



ACT
Government



Wednesday 7 September 2016

16:00 to 19:00

ESA Planning Room
ACT ESA Headquarters

Chair:	Tony Bartlett	Secretariat:	Lynda Scanes
Attendees:	Christine Goonrey Steve Angus Marion Leiba Natarsha Carney Mick George Sandra Lauer Andrew Joyce		Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire & Rescue Joe Murphy, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service Daniel Iglesias, Director Parks and Conservation Service, Environment and Planning Directorate (EPD)
Invited Guests	Tony Scherl, Ryan Lawrey, Christian Ward and Brian Levine, Fire Management Team, Parks and Conservation Service, EPD. Neil Cooper		

Minutes

Agenda item: 1.0 – Welcome and Apologies	Presenter:	Chair
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The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies were received from Kevin Jeffery, Cathy Parsons, Sarah Ryan and Dominic Lane.

Agenda item: 2.0 – Disclosure of “Conflict of Interests” of Council Members	Presenter:	Chair
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Discussion:
No Conflicts of Interest were reported by Council Members.

Agenda item: 3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting	Presenter:	Chair
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Discussion:
The minutes from the previous meeting on 3 August 2016, were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting with a minor edit.
Moved: Andrew Joyce and Seconded: Mick George

Agenda item: 4.0 – Update on action items arising from previous meetings

Presenter: Chair

Discussion:

Please refer to Attachment A for further details.

Action: Nil

Agenda item: 5.0 – Correspondence

Presenter:

Chair

Discussion:

Council noted correspondence sent to the Emergency Services Operational Review Group (ESORG) secretariat regarding Council's view to the UFU correspondence in relation to the Built Up Area.

Agenda item: 6.0 – EPD Bushfire Operational Plan

Presenter:

Fire Management Team

Discussion:

Council Members were briefed on the 2016-17 first EPD Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP) (previously the TAMS BOP) so as to provide advice to the ESA Commissioner, prior to his approval of the BOP under section 78 (2) of the *Emergencies Act 2004*.

The BOP, containing a spreadsheet of activities, along with a series of in-depth maps, was provided to Council Members for analysis prior to the meeting.

The Fire Management Team provided an overview and summary of the BOP and explained the activities using a series of maps showing the proposed activities.

The BOP contains prevention measures such as chemical, slashing, grazing, physical removal, maintenance and hazard reduction burns. Fuel plots which measure fuel accumulation was explained and mitigation activities, a range of hazard, ecological and cultural burns, along with a range of proposed physical removal of fuel hazards throughout the region (urban outer edge and nature parks). Further information on the re-treatment of the area covered in the Smokers Flat fire in April 2013, now referred to as the Emu Flat area is in response to more detailed assessment of the previous burn which shows large areas escaped treatment in that previous burn. At face value, this appears to contradict the convention that areas are not burnt twice within a short period and may concern informed members of the community. There needs to be some public information made available which outlines the reasons for re-treatment and emphasis should be made on the more powerful tools now available for assessment of prescribed burns and planning of prescribed burns which will define this work.

The cultural burns will be at Wallaby Rocks and Pearces Creek grass tree site.

The presentation outlined the rationale, challenges, risk factors and potential timeframes related to large burns within Namadgi National Park. The intention to use the moisture differentials to limit treatment areas without hard edges in the national park has risks of fire escaping the planned burn area and that this is being managed by defining a larger containment area which may result in larger than planned coverage of areas in the national park.

The presentation outlined audit and monitoring, planning and research, training activities, equipment and

vehicle upgrades, infrastructure management with water tank installation strategically placed in Namadgi; helipad maintenance; erosion infrastructure at Blue Range and improvements to bushfire grazing and fencing.

New developments – Throsby development and the nature reserve - A predator proof fence will be constructed around the suburb of Throsby with emergency entry/egress. The Riverview project in West Belconnen 'Ginninderry' will be selling blocks next year.

Council has asked for follow up on the Throsby development once infrastructure works have been completed regarding APZ's and overall fire management in relation to the adjoining nature reserve.

Council members noted that the BOP was consistent with the *Emergencies Act 2004*, Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and Regional Fire Management Plans. Council members highlighted the community's emotional commitment since the 2003 Canberra fires and noted the importance of comprehensive community engagement prior to conducting HR's etc.

Note: Uriarra Village – threats to Parks and Conservation Crews who were attempting to conduct a Hazard Reduction Burn – crews pulled out for Work, Health and Safety (WH&S) reasons.

Note: \$100,000 set aside for unplanned fire.

Note: over 10 category 2 activities are not being undertaken due to budget constraints.

Note: Council strongly support training and education activities as essential to the overall quality and competencies of fire management in the ACT.

Note: Council asked for follow up on the Throsby development once infrastructure works have been completed regarding APZ's and overall fire management in relation to the adjoining nature reserve.

Action:

- Council to draft and provide a report to the ESA Commissioner as per the *Emergencies Act 2004*.
- Council strongly supports training and education activities as essential to the overall quality and competencies of fire management in the ACT.
- Council requested future follow up on the Throsby development once infrastructure works have been completed regarding APZ's and overall fire management in relation to the adjoining nature reserve.
- Secretariat to email the presentation to Council Members.

Agenda item: 7.0 – Council's Annual Report

Presenter:

Chair

Discussion:

Council members of the Bushfire Council were asked which section they would contribute to in preparing the annual preparedness report. Prior to the meeting Sarah Ryan offered to review and edit the final draft.

Confirmation of headings and contributors is as follows:

- Introduction – background to the report – **Cathy Parsons**
- Seasonal Prognosis – **Kevin Jeffery**
 - Rainfall
 - Temperature
 - Bushfire Potential

- Operational Preparedness – **Andrew Joyce**
 - Equipment
 - Command and Control
 - Pre-Incident Operational Plans for Bushfire Response
 - Aviation Arrangements and Developments
 - Incident Management Team Capability
- Public Communication and Education – **Natarsha Carney and Marian Leiba**
 - Awareness Raising and Education
 - Community Warnings
 - Program Evaluation Efforts
- Land Management – **Mick George and Tony Bartlett**
 - Planned BOP activities for 2016-17
 - Indigenous Fire Management Program
 - ACT Farm Firewise Program
- Strategic Factors – **Christine Goonrey**
 - Strategic Bushfire Management Plan V3
 - Application of Building Standards for Bushfire Prone Areas and Review of Bushfire Prone Areas
 - Regional Fire Management Plans
 - Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework
 - Management of Lower Cotter Catchment (LCC) strategic review of fuel hazards and road network in LCC
- Volunteers – **Sandra Lauer and Steve Angus**
 - Overview of volunteer brigades in relation to recruitment, retention, succession planning, mentoring, training and competencies
 - Update on Review into Community Fire Units
- Recommendations – **Cathy Parsons**

Note: 1) Input for the Introduction: As the Minister will be new to Emergency Services the opening statement to be meaningful and include the role of the Bushfire Council and Council’s advice that was not ensued in the amendment of *Emergencies Act 2004*.

Note: 2) Council members recognised that it won’t be clear who the new Minister will be until sometime after 15 October and depending on which party forms government Council may want to provide different perspectives in some sections of the report. It likely therefore that final submission of the report will need to wait until it is clear who the new Minister will be.

Note: 3) All section authors are requested to highlight potential recommendations to Cathy Parsons.

Note: 4) Authors should circulate their draft sections to other members when ready but by 21 September. All comments on draft sections to be sent back to the authors by 26 September to enable the full document to be circulated one week prior to the next Council meeting.

Agenda item: 8.0 –Commissioner’s Report

Presenter: Mark Brown

Discussion:

Mr Brown spoke to the report on behalf of Commissioner Lane.

Opening of Belconnen ambulance and fire & rescue station — The Minister for Police and Emergency Services officially opened the new Belconnen Fire & Rescue and Ambulance Station on 2 September 2016. The community

open day took place on 3 September 2016.

Review of the Built Up Area — Consultation between the ESA and stakeholders is continuing on the review of the Built Up Area. The Emergency Services Operational Review Group is scheduled to meet on the 15 September 2016 to progress and negotiated a Notifiable Instrument and revised maps, prior to the commencement of the ACT bushfire season on 1 October 2016.

The existing response arrangements outline that the first response to all grass and bush fires in the ACT will be by the nearest available most appropriate resource, irrespective of jurisdiction or Service. Both ACT fire services continue to work together collaboratively and cohesively in responding to fires across both the built up and rural areas of the Territory.

The Commissioner is of the view that ACT Fire & Rescue is responsible for the complex hazards of a large city in the built up area, and the ACT Rural Fire Service, made up of our dedicated volunteers and ACT Parks and Conservation Service staff, remains responsible for the highly valued assets of the Territory's National parks, reserves and farms.

Pre Season Briefing — The Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department and ESA will facilitate a number of presentations on the upcoming seasonal outlook on Wednesday 21 September 2016 at ESA's Hume training centre. Council Members are invited to the evening session.

Note: The Secretariat to send an invitation to Council Members to attend the ACTRFS Pre-Season briefing on 21 September 2016.

ACT Rural Fire Service Open Day — The ACT Rural Fire Service will be holding an open day on 23 October 2016 at the ESA Training Centre. Community safety information will be available with specialists on hand to provide information on how you can reduce your bushfire risk this summer. There will be firefighting displays, helicopter demonstrations, along with free face painting, petting zoo and jumping castles for the family. Our volunteer brigades will be showcasing their fire fighting skills in the annual field day as part of the program. For more information please visit the ACT Rural Fire Service website <http://esa.act.gov.au/actrfs/get-involved/come-to-an-rfs-event/actrfs-open-day/>.

Publication on the History of ACT Rural Fire Service — The draft publication entitled *Fire on the Limestone Plains: A century of fighting fires in the Australian Capital Territory 1915-2015* written by Mr Pat Barling was table at the meeting. Mr Barling has requested Council Members feedback on the publication.

The Commissioner took the opportunity (in his report) to commend Mr Barling for his diligent efforts in providing such a comprehensive recording of the bushfire fighting history in the ACT over the past 100 years.

Mr Barling has approached the ACT Rural Fire Service seeking support for his book to be adopted as an official history. Support for the publishing of the book will also be sought from the incoming Minister for Emergency Services following the ACT Election, and the Commissioner supports this initiative.

Guidance for Caretaker Period — The Caretaker period commences at 12:01am on Friday, 9 September 2016 and will continue through until a Chief Minister is elected at the first sitting of the new Assembly.

AFAC Knowledge Forum — ESA hosted an AFAC Knowledge Forum on 29 August 2016 in relation to the Waroona Fires which occurred in Western Australian in January 2016. This was presented by Euan Ferguson who conducted the Special Inquiry into the fire.

Mr Bartlett and Mr George attended the forum and advised it was extremely interesting.

Action:

- *Fire on the Limestone Plains: A century of fighting fires in the Australian Capital Territory 1915-2015* written by Mr Pat Barling – Mr Barling requested Council Members provide feedback on the publication.
- Secretariat to send an invitation to Council Members regarding the ACTRFS Pre-Season briefing on Wednesday 21 September 2016.

Agenda item: 9.0 – Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Report

Presenter: Joe Murphy

Discussion:

The Chief Officer provided an overview of current activities within the ACTRFS.

Membership — The ACTRFS increased its membership in August by 6 new members the total volunteer membership is 541, as at 1 September 2016 there are 101 females and 440 males. The ACTRFS Memberships section is currently working on updating Honours and Award Standard Operating Procedures.

Training — Members attended the NSW RFS Incident Management Exercise (IMX) in Nowra 24 to 26 August 2016 and the IMX in Queanbeyan on 2 to 3 September 2016. Sixteen members are part way through the ACTRFS Village fire fighter course supported by eight volunteer instructors. A bushfire fighter course is planned to start in the middle of October 2016

Community Engagement — The ‘Bunnings Get Ready Weekend’ is scheduled for the weekend of 10 and 11 September 2016. The event is held at all Bunnings stores in the ACT and ACTRFS Volunteers provide information to the community on how to prepare the home for the upcoming fire season. The Pre Season briefing was mentioned in the Commissioner’s report.

Community Protection — The Community Protection Team has been working with the PCS EPD team on the 2016-17 BOP that was presented to BFC meeting earlier tonight. Because the RFS has been engaged through the process, the review of the draft BOP will be easier than in past years which should mean the final BOP will be approved before the start of the 2016-17 Bushfire Season.

Grant funding has been approved for a number of leaseholders for bushfire mitigation activities through the ACT Rural Grant Scheme. All successful applicants have signed Deeds of Grants for the works to proceed, however given the wet conditions only 3 leaseholders have been able to commence works.

The Farm Firewise Program continues with the Team about to embark on a round of reviews of properties that have their plan in place for 5 years. The team is continuing to liaise with EPD to implement a process to use a single point of truth as the basis for identifying rural properties.

Operations — Operationally the RFS has had a relatively quiet few weeks with the majority of incidents being car fires and investigation of smoke sightings, usually found to be private landholder burns.

Work on the pre season preparations with the RFS is on track to achieve the requirements of the pre season checklist. Recent work has included;

- Pre Season Servicing of the fleet, 80% complete with Gungahlin and Hall to be finished
- Work on the 2016/2017 RFS Operations Manual
- Attendance at the Parks preseason briefings

The RFS sent two individuals to be trained in specialist aviation roles, Air Attack Supervisor and Airbase Manager, through NSW RFS recently. These individuals will boost the Services ability to manage the Aviation components of incident control.

Action:

- Nil

Agenda item: 10.0 – General Business

Presenter:

Chair

Discussion:

- Mr Joyce represented Council at the AFAC Conference in Brisbane and tabled a very informative report. Mr Joyce stated the AFAC Conference theme was mitigation, response and recovery – getting the balance right. This year the conference was held concurrently with the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Meeting and the Women and FireFighting Australasia Conference which proved very successful.
- Volunteer Legislation – Mr Joyce provided an update in relation to the new legislation surrounding volunteering and Certified Agreements.
- Mr Bartlett attended the official opening of the Belconnen Ambulance and Fire & Rescue Station on Friday 2 September 2016. He made special mention of Commissioner Dominic Lane’s excellent speech in which he refuted many of claims made in the media about the lack of preparedness to deal with another 2003 style bushfire; defended the good work by ACT Government and Emergency Services staff; complemented the skills and good work done by PCS in managing fire risks on public land; highlighted the responsibility and the capability of the RFS volunteer and parks brigades in suppressing bushfires in the ACT; and indicted that Canberra was now much better protected from bushfires than it was in 2003.
- Mr Brown advised of a community event scheduled from 10am to 4pm Saturday 10 September 2016 for the official closure of the old ACT F&R station in Lathlain Street Belconnen (opposite Westfield).
- Mr Bartlett and Mr George indicated that they had attended the recent presentation given by Euan Ferguson on the process and findings from the Special Inquiry into the Waroona bushfire in Western Australia. They indicated that there are a number of lessons, such as ensuring the intent of previous fire inquiry recommendations has been addressed and that this needs to be independently verified.
- Mr Bartlett advised he has requested 3 months leave from his role on Council; the leave request is currently with Commissioner Dominic Lane pending approval.

Action:

- Nil.

Agenda 15.0 – Next Meeting

Presenter:

Chair

item:

The next meeting is scheduled for 4pm Wednesday 5 October 2016.

Closing: The meeting closed at 19:10pm.



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL MEETING IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION ITEMS

~Principles~

- The register will include all action items that have yet to be implemented or where implementation is in progress. The status of implementation should be reviewed at each Bushfire Council meeting.
- The status update information is the only information that will be regularly updated in the relevant column. The only exception to this is if a revised completion date is suggested, the status must clearly detail rationale for this change.
- Status of implementation will continue to be regularly updated until action item is fully implemented.
- Action items will only be indicated as “Complete” after due consideration by the Bushfire Council.

Active Items for current meeting

Action Item / Issue ¹			Originating Meeting date	Responsibility	Proposed/Revised completion date	General Comment	Status Update
Consultation information on changes to building requirements to be provided to Council			2 March 2016, agenda item 6	EPD			ongoing
Addressing concerns relating to the SBMP – refinement of the BPA			6 April 2016, agenda item 11	Chair		Lidar validation	Pending data from Qld being released
Environment and Planning Directorate (EPD) Bushfire			7 September 2016, agenda item 6	Fire Management			

Action Item / Issue ¹			Originating Meeting date	Responsibility	Proposed/Revised completion date	General Comment	Status Update
<p>Operational Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to draft and provide a report to the ESA Commissioner as per the <i>Emergencies Act 2004</i>. • Council strongly supports training and education activities as essential to the overall quality and competencies of fire management in the ACT. • Council requested future follow up on the Throsby development once infrastructure works have been completed regarding APZ's and overall fire management in relation to the adjoining nature reserve. • Secretariat to email the presentation to Council Members. 				Team (EPD)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fire on the Limestone Plains: A century of fighting fires in the Australian Capital Territory 1915-2015</i> written by Mr Pat Barling – Mr Barling requested 			7 September 2016, agenda item 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council 			

Action Item / Issue ¹				Originating Meeting date	Responsibility	Proposed/Revised completion date	General Comment	Status Update
Council Members provide feedback on the publication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretariat to send an invitation to Council Members regarding the ACTRFS Pre-Season briefing on Wednesday 21 September 2016. 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretariat 			

Summary of recommendation or issue

Assessment of progress represented by appropriate coloured 'traffic lights'

Actions shaded in grey reflect completed Actions.

Progress status legend

Red: Significant delays

Amber: Some delays

Green: On track

Completed Items

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review BPA Maps at October Meeting Provide the BPA maps to Mr Bartlett out of session 				3 August 2016, agenda item 3	Mr Foot and Mr Lhuede	October		Completed
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BFC to provide its position (in writing) on the BUA prior to the next ESORG meeting on Monday 15 August 2016			3 August 2016, agenda item 9	Chair	Prior to 15 August 2016		Completed
Email an invitation to BFC to attend the New Aranda Ambulance and Fire & Rescue Station Open Day.			3 August 2016, agenda item 11	Secretariat	5 August 2016	Sent on 5 August 2016	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate the information for those BFC members who would like to attend the IMX in Queanbeyan as an Observer • Circulate the Mt Clear (Booth Range) after action review recommendations response (out of session) to BFC • Circulate the new video explaining IOD to BFC 			3 August 2016, agenda item 13	Secretariat		All information sent on 5 August 2016	Completed
Circulate last year's season preparedness report to BFC			3 August 2016, agenda item 14	Secretariat		All information sent on 5 August 2016	Completed

The 2016 BFC Business Plan

Tentative meeting agenda topics.

Feb-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross Border Arrangements (RFS) (SBMP 2&3) 	Completed
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Review into Community Fire Units (F&R) (SBMP 9) 	Completed
Mar-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Bushfire Prone Areas (EPD + ESA) (SBMP 10&11) Update on community awareness and warning activities (SBMP 9) 	Completed Completed
Apr-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of new technology for weather forecasting and fire behaviour (ESA + BOM) (SBMP 3&8) New approaches to identifying priorities for reducing fuel hazards and monitoring and evaluating risk reduction (SBMP 8) Overview of lessons learnt – inquiries, reviews and reports (SBMP 8) 	Completed July agenda Completed
May-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of strategic review of fuel hazards and road network in Lower Cotter (SBMP 6&7) 	Completed Completed
Jun-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm FireWise Program update Update on Indigenous Fire Management Program 	Completed
Jul-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate different approaches to achieve low intensity and different seasonality in fire regimes (SBMP 8) Overview of volunteer brigades in relation to recruitment, retention, succession planning, mentoring, training and competencies. (SBMP 2&3) 	Completed
Aug-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of achievements of the TAMS Bushfire Operational Plan in 2014-15 (SBMP 1 & 6) Aviation Arrangements and Developments (SBMP 3) New approaches for risk reduction 	Completed Completed
Sep-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal Outlook for 2016/17 Production of Annual Preparedness Statement for the Minister Annual pre-season briefing on Preparedness by Rural Fire Service 	Pending
Oct-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burning Program for 2017 	

Nov-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contingency meeting to allow for slippage	
Dec-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2016 in Review - Planning for 2017• Verbal Report to Commissioner on scope and effectiveness of SBMP as required by <i>Emergencies Act 2004</i>	