



ACT Bushfire Council Meeting

4 March 2015
16:00 to 19:00
Black Mountain 1 & 2
Meeting Rooms
ACTESA Headquarters

Chair:	Kevin Jeffery	Secretariat:	Vanessa Althorp
Attendees:	Ms Christine Goonrey, Member Ms Cathy Parsons, Member Ms Marian Leiba, Member Mr Steve Angus, Member Mr Tony Bartlett, Member		Mr Dominic Lane, ESA Commissioner Mr Andrew Stark, Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Mr Conrad Barr , A/g Chief Officer ACT Fire & Rescue Mr Neil Cooper Mgr Fire Forest and Roads, PCS

Minutes

Agenda item:	1.0 – Apologies	Presenter:	Chair
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The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.
Apologies received from:

- Mr Michael Lonergan, Member
- Mr Joyce, Member
- Mr Hanson, A/g Manager, Bushfire Planning & Coordination, ESA

The Commissioner made apologies for his early departure due to a conflicting meeting.

Agenda	2.0 – Disclosure of “Conflict of Interests” of Council Members	Presenter:	Chair
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No Conflict of Interests were reported by Council Members

Agenda item:	3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of 6 Apr 13 meeting	Presenter:	Chair
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Discussion: The minutes from the previous meeting held on 4 February 2014 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Accepted by Mr Jeffery and seconded by Ms Parsons with additional comments added

Ms Parsons asked Mr Corrigan to clarify the Mt Franklin road and the problems in getting the EIA done in a timely fashion. The council wanted reassurance about whether under the new processes, the timeframes for approval of TAMS projects would now be much streamlined and quicker. Mr Corrigan did assure Council this would be the case.

August minutes need to be approved.

Agenda item:	4.0 – Update on action items arising from previous meetings	Presenter:	Chair
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Discussion: Council noted the following updates against the previous meeting action items:

- Terms of Reference were circulated to Council Members

Agenda item: 5.0 – *Correspondences* **Presenter:** **Chair**

Nil.

Agenda item: 6.0 – *Land Manager Report to Bushfire Council* **Presenter:** **Mr Cooper**

Discussion: Mr Cooper reported that work on Mt Franklin is ongoing and the Slashbuster is progressing. Mr Cooper has been asked to supply a cost benefit analysis to TAMs for the purchase of a Slashbuster. They are spraying behind the Slashbuster but the spraying program is behind schedule due to unseasonal rain and the re-growth is flourishing.

Hazard reduction burns start in NSW on Monday and Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (TAMS) is assisting NSW National Parks. ACT Parks are hoping to start their hazard reduction burns next week dependant on fuel moisture and achieve a couple of week's burns.

Parks is currently upgrading their seasonal worker salaries from a /6 to a 5/6 to align with other Parks staff. This will ensure staff stay within the fire unit instead of moving to other areas of TAMS, this will drop the number of seasonal positions from 15-12 but the overall no of fire staff is still matching the requirements in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Council – Supported the position of upgrading seasonal staff and preferred to invest in ongoing positions and in keeping fewer staff to remain consistent and utilize their experience and training.

Land Managers asked for clarification from Bushfire Council on their expectations if hazard reduction burns are unable to be completed this year.

Council – Supported a rolling program to compensate for unfulfilled burn plans due to weather conditions.

Mr Cooper stated that 2015/2016 financial year Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP) would be designed as soon as the budget is handed down. This year it could be a slow process due to SME leaving, no budget and a new system. Mr Cooper asked for the BOP to be moved from the July agenda so they can undertake an Audit of current years work and what was achieved.

Council asked that Draft BOP's be provided to the Council at the July meeting for their consideration and the BOP's to be discussed in August.

Agenda item: 7.0 – *ESA Commissioner's Report to BFC* **Presenter:** **Commissioner**

Discussion: The Commissioner stated the need to review the Lower Cotter Management Plan pragmatic steps need to be taken outside of the strategy to ensure significant change. The Land Managers need to understand that fire is the biggest risk in this area. Ms Claire Henderson needs to be consulted from the Conservation Council. Mr Bartlett indicated that a very thorough process, chaired by the Chief Minister's Department and involving many stakeholders, was used to develop the current plan after the 2003 bushfire and that decisions to close some roads were made on the basis of balancing water quality and environmental values with maintaining appropriate access for fire management. There is agreement that the Lower Cotter Management Plan maybe out of date and that revision may be warranted. Mr Bartlett suggested that a field trip to the Lower Cotter area should be organised for Council members before the next meeting to enable everyone to better appreciate the range of issues in this area and to assist Council to provide appropriate advice on fire management strategies. As with the Blue Range area it is likely that the issues need to be assessed on a block by block basis. The Commissioner advised Council that he considered that action is not happening fast enough.

Power Infrastructure and Bushfire Prevention

Recently the Australian Electricity Regulator made a draft determination regarding ActewAGL distribution. A letter has been sent to ActewAGL by the ESA Commissioner which outlines ActewAGL statutory responsibilities and obligations. A specific working group is being established with relevant Directorates and ActewAGL to progress the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) action items regarding vegetation near power infrastructure. It is expected that Council will also be able to review the ActewAGL BOP at your June meeting and ActewAGL have been invited to present on their bushfire prevention activities at your October meeting.

National Bushfire Mitigation Program (NBMP)

The NBMP is currently being negotiated between the States/Territories and the Commonwealth. It is expected that a small amount of funding will be available for the ACT over 3 years which ESA will use to assist in progressing key aspects of the SBMP. Further details will be provided once the negotiations have been finalised.

SBMP Implementation Action Plan

To support the SBMP Implementation Working Group keep track of SBMP actions, the attached Implementation Action Plan has been developed which outlines responsibilities, priorities and the current status on each action. A number of the Bushfire Council's Annual Preparedness Report recommendations are being progressed as part of the SBMP framework. Mr Bartlett sought clarification on when Council would be consulted about the Statement of Resources Required to Implement the SBMP. The Commissioner replied that work was underway to develop a draft of this document.

Council – flagged with Land Managers that they would be looking closely at the Lower Cotter in the BOP. Council would benefit from a field trip to the Lower Cotter to assess fuel loads with a focus on different vegetations, dates to be arranged by RFS.

Council –Wanted clarification on the status on SBMP statement implementation plan and when they would see results from the Treasury Review.

Council members noted that the Minister had not yet responded to Councils 2014/15 Preparedness Report. The Chief Officer informed Council that he understood a response was being prepared.

Agenda item: *8.0 – RFS Chief Officers Report to BFC*

Presenter:

Mr Stark

Discussion: The Chief Officer provided a written report to Council.

ACT and Northern Territory sent crews to Western Australia under a NSW contingent all staff and volunteers were specialized roles, ACT was originally asked for 12 and ended up sending 19 to make up for shortfalls from other states.

A new Sector/Divisional Leader Course was piloted by the NSW NP at Hume Training Centre with participants from RFS staff, volunteers and Parks. Advanced Fire Fighting Training modules have continued. A further Crew Leader Development session was held. A specialist aviation course CRM/Flying in Wire course was also held at Hume as joint ACT NSW NP program.

February's significant Community Engagement Activity was the Royal Canberra Show, with a display stand manned by volunteers across all sessions of the show.

Council would like to receive feedback regarding the Div Com training ACT RFS attended.

Discussion: Kaylee Rutland, A/g Coordination Manager, Community Education, provided a progress update to Council on the CBR Bushfire Ready campaign, which included an outline of how the project team plans to evaluate the program.

The following data was provided to council:

HOUSES DOORKNOCKED TO DATE BY SERVICE (in targeted CBR areas):

Houses d/k by RFS	463
Houses d/k by SES	123
Houses d/k by CFU's	110
Bruce Institutional addresses F&R	250
d/k to date	946

Vulnerable Communities Engaged

The Oaks Estate Public Tenants	30
The Emergency Forum	17
Homeless Lunch	90
Library Information session	7
Total	143

Kaylee highlighted that the project team were undertaking several program evaluation strategies which included; conducting a residents survey on a sample of addresses doorknocked last year and comparing the survey results to a control group of homes situated in our targeted CBR area but were not engaged during the initial door knock. The team have also conducted a survey of Oaks Estate residents in partnership with St Vincent de Paul, who participated in an engagement session with the ESA in December. This survey will capture data about what action residents took to prepare for bushfire following the engagement session. An internal stakeholder review is also underway which was designed to seek staff and volunteer feedback to help shape the future delivery of the program. The review involves one on one interview session conducted by phone or in person and also an electronic survey.

Kaylee also highlighted the high level of coordination across the ESA that has taken place. Each of ESA four services have been involved in the delivery of the CBR Bushfire Ready program. Kaylee highlighted that all of the services worked collaboratively through door knocking in partnership and co-delivering community preparedness forums and engagement sessions. The Coordinated approach across the whole of ESA has worked really well, having a combination of paid and volunteer staff informing the community through targeted events has been especially successful with the Director of St Johns Parish Church (Homeless lunch) stating her clients can be “allergic to uniforms” and that her clients are still discussing this initiative three months later. Tim from St Vincent de Paul also supported our campaign strategy of a BBQ at the Oaks Estate on George Street saying “Engaging with the Oaks Estate community around community issues can be difficult due to the transitional nature of many in the community. They often view there accommodation as temporal and may not be as willing as others to invest themselves into current issues. The BBQ was a really enjoyable way to start a conversation and get people thinking. We find food and particularly BBQs is always a really good drawcard for engagement in this community”. This strategy is a good example of a whole of agency, coordinated, approach to informing a vulnerable population about their emergency preparedness responsibilities. Initial evaluation of the Oaks Estate public tenant community has proven our strategy as successful with the 50% of residents who responded to our survey saying they were door knocked 80% made at least one preparation. The CBR project team were able to form partnerships across the community sector with the current literature stating that using community sector links is a strengths based way of informing the community as their links and community partnerships / relationships are often deeply embedded in vulnerable communities.

An outline of the research the project team has reviewed and used to design the communications strategy behind CBR Bushfire Ready was provided. The project team would like to share more of this information with Council if they so wish. A copy of the CRC Hazard Note article was provided in hard copy.

Council – Supported the Canberra Bushfire Ready Program and the effectiveness when services

within ESA work together in a coordinated effort. From the evaluation it appears the campaign is having a positive effect utilizing combined agencies and targeting a logical audience.

Agenda item: *10.0 – Capability Framework Review* **Presenter:** **Mr Stark**

Discussion: The Chief Officer RFS, assisted by the A/g Chief Officer F&R, presented an early draft Capability Framework.

Mr Stark described the target parameters for set responses in the Capability Framework which is 30 minutes inside the BAZ and 45 minutes outside the BAZ and to control fires within 5 hectares. The model is looking at resourcing and how many times we can turn crews out before we exhaust our resources.

This modeling is backed up by statistics provided by Mr Rick McRae. It shows where we are clearly lacking in IMT capabilities and captures supplementary resources we can request from outside the ACT (NSW RFS & NSW NPWS). Mr Cooper commented that the terminology was not consistent in relation to Class 3 or Level 3 and that there is no consistent methodology when it comes to qualifications, Mr Barr noted this was for bush and grass fires only. There will be a detailed skills gaps analysis to identify what capabilities are lacking. It was noted that Parks need to be involved at the beginning not the end. Mr Barr noted that everyone will have the opportunity to contribute. ORH has a tool they are developing that they currently use for urban fire and medical response that they are currently adapting to bushfire. Mr Bartlett stated IMT results have been drawn from the Conway Report.

Ms Goonrey expressed concern about women's participation in IMT roles. Mr Cooper noted that it was hard to keep women in IMT roles, due to women leaving to go on maternity leave and returning part-time and unable to keep competencies and were unable to commit to going away on deployments. There was robust discussion on this matter and Ms Goonrey stated there should be no difference with maternity to long service leave. Ms Parsons asked whether this would be addressed under the Women In Emergency Services Strategy. Ms Goonrey noted there was a female currently acting in the role of Deputy Commissioner for ACT State Emergency Service (ACT SES).

The project will continued to be resourced with Mr Stark working on the project.

Agenda item: *11.0 – Bushfire Council Terms of Reference* **Presenter:** **Mr Jeffery**

Council agreed that the Terms of reference (TOR's) be circulated with track changes so people can add input, and suggestions. TOR will be distributed with track changes for council members to comment on with improvements and suggestions. Mr Bartlett stated that an amendment to 8.3 has previously been agreed to by the council and the current version does not reflect these changes.

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate BFC TORs to members within 2 weeks of the meeting.

ACTION: Council members to provide comments and change suggestions to the Tony Hanson before the next meeting for a version to be discussed at the next meeting.

Closing: **The meeting was closed at 6.30pm the next meeting is scheduled for 1 April 2015**

Mr Cooper and Mr Jeffery discussed the need to increase formalized indigenous burns after the meeting was closed.