

ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting Minutes

**Thursday 28th August
4.00pm**

**Conference Room
Air Support Operations Centre
4 Point Cook Avenue Fairbairn**

Attendance:

Kevin Jeffery	(KJ) Chair/ Member
Tony Bartlett	(TB) Member
Tony Fearnside	(TF) Member
Michael Lonergan	(ML) Member
Simon Katz	(SK) Member
Ken Batt	(KB) Member
Steven Wise	(SW) Member
Marion Leiba	(ML) Member
Christine Goonrey	(CG) Member
Cathy Parsons	(CP) Member
Tim McGuffog	(TM) ex Officio (Deputy Chief Officer ACTRFS)
Brian Parry	(BP) ex Officio (Deputy Commissioner Fire & Rescue)
Gregor Manson	(GM) ex Officio (Commissioner ESA)
Beth Burgess	(BB) Secretariat

1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman

- The Chair opened the meeting at 4:10pm
- Chair mentioned meeting fees and that all members should talk to TM about filling out a form so the sitting fees can be paid to them.

2. Apologies/Absent

- Peter Kanowski,
- Gregor Manson arrived later in the meeting.

3. Minutes from Previous Meetings

- Insert into previous minutes – Simon Katz was not present at the last meeting – to be removed from minutes.

ACTION: ML suggested the BFC hire an external professional minute taker to do the minutes at each meeting. Motion moved by ML and accepted by all.

Motion: That the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted with the changes nominated. Moved by ML and Second by TB. **Carried.**

4. Business Arising

4.1 Review Actions from July Meeting

- The Chair reviewed the outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

ACTION: TM to source presentation by Norm Mueller from the previous meeting and distribute presentations to the new members for their information.

ACTION: KJ to send out the Policy and Procedures documentation for the AFSM to the new members.

4.2 Business Plan Update

- BP advised the steering committee has accepted the plan however the finalisation of the staff duty statements are still outstanding.
- There was an evening presentation held at the Canberra Stadium to introduce the Business Plan to the volunteers where the consultant outlined the plan. It was generally well received. BP feels the acceptance of this plan goes a long way towards addressing the low morale in the RFS.
- The major issues identified were that members felt they didn't have enough contact with the RFS staff, and Comcen not following procedures in first response callouts for closest brigades. Members noted that they would like to see changes made to these procedures.
- The updated Bushfire Abatement Zone (BAZ) map was displayed and now incorporates some more of the urban edge areas into the rural area (thus they have been excised from the abatement zone). BP noted that he has changed the operational boundaries from the BAZ to the Built-Up Area. This will also help resolve the issues of who's in charge at any particular incident, where BP explained how RFS officers would be in charge outside the Built-Up Area, and ACTFB in charge within the Built-Up Area. Various issues and questions were raised on specific areas on the map and were addressed by BP (particularly with regard to Black Mountain and to the concept of sending ACTFB first inside the Built-Up Area rather than "Nearest Appropriate Unit"). It is intended that the ACTFB will move away from the bush and grass fires as soon as possible to enable those resources to be more readily available for urban fires.
- It was requested that a better definition for "Self Responding" be reflected in the minutes. BP said "Self Responding is where you drive off to a fire across town without notification or request. He noted incidences of that last season. BP stated that it is not considered "self response" if a unit attends to a fire in their area or along their route which has just started and it is the appropriate response under the circumstances.
- BP advised an ACTFB officer will be the incident controller for all Level 1 grass, bush and forest fires in a built up area (inside the pink boundary). An ACTRFS officer will be the incident controller for all Level 1 grass, bush or forest fire in a rural area (from the pink boundary out). At any Level 2 grass fire, bush or forest fire incident the appointment of the most suitable person as an incident controller will be at the

discretion of the Chief Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Chief Officers of each service. All grass, bush or forest fires that require additional resources must be identifiable by an incident name which will feature as the call sign for each controller.

4.3 ROAG Meeting 22/7/08 Update

- There was a lengthy discussion regarding the stand-up arrangements that were of high level interest to the brigade captains.
- The meeting discussed the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) nominating process and the template has been sent out by GM. This has been accepted by the captains and the nominations will go out shortly.
- There was robust discussion on the Accord or Terms of Reference for the ROAG group which TM advised is all sorted out now.
- Next Meeting of ROAG will be 23/9/08 at Gungahlin.
- Remote Area Fire Teams (RAFT) – TM to get Matt Brook to provide more information on what RAFT does.
- GM mentioned the ESA has a spare conference ticket for the upcoming AFAC conference and to contact him if anyone is interested in attending.

ACTION: GM or TM will send out the template and policy and procedure process for AFSM to all members

5. Listing of new Agenda Items -

5.1 Consultant's Update BFC Monitoring and Review Project

- Bob Smith has been employed as the consultant and he has provided an establishment report. He will provide us with the draft outcomes and the process he is going to undertake. TM handed out the draft paper – Risk Management Framework. A lengthy discussion was held on the hand out.
- Bob is working on reviewing the documents provided by the government agencies as to what they have implemented and checking them off. He will be going around and talking to people over the next two weeks and making sure they have done what they said they were going to do.
- GM suggested Bob talk to him about the risk management plan the ESA has done recently that may help him. KJ advised he has already told Bob to get in touch with him.

ACTION: TM to circulate the TOR for the Project Plan to the new members for their information and understanding.

ACTION: KJ to contact Bob and submit some suggested changes to him.

5.2 Workshop BFC Pre-Season Preparedness Report to the Minister

- TM advised that he has already allocated some tasks for the gathering of requested information to relevant people. He handed out a copy of his list with the names of who he has passed it on to, to action.

ACTION: KJ to make sure the report is sent to members 1 week before the next meeting to allow members enough time to read it and respond at the meeting. The Bushfire Preparedness Report is due to the Minister by 1st November 2008.

6. Correspondence -

NIL

7. General Business -

ACTION: TM and KJ to give a presentation in relation to the resources available to the RFS to assist the new members. GM advised that a lot of this can be found in the Business Plan that is already included in the new members pack but a presentation would still be beneficial.

ACTION: KB and TM to organise a 1 day fire weather training and awareness course. Members to be invited to the pre-season weather briefing and possibly the training course as well.

8. Reports

8.1 Commissioner

- A Nationally Consistent Emergency Warning System paper mentioned by GM. This report will be tabled at COAG.
- A National Strategic Framework for Increasing Community All-Hazards Disaster Resilience Paper was also mentioned.
- GM will be asking TM and BP to brief him in relation to pre-season preparedness. One of his major concerns is hazard reduction and will be meeting with Mike Zissler next week about re establishing the mosaic burn patterns in the catchments and will update the BFC about this meeting next time.

8.2 ACTRFS

- Six of the Brigades have held their AGM's to date with the final two to be held in the next couple of weeks. The brigade's executive structures will be sorted out and contact lists updated.
- VBA Annual Bushfire Field Day (competition day) is being held at Molongolo on 20/9/08. TM will provide further details to anyone that would like to go along.

- The pre-season brief will be held on 1/10/08 and will involve all of the brigade operations people and cover all the pre-season arrangements and introduce any new staff. TAMS will be there as well as KB to give an update as well.
- Information sessions have been running to recruit new volunteers with about 46 people attending and approx. 15 – 20 people actually returning for sign up as volunteers. TM is looking into different ways to find more volunteers and is liaising with the ESA Media Officer. They are aiming to get up to 40-50 if possible.
- Jim Gould from CSIRO will be running two days of presentations on Project VESTA, a fire behaviour study principally undertaken in WA which may be valuable for our particular environment. To be held at ASOC on the 7th and 8th of September 2008. If anyone is interested in coming please inform TM.
- Staff changes – three people are acting in positions at the moment and these positions will be advertised shortly with a view to getting them filled before the bushfire season. Some positions have been upgraded in line with the new RFS structure and also with the requirements of the positions. BP mentioned another change at ESA being his EA position is now vacant and will be advertised as well. Nick Lhuede has been appointed as the Director of Risk and Planning at the ESA.
- BP also advised of the new headquarters arrangements and that we will be relocating here at Fairbairn within 18 months.

8.3 Fire Brigade

- Serious changes coming in to the OH&S Act that will have a major impact on how we manage the organisation from both a volunteer and a paid staff perspective. Discussion ensued on the Act and it was suggested that BP or GM keep the Council informed of how things are going with the changes.
- GM raised the issue of fatigue management and BP will try to find the two papers relating to it and will disseminate to all members.

8.4 Council Members

- CG has given her apologies for the next two meetings as she will be overseas.
- ML advised the standing committee on legal affairs has issued a report and it went onto the website yesterday. He would like the Council, or a member on behalf of the Council, to write to Karen McDonald rebutting comments regarding the Bushfire Council in the report.
- ML's second point regarding the Inquiry was about the pre-occupation of the ESA on bushfires and the apparent expenditure of huge amount of bureaucratic and volunteers time on bushfires and the large amounts of the ESA's budget that is consumed. These figures were discussed and ML feels that perhaps the Council should respond to this criticism.

- Another point ML mentioned is the research work Rick McRae has undertaken for the CRC and thought it was excellent and that he should take it further. It also confirms the need for a mountain fire management college and he will develop this further and weave it into a proposal paper.
- The last point ML raised is on the Communications plan requirements that TM tabled at the last meeting that talks about automatic vehicle locators and the duress button. ML thought the automatic vehicle locators were what we once called FireLink and he is concerned that it encourages centralised control. He doesn't think the RFS should have them and Council then discussed this. The duress button is flawed for a couple of reasons and he believes it gives the operator a false sense of security.
- TF made a couple of comments about ML's points saying that the Council is set up to advise the Minister and if the Council can't do that then what is it set up for?
- ML mentioned that she has done a lot of editing for multi-faceted risk reports in the past and if the Council needs any help with the Risk report she is happy to do it.
- ML's second point is that she may not be able to make the next meeting but will put her apologies in if need be.
- TB advised he is also going to AFAC and will be doing a presentation on the need for a National Forest Fire Management Policy.
- KJ mentioned the TAMS deployment that went over to America to assist with their recent fires and would like them to come and give a short presentation at one of our upcoming BFC meetings.

9. Confirmation of Next Meeting

- The Chair closed the meeting at 6.52pm
- The next council meeting will be held at the ASOC, 4 Point Cook Avenue, Fairbairn on the 25th September 2008.