

ACT Bushfire Council

Date:	Wednesday 2 May 2018	Time:	16:00 – 19:00
Venue:	Black Mountain Meeting Room (Ground Floor) ESA Headquarters. 9 Amberley Avenue, Fairbairn		
Chair:	Sarah Ryan	Secretariat:	Victor Khaw Executive Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

Council Members	Sarah Ryan (Chair)	Marion Leiba	Jeremy Watson
	Natarsha Carney (Deputy Chair)	Bhiamie Eckford-Williamson	Kylie Coe
	Cathy Parsons	Margaret Moreton	Tony Bartlett
	Steve Angus		
Officials	Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue Joe Murphy, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service Daniel Iglesias, Executive Director, Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (PCS, EPSDD)		
Invited Guests	Tony Scherl, Senior Fire Management Officer, PCS Trent Penman, University of Melbourne Adam Leavesley, Fire Management Officer, PCS EPSDD Rohan Scott, Manager Operations, ACTRFS Chris Condon, Senior Rural Officer, ACTRFS		
APOLOGIES	Dominic Lane	Lynda Scanes	
	Mick George	David Snell	

Number	Agenda Item	Presenter:
1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair

The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians of Country.

2	Welcome and Apologies	Chair
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The Chair welcomed members and invited guests to the Council Meeting, and noted the apologies.

The meeting commenced at 16:03

3 Declaration of conflicts of Interest

Chair

No declaration of conflicts of interest were reported by Council Members.

4 Presentation cost-benefit analysis of fire management

Trent Penman

Dr Trent Penman presented to Council on a collaborative study conducted with the Fire Management Unit of ACT Parks and Conservation Service. The study aims to create a cost-benefit analysis model of fire management activities in a defined area of the northwest of the ACT and surrounding NSW. It utilises Phoenix fire modelling to predict fire occurrence and spread across the defined landscape over time, and the impact that different levels of prescribed burning would have on the fire and consequent net costs to the ACT.

The model outputs underline the importance of access and fuel management in reducing the risk of harm to the ACT.

The Council thanked Dr Penman for his presentation.

Bushfire Council's Preparedness Report in the Media

Council discussed the recent ABC news coverage of the last Bushfire Preparedness Report to the Minister. The issue of describing prescribed burning targets in terms of area was discussed and Council recognises it has limitations. It was noted that Victoria is moving away from area targets to a focus on expressing achievement in fuel management in terms of residual risk. This is an approach that the Council agrees could well be explored for the ACT. Council noted the high rate of achievement of all other fire mitigation activities, like grazing, slashing, physical removal and access. However, with the climate warming and suitable windows for prescribed burning likely to continue to narrow, Council re-asserted the principle of evaluating achievement across multiple years to ensure that backlogs don't continue to grow. The imminent development of the next 5-year Strategic Bushfire Management Plan is the appropriate opportunity for reviewing how targets are set.

Council requested a presentation and discussion on how hazard reduction burning targets are set and what might be more appropriate measures of planned and reported risk mitigation.

Action: Secretariat to arrange a presentation and discussion on how hazard reduction burning targets are set and what might be more appropriate measures of planned and reported risk mitigation.

5 Topics from the 2017 ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan

ESA and PCS

Discussion:

5.1 EPSDD PCS quarterly BOP report

Papers tabled:

- Third quarter report on progress against the BOP from PCS – to be circulated out of session

All urban and cultural burns have been completed and only 4-5 larger burns remain. PCS are still committed to these burns and are testing moisture on sites 2 or 3 times a week in hopes of the right conditions to burn... They expect to reach 90% completion of their BOP this year. Several training activities can't be delivered this year, due to logistics and will be carried over to next year. The purchase of new portable radios (in conjunction with ESA and other ACT Government agencies, and giving full functionality on the Territory Radio network) has been completed but not yet in the financial record so this item looks low now but will be achieved by the next report. Council thanked the Executive Director, Parks and Conservation Service for his report.

Action: • Secretariat to circulate the papers electronically.

5.2 Update on the Farm FireWise Program

Chris Condon presented an update on Farm FireWise. Farm FireWise plans for private land holders are similar to a Bushfire Operation Plan that every land manager in the ACT is required to have. The plans collect details from rural lessees on asset protection zones, access points, water sources, protection priorities and other relevant information that can be shared with firefighters during a fire. The information is now able to be digitally mapped while on site with the lessee, making it much more efficient.

Council thanked Chris for staying late and presenting to Council.

Action: Nil.

5.3 Preparing for and responding to risk during bushfires

A paper was circulated in session on the processes in place to ensure that risk to staff during bushfires is appropriately managed by the ACT Rural Fire Service.

There is an emphasis on reporting all incidents and near misses and analysing the data to identify any trends that need attention. Council asked about the trends, and was told that the highest rate of incidents are for knees and ankles in ACTFR, for back in PCS and back and soft tissue injury in ACTAS.

Council thanked the Chief Officer RFS for the presentation of the process, but noted that a relative sense of what constitute the biggest risks is missing.

Action: Nil.

5.4 Post 2017-18 Bushfire Season Review

Rohan Scott presented a review of the 2017-18 bushfire season.

The season was not as serious as earlier outlooks suggested.

Of note was the Holt grassfire near a power sub-station. The golf course was very cooperative and turned their sprinklers on. Observers noted the high effectiveness of the asset protection zone around the sub-station in preventing the flame front reaching the asset.

Other significant fires over the season were:

- Christmas Eve Corin Dam fire, where rapid large suppression efforts prevented what could have been a substantial fire.
- Boboyan Road in NSW. , ACT took the lead on this, under the MOU with NSW. The IMT formed in case of the fire jumped into the ACT.
- The Bruce Ridge fire, which was caused by arson. The event was used for training in fire investigation.
- Potter’s Hill – PCS and ESA staff worked together well.
- Simpson’s Hill – made media because of an injury but the firefighter made a full recovery.

Council asked what was considered to be the biggest success of the season. The response was that there were no large fires in the ACT; that brigades are starting to gel as one service, and the way that other agencies are using ACTRFS ground based, vehicle based and aviation expertise. Next year the new PPC will hopefully make RAFT crews more comfortable and reduce fatigue. There are about 80 volunteers in the Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) including PCS. The ACTRFS Chief Officer noted that for the Potter’s Hill hazard reduction burn, the IMT moved over to ESA before predicted bad weather in case it was needed, which was an example of good practice. SES also had a storm come through and ACTRFS assisted with about 80 jobs.

The Council expressed their gratitude for the quality of the report and the success of the season.

Action: Provide Council with information on the number of fires and levels of fire danger in the 2016-17 season for comparison with the 2017-18 season.

6 Acceptance of minutes from previous meeting and update on action items arising Chair from previous meetings

Discussion:

The minutes were accepted subject to a minor alteration in the second sentence of 4.4, which should now read “The five year program was developed by NSWRFES and is being put forward to the National Board of ANZEMC for their consideration.”

Action items were updated and Council expressed thanks to Lynda for preparing the papers. Council also noted the growing fulfilment of their requests for papers to accompanying agenda items and to be provided ahead of the meeting. Council agreed to a trial of combining all papers into one PDF document for distribution before the meeting, with the exception of papers for comment so that members can make edits and tracked changes to the document.

Action: The Secretariat to arrange a trial of combining all papers into one PDF document for distribution.

7 Correspondence for noting Chair

Discussion:

Nil.

8 Discussion Paper – Draft Policy for monitoring achievement of the SBMP V3 2014 Chair

Discussion:

Council discussed the draft policy and based on the written feedback provided by some of the members, agreed that the response to the ESA Commissioner should be:

- that the policy is welcome
- that there be clearer delineation between monitoring actions vs outcomes
- that the fields in the database be reviewed and more guidance provided on exactly what is expected to be entered in each, and
- further consideration should be given to the points raised in the detailed feedback document prepared by Council members.

The Chair agreed to provide this advice to the Commissioner, in writing, by the requested date.

9	Reports for noting	Chair
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Discussion:

Reports and briefs for noting:

9.1 ESA Commissioner's Report

The report was taken as read.

The following topics were highlighted in the report:

- Potter's Hill Prescribed Burn Review
- Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) National Memorial Service for Fire and Emergency Service Personnel
- ACT Emergency Services Agency Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial
- ACT Ambulance Service Graduation
- ACT Rural Fire Service Long Service Award Ceremony
- ACT Fire & Rescue Graduation
- 2018 Rotary Emergency Service Community Awards Finalists

9.2 Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Report

The report was taken as read.

The following topics were highlighted in the report:

- Long service medal ceremony
- Review of membership section plan and Senior Managers Group meeting
- Public events/community awareness
- BOP and Farm FireWise updates

9.3 EPSDD Parks and Conservation Service Report

The report was taken as read.

The following topics were highlighted in the report:

- Prescribed burns remaining on the schedule to deliver as conditions allow
- Regional Fire Plan and EPSDD BOP 2018-19 resourcing
- 2017-18 BOP update (to compliment the quarterly update)
- Women and Firefighting Australasia Conference 2018
- Readiness arrangements
- NSWRF's hazard reduction burn collaboration Mt Clear

The Council thanked Officials for the comprehensive updates.

10	Any other business	Chair
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Final arrangements for Bushfire Council Field Trip on the following day were announced.

11	Next Meeting	Chair
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The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 6 June 2018.

12	In camera meeting if required	Chair
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Not required.

13	Council performance checklist and meeting conclusion	David Snell
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Discussion: Council thanked Victor Khaw for standing in as the secretariat.

Action: Nil.

Closing: The meeting was declared closed at 18:52pm.