

ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting Minutes

**28 February 2008
3.00pm**

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

Attendance:

Kevin Jeffery	Chair/ Member
Tony Fearnside	Member
Simon Katz	Member
Tony Bartlett	Member
Michael Lonergan	Member
Tim McGuffog	ex Officio (DO RFS)
Brian Parry	ex Officio (Deputy Commissioner ESA)
David Foot	ex Officio (A/g Commissioner ESA)
Tracey Benn	Secretariat
Jenny Andreev	Secretariat

Invitees:

Minister Simon Corbell	Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Peter Cartwright	Superintendent Operations Support, ACT Fire Brigade Representative

Apologies:

Stephen Wise	Member
Peter Kanowski	Member
Gregor Manson	ex Officio (Commissioner ESA)

1. *Opening and Introduction by Chairman*

The Chair opened the meeting at 15.15 pm.

The Chair welcomed David Foot, and Superintendent Operations Support, Peter Cartwright to the meeting, and welcomed Michael Lonergan back to the Council.

2. *Apologies*

Apologies were received from Stephen Wise, Peter Kanowski and Gregor Manson

3. *Minutes from January meeting – 31 January 2008*

Tony Fearnside suggested the minutes be held over until the next meeting due to the minutes not being distributed seven days prior to meeting. Tony asked that the minutes be discussed and then accepted.

Motion: *To hold over minutes of the January meeting to be ratified at the March meeting Moved Tony Fearnside, seconded Kevin Jeffery, carried.*

The Council discussed how the minutes should be recorded, whether people should be named or whether just to use initials. Should the minutes be more formal?

Brian suggested that some issues that are considered 'confidential' should be recorded as outcomes rather than put into the minutes.

Confirmation of the minutes' process:

- Secretariat types up the first draft;
- Draft minutes are sent to the BFC Chair, Kevin Jeffery, then to Chief Officer Brian Parry and Deputy Chief Officer Tim McGuffog;
- Draft minutes are distributed to Council Members at least 7 days prior to the next meeting.
- Minutes amended and ratified at next meeting (once this has happened there are to be no amendments made to the minutes); and
- Ratified minutes are published.

It is necessary to ensure that the minutes are distributed in the required time so that Council can accept them at the next meeting.

Action Items from the previous meeting

Extra item - Roadside slashing and burning update – Arthur Sayer to have a look at Kambah Pool area. Tim advised the Council that Arthur had gone out to the site on Tuesday and the work had been carried out.

Item 5.4 (31 Jan 08) As the Commissioner was currently on leave this item will carry over until the next meeting.

Item 5.8 (31 Jan 08) The AFAC bulletin regarding guidelines – people sheltering in cars during bushfires were distributed to Council members.

Item 5.9 (31 Jan 08) The SA Coroner's findings were distributed to the Council members.

Item - Uriarra Development Sprinkler Protection (31 Jan 08) Presentation to be given in today's meeting by Peter Cartwright (Fire Brigade).

Item - Timing of BFC meetings (31 Jan 08) An email was forwarded asking members their opinions of the meeting time; the response was that most members were happy with the current time for meetings. Peter Kanowski will be contacted to find out his opinion.

Action: Tracey Benn to contact Peter Kanowski to find out his opinion.

Item 4. Mr Mulvaney letter (29 Nov 07) - Status no further action at this stage. The area of concern has been mowed by TAMS.

4. Business Arising

4.1 Introduce Minister Simon Corbell

Kevin introduced the Minister to the Council members and welcomed him to the meeting.

4.2 Minister addressed Council

The Minister said that he is aware of the membership issues and is keen to see expansion of Council membership. He said that the vacancies had been advertised and had now closed. The current situation is that he is waiting on advice from the Commissioner regarding the applicants.

The Minister thanked the Council for their bushfire season preparedness report, however he advised members that he needs to receive the report at the beginning of the bushfire season as he is asked questions regarding these issues.

The Minister is committed to see the work done by the RFS enhanced. He advised that the Commissioner expects all positions filled and for the Business Plan to be finalised as RFS is the only Service not to have done so. The Minister reaffirmed his support to volunteers and to providing information to land managers.

The Minister said that the budget initiatives were progressing well, i.e. training and the fleet replacement program will go ahead. He noted that he is paying close attention to all of the issues and is keen to see resources deployed in the appropriate areas. The Minister wants volunteers kept informed and is meeting with them regularly.

The Minister advised the Council of the concern the volunteers had regarding the changes to work cover, re no compensation coverage for journeys to the shed for call outs and training. He said that the Government had identified other provisions to cover volunteers travelling in those circumstances, and is awaiting written confirmation.

4.3 Council Questions and discussion

The Chairman thanked the Minister for attending the meeting and said that he would keep him informed, he also apologised for the lateness of the report.

M.L. said that the 25th anniversary of the Ash Wednesday fires was coming up and one of the things that came out of it was that the RFS could not protect all property and that the public need to be prepared and that it is a shared responsibility. The Minister answered that the Government is advising households to be prepared by planning and by seeking information from the ESA. M.L. suggested that this be included in the Business Plan. KJ advised him that it was a key concept in the SBMP.

The Minister suggested that the awareness campaign be refreshed leading up to the next fire season.

TB said that the Namadgi plan briefing from TAMS had been finalised, submitted and he asked if it had gone to Cabinet. The Minister advised the Council that he was not sure but didn't think it had gone to Cabinet. He said that he had spoken to the Chief Minister regarding the plan and that he is interested in further discussions. The Minister will follow up and advise the Council.

5. Agenda items

5.1 Brian Parry – South Australian Coroner's Findings

Brian spoke about some of the recommendations from the report.

- Rec 29.2 - Coronial inquests were not necessarily the way to go and that there might be other ways of identifying measures to improve bush fire fighting.
- Rec 29.8 - Brian said that the capability of sky crane was good, however, he believed that maybe a few smaller medium aircraft would be more beneficial. Brian asked that the Council advise him regarding this so that he could have the information for the NAFC meeting he will attend in Perth next week.

TB said that the use of medium helicopter would be cheaper and more efficient. TMc said that he was happy with the current arrangements and believed that NSW would assist if required. He also said that there was a need to look at mobile or fixed retardant batching plants.

Motion: Kevin Jeffery moved that we maintain one small and one to two medium aircraft for next season and that RFS investigate fixed wing/retardant options. Seconded by Tony Bartlett. Carried.

- Rec 29.9 – BP said that NSW legislation can require firebreaks be prepared on agricultural land, and suggested that the Council may like to consider this option.
- Rec 29.9 – BP raised the issue of public warning during fire incidents. TF was concerned that warnings were not going out and who would ensure that warnings did go out. TMc said he is sure that ESA has all the procedures in place. The acting Commissioner David Foot advised that there are MOUs in place.
- Rec 29.9 - Tuition courses to be conducted, is there a need for it?
The Chairman suggested that “when there is smoke in the air” a plan be put in place to take advantage of and learn from these incidents.

BP recommended that the community be encouraged to listen to the media announcements, i.e. the radio.

An issue raised by landholders to the FarmFire Wise representatives was that if they reported a fire, they expected to be updated on the situation. Discussion was held and Council agreed that individual notifications were too onerous (especially give large volume of calls received for any one incident). It was suggested that the ESA inform the Media and keep brigades informed, and landholders contact their brigade captains for updates, and other people listen to the radio.

The Chairman recommended that none of this be done by Comcen, but that landholders listen to the radio and/or contact their brigade captains.

TF suggested that rural lessees be provided feedback if possible, eg: as part of the de-briefing process.

TB asked if an SOP had been developed, or can be developed if not.

- Rec 29.9 – In level 2 and level 3 incidents that the IMT must have demonstrated skills and competency in risk management.

Action: For the next meeting that RFS provide a risk assessment.

BP advised the Council that QLDF&R would be engaged to undertake AIIMS training for the ESA. Arrangements for this are currently underway.

PC suggested that access could be given to land managers to parts of the portal for specific information relating to fires. It was also suggested that there be a dedicated liaison officer in the IMT to provide information. KJ said that FarmFire Wise and Captains should be utilised for this task.

5.2 Brian Parry/ Fire Brigade Representative – Uriarra Development – Sprinkler Protection

ACTFB representative gave a brief outline of his working history and then provided an overview to the Council on the background of Uriarra Development, sprinkler protection program.

In 2004, he was asked to make recommendations to ACTPLA and NCA on sprinkler protection in Uriarra, due to its location. This was not for grass or bushfire purposes, but because it is located outside of suburbia. He explained that if a fire broke out, in a built up area of the city the accepted response times for Canberra Fire Brigade is 6-8 minutes. ACTPLA did not accept the ACTFB's

recommendations, so PC provided background information and research regarding the response time to Uriarra, that being 20-25 minutes. This was 10-15 minutes more than the acceptable response time. Brian raised the concern of water supply for this. PC said he had met with Stephen Wise and this issue was being addressed.

5.3 Brian Parry - Update on Organisational Evaluation and development of Business Plan.

Brian advised the Council that the RFS consultancy evaluation was completed and that the consultant was ready to commence once it was signed off. Brian said that the volunteers would be notified in the next newsletter.

The Chairman suggested that the Business Plan be circulated to Council members to be considered and a due date to be determined for any comments.

5.4 Brian Parry - Update on New Senior RFS Position

BP advised the Council members that he couldn't really comment on this but thinks that Commissioner conducted interviews whilst he was on leave. He is not sure of outcome.

The Chairman said that the BFC was expecting to be involved in this process (based on an email from the Commissioner in December), however, this did not occur. The Minister said he would raise this with the Commissioner.

5.5 Simon Katz – Strategic Basing Study

SK said that the 2004 version has been revamped by consultants and is concerned that a draft will be provided to volunteers at the next meeting that will be on Wednesday. Although this covers the short, medium and 30 year plan there will be only two days for comments. The draft is to be finalised Friday and at this stage no one has seen it.

ML said that an ESA staff member spoke about this at the ROAG meeting on Tuesday and that dates have been pushed back.

TMc said that any relocation information would be sent to volunteers. He also said that most of the Brigade Captains have been consulted. One issue raised was that the Brigades currently do not have sufficient space.

The Chairman was concerned with the tight time frame and also the concept of co-location of 'shared facilities' was not acceptable to the services, including volunteers. This was agreed to be a concern to all services by the representatives of other services within the room.

To clarify the Government's view, the Minister said that the government decided in 2006 to look at the stations, mainly the urban fire brigade and ambulance in regard to the expansion of the city (Molonglo). It looked at the congested sites and the response times so that in its forward planning the Government was able to maintain the required response times. The Minister has not yet received advice on the outcomes. The Minister stated that the Government did not have a co-location agenda.

5.6 Tony Fearnside – Status of Membership of the Bushfire Council

TF feels that this has been addressed. ML agreed.

The Chairman stated that the expressions of interest for potential members have closed but he has not seen the applications as yet.

5.7 Tony Fearnside - Matters arising from the ROAG meeting of 26 February 2008:

- Clarify appointment of incident controllers at bushfires

An issue arose regarding who should be the Incident Controller in a bushfire. This needs to be clarified with procedures completed and advised via the newsletter.

BP gave the example of today's fire at Coppins Crossing. He checked to see if procedures had been followed and they had been.

- Progress regarding operational effectiveness of heavy tankers eg, Ford Louisville

A Fleet Procurement staff member has been told this had been discussed in Council; however there has been a communication problem as the Council recommended a fire fighting tanker not a water tank.

It was requested that this is to be clarified by the Commissioner. David Foot, the acting Commissioner will follow this up and advise Council.

The Council also discussed with Mr Foot the issue of delays in the procurement of a replacement extra-heavy tanker, and the discussion agreed that the minimum outcome was for the order to purchase the extra-heavy tanker be placed before the end of the current financial year.

Both ROAG and the BFC advised Fleet what was required. The questions asked were, where is it up to and what was ordered.

Motion: *That the Council's position on the extra-heavy tanker continued to be that it must be a fire-fighting appliance. Moved Michael Lonergan, seconded Kevin Jeffery, Carried.*

Action: *TMc to discuss with the Acting Commissioner the requirement, fire fighting tanker and then speak with Fleet Procurement*

- Vote of confidence in RFS staff.

The Council noted that the motion passed at ROAG meeting.

6. Correspondence

Mulvaney letter

RFS response

7. General Business

TB requested an update where we are up to with the coronial consultancy.

The Chairman advised that a sub group reviewed the tenders, and that a formal contract is to be signed. This to be an agenda item for the next meeting if a consultant is onboard in time.

Action: *TMc to provide the table with the status of McLeod and coronial recommendation to be circulated to Council at the next meeting.*

Agenda items for next meeting: Consultant, the Awareness campaign and issues raised in the Parliamentary Inquiry

8. Reports

8.1 Commissioner

They have had one and a half weeks preparation for Legislative Assembly inquiry (Legal Affairs Committee). A letter seeking clarification of request regarding the FOI request was signed off and sent to Mr Pratt (MLA) to confirm what he requires.

8.2 Rural Fire Service – Tim McGuffog

RFS Staff Changes

New RFS staff have been employed:

- Nicole Cobb from TAMS (replacing Roberta)
- Syd McRoy (replacing Mathew)
- Stephen Wilkes (replacing Scott)

Virginia's last day is tomorrow. Commendation on her work on FarmFire Wise, and on her return to work, Virginia is keen to start developing the kid's package.

General RFS items

SBMP process is progressing well.

The helicopters have gone, they were not used much due to it being a good season.

The FOI request by Mr Pratt (MLA), has been clarified .

Conducting audit of the signage on TAMS estate

This was one of the outcomes from the BFC field trip. There has been a positive response from volunteers to assist with this process.

Fleet Update and Proposal to modify CAFs Units

The Commissioner has spoken to Fleet regarding RFS dissatisfaction in the CAFS units. Volunteers to evaluate the costs. Recommendations to convert the CAFS units to fire fighting tankers – cost benefit to be done.

Fleet Update (As written by John Jenkins)

Heavy Tanker

The invitation to tender for the body build has been sent to four companies. The closing date for response is 20th March 2008. Until the tender is awarded it is too early to provide a timeline for this project. More information will be available towards the end of March.

Hino were successful in securing the deal for the supply of the chassis and a purchase order has been generated and received by Hino. Further discussions were held with Hino on 11th February 2008 to cover off minor issues. Hino have confirmed that the eight chassis have been set aside for this project. Issues raised by Tony Hill with regard to the automatic transmission have been forwarded to Hino for clarification and discussions have also been held with Tim Norris at the ESA workshop.

HQ20 Light Unit (cat 9) Replacement Back

The procurement of services for this project has been approved and signed off by the Manager of Fleet and Procurement as of 29th January 2008.

The refurbishment project for this vehicle has been awarded to Tip Top Equipment from Kuring-gai in Sydney. The current HQ20 tray back has been removed and the chassis is due to be delivered to the body builder on 28th February.

Quotes have requested for the livery for the vehicle when completed.

This project is still tracking to be completed by the end of March 2008.

HO21 Medium (cat 7) Replacement Back

The Procurement Plan has been approved and signed off by the Commissioner as of 24th January 2008 and the purchase order for this project has been produced and received by the supplier.

Alexander Perrie & Co from Rockdale NSW have been selected to undertake the refurbishment under the NSW Dept of Commerce contract #0602893/0003. The pumpset will be a GAAM Mk125 close coupled to a Ruggerini MD191 air-cooled diesel engine with a 1500lt water tank capacity.

Quotes have requested for the livery for the vehicle when completed. A call sign is still to be confirmed for this class of vehicle.

We expect to deliver the chassis to the body builder towards the end of February for inclusion into their production schedule. This project is still tracking to be completed by the end of the 07/08 FY.

8.4 The Field Day

On the 20th September 2008 Molonglo will be hosting a Volunteers field day

There will be an end of Season RFS Dinner. Tracey will organise. It will be Volunteers, Brigades and TAMS get together.

8.5 Fire Brigade – Superintendent Peter Cartwright

Training

- Recruitment College 31 is going well;
- Training for the brigade is proceeding;
- Will undertake IMT and AIIMS training in conjunction with all segments of the ESA;
- Multi agency skill exercise being planned; and
- Looking at the possibility of recruitment college 32 this year.

Fire safety

- World youth day this year and currently doing a risk assessment;
- There has been a successful removal of dumped tyres from Parkwood;
- Lots of drills with operational staff;
- TMc asked if some RFS operational staff could be included in this training. PC said he would discuss this with the Deputy Commissioner and TMc. Brian is happy for this to happen; and

- Arrangements for IMT training are happening. There are three providers that have submitted quotes and the QLDF&R will be contracted to do this. It will be a two 2 day courses, involving people from each service and possibly two from BFC.

This will be done through the ESA training section and will be held in April/May 2008

8.6 Council Member

In regard to the AFAC Bulletin article about 'vehicles and bushfires' TF asked whether there is a need to do a publicity campaign.

BP said that there is a need to evaluate the current bushfire information pamphlets, etc and ensure they comply with these recommendations. Based upon the advice about vehicles we should review procedures for overruns for crew protection in tankers.

There is also a need to review procedures for overruns for crew protection in tankers.

LPG concerns were noted.

TMc said that QLD have on their website lessons learnt in a safety alert, he will look at this website and provide the information in the newsletter.

BP suggested, that towards winter, either FB or RFS training be approached to carry out research on this issue and be discussed in a BFC meeting in a few months time.

Include in the newsletter lessons learnt out of incidents

9. Confirmation of next meeting

The Chair closed the meeting at 18.10pm

The next council meeting will be held at the ASOC on Thursday 27th of March at 3pm.