



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL (BFC)

5 March 2009

ACTRFS HEADQUARTERS

4 POINT COOK AVENUE

FAIRBAIRN ACT

Thursday 5th March 2009

AGENDA

1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman
2. Attendees/ Apologies
3. Minutes of previous meeting
4. Actions running sheet
5. Correspondence
 - Incoming
 - Outgoing
6. Agenda Items
 - 6.1 Presentation on Hotspots project – Tony Bartlett
 - 6.2 Update on TAMS Subregional planning – Neil Cooper
 - 6.3 Council discussion on 'Stay or Go' policy
 - 6.5 Update on BFC Consultancy progress – Kevin Jeffery
7. Other Business
8. Outstanding Items/Issues
9. Confirmation of next meeting

AGENDA ITEM: 1- 5

DATE: 5th March 2009 1600-1900 Hrs

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

Meeting Opened Time: 16:12

1. Welcome by Chairman

KJ welcomed Council Members and Special Guests.

2. (a) Attendees

Brian Parry	(BP)	Deputy Commissioner
Tim McGuffog	(TM)	Deputy Chief Officer
Tony Bartlett	(TB)	Council Member
Kevin Jeffery	(KJ)	Council Chairman
Tony Fearnside	(TF)	Council Member
Christine Goonrey	(CG)	Council Member
Michael Lonergan	(MIL)	Council Member
Simon Katz	(SK)	Council Member
Cathy Parsons	(CP)	Council Member
Peter Kanowski	(PK)	Council Member
Conrad Barr	(CB)	ACT Fire Brigade
Virginia Dixon	(VD)	RFS Community Awareness Liaison
Kaylee McInnes	(KM)	Secretariat

2. (b) Apologies

Marion Leiba	(MAL)	Council Member
Gregor Manson	(GM)	ESA Commissioner
Kenn Batt	(KB)	Council Member

2. (c) Late Arrivals/ Early Departures

Conrad Barr arrived at 16:47

Brian Parry arrived at 17:38

3. Minutes Of the Previous Meeting:

- Minutes of the 5th February 2009 meeting tabled.
- Changes to the minutes to be updated:
 - Council would like a list of attendees to be added to the minutes and to have a key of initials.
 - CP suggested the minutes may still be too detailed.

MOTION: Council approves the format the minutes are now being published in.

Minutes Accepted

Moved: Michael Lonergan

Seconded: Catherine Parsons

4. Actions Running Sheet:

Action Required:

5. Correspondence In/Out

1. Advice on change of date for this meeting – Out and In

2. Sitreps on Victorian Deployments and daily situation.

3. AFAC CEO – Position on Stay or Go

4. ESA Spokesman – Kevin Jeffery, Gregor Manson

5. Letter to Canberra Times – Tony Fernside

SOURCE: Tim McGuffog

AGENDA ITEM: **6.1**

DATE: 5 March 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: **Presentation on Hotspots Project**

BACKGROUND:

New Approaches to Managing Fire to Conserve Biodiversity.

Fire is an integral part of the Australian bush, our plants and animals have evolved with fire as part of their system, but as we have seen in recent weeks fire can cause devastating impacts on people, settlements and on biodiversity.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The **Hotspots Fire Project** aims to assist landholders and public agencies in managing fire for the protection of life and property while at the same time ensuring healthy productive landscapes in which biodiversity is protected and maintained. "Hotspots" is managed by the NSW Conservation Council and the NSW Environmental Trust that works with communities and landholders to facilitate a shared development of fire management plans that enable biodiversity conservation and fire risk management. Hotspots aims to:

- improve awareness of fire as a tool for conserving biodiversity;
- improve understanding and knowledge of the role of fire;
- improve the capacity of communities to work together to manage fire; and
- facilitate the development of appropriate property management fire plans.

Project officers from the Hotspots project will give a presentation on their work, including information on how they have worked with communities to develop fire management plans and implement appropriate fire regimes for forested land in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority region.

RECOMMENDATION :

Council considered this presentation as an alternate view and means of expanding our understanding of integrated fuel and hazard management principles. An holistic approach to community based fire management was appreciated by the membership.

VD: Highlighted the Farm Firewise project that is currently in place in the ACT. This programme has addressed several of the variables described in the presentation, but believes that HOTSPOTS have gone a number of steps further in their models. These ideas could be incorporated into the Farm FireWise programme.

SOURCE: Tony Bartlett

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

References and project notes were provided to Council.

Council would like to see the hotspots programme associated with the Farm Firewise programme currently established in the ACT and surrounding NSW regions. Council believes the programmes could benefit and learn much from each other. VD has arranged further meetings to progress incorporation of this model into the Farm FireWise program.

MOTION MOVED:

MOTION SECONDED:

ACTION REQUIRED

AGENDA ITEM:

6.2

DATE:

5 March 2009

LOCATION:

ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT:

Update on TAMS Sub-Regional planning

BACKGROUND:

Neil Cooper provided Council with an overview of TAMS planning processes and templates for the sub-regional plans at the February meeting.

CURRENT SITUATION:

There has been a further development with this planning and TAMS would like to keep members abreast of progress.

RECOMMENDATION :

SOURCE Neil Cooper

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION: Neil Cooper was unable to attend the meeting. This agenda item will be held over until the next Council meeting.

MOTION SECONDED:

ACTION REQUIRED:

AGENDA ITEM:

6.3

DATE:

5 March 2009

LOCATION:

ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT:

Council discussion on 'Stay or Go' policy

BACKGROUND:

The current Victorian Bushfire Emergency has raised professional and public debate on the Stay or Go policy in light of the significant number of fatalities across Victorian Communities. This topic is likely to generate significant debate within the community, professional services, and the various inquiries and Commissions that will emanate following this event.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Bushfire Council members should ensure that they are familiar with all aspects of this policy and form a pre-emptive position on the advice they will likely have to provide to the Minister, the Services and the Community.

Attachments for this item include

1. A copy of the ACTESA Stay or Go documents
2. The AFAC position paper on Bushfire and Community Safety
3. Bushfire CRC Fire note on Stay or Go policy.

RECOMMENDATION :

VD: Raised concern over the level of interest that the Stay or Go policy is currently attracting. We need to take advantage of this interest and highlight the matter whilst it is in the media. VD believes not enough emphasis has been given on the subject of "Stay or **Go Early**", there is a lot of confusion in communities of what "Stay or Go Early" means. Not enough is done to explain the concept of stay or go. VD believes that the delivery of the message is so important in order to reach audiences in a clear and precise format; the correct message needs to be heard.

TM: Has advocated an emphasis on educating the police force on evacuating areas in the instance of fires.

CB: People have to understand what it means to actually be "prepared" for the onset of bushfire. Do we draw a line on days of high fire danger, and change the policy to go in instances of high risk fire days? Parallels and lessons need to be learned and evaluated.

VD: One on one education is vital in making people think about what they would do when confronted with a bushfire.

TB: ACT needs to adopt an idea of what early "means". Also, on days of high fire danger we need to educate the public, that if you are not prepared to defend properties then they need to go early. Land owners need to decide this and be prepared to make a decision before the fire starts. The ACT could lead the way by incorporating fire danger indices into daily bushfire and weather forecasts and teach the public to recognise and respond appropriately to these indices.

Discussion was had regarding where people would or could go in the event of leaving early. Some people do not have an alternative safe place to go. What are we doing in regards to designated evacuation centres?

CB: Raised the possibility of activating a number of "safe houses or evacuation centres", which can be established at a short notice. This can be done through the ACT emergency management arrangements.

PK: The policy does remain; the message has been simplified to easily communicate it but the importance of the meaning has been lost. He would rather send a message that is consistent with the Victorian message.

KJ: Believes the marketing isn't enough, we need to say to governments that you can spend money sending out flyers, but what is really needed is to sit down with the people and educate them one on one.

ML: Suggests no more than a one page document as it does not discourage people reading it.

TB: We need a programme in place by the end of June. It is achievable and would be a great plan for the ACT to adopt.

BP: raised discussion into property inspections they used to conduct on the South Coast and advice to residents as to whether their properties were defensible in the event of a bushfire. Further discussion was had regarding the legal implications of such a program and whether it is practical or viable in the ACT.

SOURCE: Virginia Dixon

**RESOLUTION &/OR
DECISION:**

- VD has the support of Council to actively pursue her research and development of “stay or go”.
- Council asked CB to pursue the idea of opening emergency ACT Recovery Centres on extreme fire days.
- Consider wider use of daily fire danger indices so the community becomes more aware of daily bushfire threat and potential.

MOTION MOVED: The Bush Fire Council continues to support the AFAC policy of “Stay or Go Early”, until such time as a new nationally recognised programme is developed. We note that further follow up action needs to be done in regard to opening and public awareness of evacuation centres.

Moved: Tony Bartlett
Carried: Unanimously

Seconded: Tony Fearnside

ACTION REQUIRED:

- To follow through with a program to train and educate ACT Police on the “stay or go” policy.
 - BP to provide advice on the practicality of individual property inspections to indicate defensibility of properties in the ACT.
 - ESA considers an approach to advise the public of the daily fire danger indices to heighten awareness of bushfire danger and potential.
 - Conrad Barr to investigate opening and advising the public of evacuation centres on days of extreme fire danger
 - The paper provided by Gregor Manson will be discussed next meeting.
-

AGENDA ITEM: 6.4

DATE: 5 March 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: Council discussion on "Prescribed Burning"

BACKGROUND:

Members were provided email correspondence on national debate that has arisen as a result of the Victorian Bushfire Emergency on fuel reduction burning.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Council members need to familiarise themselves with the issues and the policy surrounding this debate and be prepared to provide the Minister with informed advice and our position on this topic.

Attachments for this item include

1. Copy of Australian News Article
2. Copy of letter to Prime Minister from Roger Underwood
3. The Place of Fire in the Australian Environment – Forest Fire Control Officers Group.

RECOMMENDATION :

Due to the length of this meeting the agenda item will be held over until further notice.

SOURCE: Kevin Jeffery

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

MOTION MOVED:

MOTION SECONDED:

ACTION REQUIRED:

AGENDA ITEM:	6.5
DATE:	5 March 2009
LOCATION:	ASOC Fairbairn
SUBJECT:	Update on BFC Consultancy progress

BACKGROUND:

The BFC sub committee met with Bob Smith on Wednesday 25th February to review the initial draft document "Performance management of inquiries' recommendations into 2003 Canberra Bushfires" The document was reviewed and amendments were provided on structure and content of the Executive Summary and explanatory part of the document. The status of implementation of both the McLeod and Coroners' recommendations were reviewed and a number of changes were agreed upon.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Bob Smith will incorporate these changes into the next version of the document and with the agreement of the sub-committee will proceed to develop the "Risk on a page" templates for the five agreed consolidated groups of recommendations for Councils further consideration.

Once the risk evaluation is completed and agreed upon, the next stage will be to set priorities and actions for implementation by RFS, ESA and TAMS as appropriate.

A copy of the next version of the report was provided to Council at the March 5 2009 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Bob presented the revised version of his report to Council. He indicated his advice regarding outstanding recommendations and how Council should address their report to the Minister and Government. Further discussion was had regarding finalisation of the first stage of the report and Council agreed that the sub-committee would meet with Bob a.s.a.p. to finish this stage.

Council agreed with Bob's rollup of outstanding recommendations into five categories. These will form the basis of the risk assessment and development of an action plan to ensure that they are addressed and finalised in accordance to risk based prioritisation.

MIL: Would like to have the working group discuss and iron out any issues before providing a recommendation to Bob Smith on the update of the report.

TF: Would also like to focus on what Council's response will be to the Minister.

CG: Appendix 2: Would like to suggest that there are also some environmental risks.

SOURCE: Bob Smith *(please contact Tim McGuffog for presentation material)*

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

Council will reconvene to discuss issues in the report before making any recommendations. The meeting will be held within a week of the final report being presented to council

ACTION REQUIRED:

Council to decide on a date for a working group to meet to finalise Bob Smith's report.

AGENDA ITEM: 7

DATE: 5 March 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: Other Business

No additional business was raised at the meeting

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

MOTION MOVED:

MOTION SECONDED:

ACTION REQUIRED:

AGENDA ITEM: 8

DATE: 5 March 2009

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

SUBJECT: Outstanding Items/ Issues

Time and Date Next Meeting: 8 April 2009

RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:

MOTION MOVED:

MOTION SECONDED:

ACTION REQUIRED:

- To finalise all of Bob Smiths work out of session
 - RFS media front man discussion to be added to the next agenda.
-

Time Concluded: 18:51.