discussed the update on the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan version 5. Council member Len Morris provided a presentation on a quantitative analysis on disaster resilience in the ACT.

15. Meeting Close

Next meeting 1 November 2023