

ACT BUSH FIRE COUNCIL

Meeting No. 10 - 23rd June 2005 3.00pm-6.00pm
Executive Conference Room 1

Emergency Services Bureau
123 Carruthers Street Curtin ACT

1. Attendees

Dave Broderick	Chairman
Clem Davis	Member
Tony Bartlett	Member
David Prince	ex-Officio
Peter Dunn	ex-Officio
Michael Ross	ex-Officio
Bob Moore	Member
Kevin Jeffery	Member
Dee Watson	Secretary

Apologies:

Geoff Cary	Member
Brian Murphy	Member

Mr Broderick opened meeting at 3.15pm

2. Minutes from previous meeting

Some errors were identified in the previous minutes:

- 6.1 NAFSI should read 'NAFC'.
- 6.2 Para 2 – “ .. *service to cover any ??? that may occur*” should read “.... service to cover any incidents that may occur.. “.

Final line should read “The motion to accept the endorsement was agreed”.
- 6.5 “*Researchers*” should be singular.
- 7.2 Remove “*which are ??UHF to UHF??*” from line 1, Page 5.

The minutes were accepted, subject to the above changes. This was proposed by the Chairman, Dave Broderick and seconded by Clem Davis.

3. New Business arising

Radio Project:

Kevin Jeffries asked for an update to the Radio Project. Dave Broderick said that he believed that this would happen in September.

Yellow Edge Report:

The Yellow Edge Report has been cleared by Legal and Chief Officers and is currently being printed for distribution.

Risk Management:

The Risk component of the OH & S Act is causing concern for Tony Bartlett.

He raised some question asked in his email, re risk assessment within a government framework – has this been done?

Tony Bartlett has offered to send ACT Forest's Risk Assessment to ESA for perusal.

A discussion ensued relating to Risk and the process of assessment. Michael Ross agreed that this would need to be completed prior to the next fire season.

4. Listing of new Agenda Items

No new agenda items

5. Correspondence

There was no correspondence, other than a number of brochures that were distributed to the Committee.

6. Reports

6.1

Peter Dunn - Commissioner

ESA is currently in negotiations with another tenderer for a 2nd Helicopter for next season. There has been a national tendering process, which proved very successful. Organisation is now in negotiation with the third tendered (an internationally known company). There is also a cost reduction whilst at the same time, a longer time period of having the helicopter in the ACT. Each of the helicopters will be fitted with Firelink. There is to be a national Firelink trial, commencing in the ACT. Peter Dunn agreed that it would be beneficial to have a presentation on Firelink made to the Council.

Lower Cotter Catchment – water:

There are a number of concerns regarding water quality and yield in the Lower Cotter Catchment. There will be intensive work to be done on this, in terms of planning.

Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre:

The ACT has taken the National lead in High Fire Research, along with the CRC. Rick McRae has been asked to take a lead role within the CRC.

Budget:

ESA did not achieve the funds required for the training academy and HQ but have 'an in principal' agreement for a move to the Hume site. Money will be targeted on the training elements, rather than bricks and mortar.

Peter Dunn and a number of the senior officers attended the opening of the new AFP training facility at Majura. This facility offers potential for joint AFP/ESA training.

Helicopter Sites:

There will be 3 helicopters at the Hume site for a period of approximately 3 months. This will pose a number of problems, including the fact that this would be extremely expensive. There is a requirement to look at other potential areas.

Bushfire Council Membership:

Cabinet has signed off on the final positions for membership of the Bushfire Council and is currently at the Legislation Committee.

6.2 Michael Ross-Rural Fire Service**CAFS Units:**

The CAFS Units (3) are on order and due in late August or early September.

CRC High Fire:

Michael Ross attended a forum which he found worthwhile, giving an overview of where the programs are currently at. ACT will have an important role to play.

Lower Cotter – No Fire Zone:

ACTEW asked the RFS for advice regarding a 'Zero Fire' policy, and RFS responded. They were advised what would be required to enable this. This included greater patrols over the summer period, 'hot shots' etc.

Dave Broderick asked about distinction between a small fire and a large invasive fire. By the end of the discussions with ACTEW they felt that the costs involved could be prohibitive.

A decision needs to be made as to:

- a) Who is in charge of the catchment area?
- b) What is the requirement?
- c) Is the water that valuable that they are prepared to spend \$x.

ESA will need to advise what the actuals would then be.

Tony Bartlett indicated that if the policy on fire management in the ACT water catchments is to change to include no planned use of fire, then there will need to be a proper policy debate, including input from Bushfire Council and public consultation.

Group Officer

Michael Ross distributed an ACT Rural Fire Service diagram, showing a range of specialisations, which could be possible for individuals, as Group Officer. Working groups in each area would back these individuals. It was agreed that it was very worthwhile. The Group Officer would be a volunteer position and could be from either Volunteer or Paid Brigades. The Chairman stressed that this was an excellent initiative and had the full backing of the Council.

6.3 David Prince-Fire Brigade

Fire Brigade:

The Fire Brigade are about to interview for a number of positions, including that of Deputy Chief Officer (6 July). They are also about to promote 12 new Officers. A number of Recruits will also be coming through.

Trial and discussions with CFU team leaders regarding trial of an extended area from a trailer (a sub-unit). Current vehicles are three Mercedes Tankers, two Light Units, two Medium CAFS and 2 Large CAFS, nine Bushfire Tankers in total for the Brigade. There are twelve new Station Officer starting a course on Monday 4 July.

Vicki Dunn raised the following in the Assembly:

“Have UFU black banned the CAFS? Minister responded “No”.
Any intention of giving to RFS – Answered by Minister “No”. “

6.4 Tony Bartlett-ACT Forests

Tony Bartlett stated that Forests people will be joining Chief Ministers Dept on 1 July. There are some financial issues that will need to be cleared up. Roles will be divided into Rural and Urban. The aim is to get a more integrated outcome between the departments. Some small burns have been carried out. Tony Bartlett is leaving the ACT Gov as of 17 July and moving into the Commonwealth.

6.5 Clem Davis-Bureau of Meteorology

A Vertical Profiler is currently being installed at the Airport. It will be up and running by next fire season. This system involves a Doppler beam which works out the wind up to approx 20,000ft. A reading can be taken at any time, as required.

John Dole from the UK will be giving a talk at the ANU Forestry Lecture Theatre next Wednesday at 5:15pm. Mr Dole is researching the energies of fire. It will be followed by a dinner.

El Nino:

The latest information is that El Nino is easing off.

ACT Fire Report:

The ACT Fire Report is 99% completed. It should be completed and approved for publication in the very near future and should be out before next fire season.

6.6 Geoff Cary-ANU

An email from Geoff Cary was read to the Council. He has accepted a position as the Bushfire Advisor for NSW Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council. He thanked the members for the time he was part of the Council.

6.7 Dave Broderick-Chairman

Dave Broderick has contacted some of the new Council members to let them know where the council is at. He has also spoken to the Ministers Office regarding a Media Release regarding Controlled Burns. He spoke to the Minister, as a Council Member, regarding the fact that he said on air regarding Controlled Burning, without talking to his advisors beforehand.

7. General Business

7.1 Lessons Learnt from the 2003 Fires

No changes have been made. Dave stated that it is predominantly for Council purposes.

Tony Bartlett suggested that it could be valuable to do an update, for the file, in perhaps 6 months time. Dave agreed that there needs to be closure on each of the 8 points, though not as a media item. It will need to be listed immediately as an Agenda item for the new council, and followed through at a subsequent meeting. Tony suggested covering one or two items at a time over a series of meetings, depending on the size of the items covered. Peter Dunn suggested that the following items should be introduced in future Agendas.

- McLeod Report
- The role of the Bushfire Council
- Induction – This would be a separate meeting, prior to the 28 July meeting, possibly on Monday 25th. It would involve a 2-hour session. The new members would be able to obtain their security passes at the same time. It could be a working lunch, if that suited.

Tony Bartlett said that the role of the Council should be covered, to ensure that everyone understood what should be being done.

Next Bushfire Council Meeting - 28 July:

Kevin Jeffrey and Tony Bartlett are to decide on two topics to be covered at the next meeting and advise the Chairman prior to the meeting.

7.2

This is Bob Moore, Geoff Carey, Brian Murphy and Clem Davis' final meeting as members of the Bushfire Council. The Chairman thanked them for their valued input over the time they have been on council and recognised the 22 years Bob had been a member.

7.3

There is a need to look at payment for the Members of the Council, many of whom have not been paid for past 4 years. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

7.4

David Prince raised a concern regarding the distribution of the Australian Fire Service Medal, one is allocated per year for the whole of the ACT. He thought that there should be a committee formed to allocate the medal. He stated that he felt there should be two per year. The original reason for having one only, was due to numbers. This would have to go through the National Awards Committee.

7.5

Bob Moore

Spoke to the meeting of his hopes that the Council would have more sway with Politicians in the future.

8. Confirmation of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 28 July at 3pm.

Meeting closed at 5:10pm