Act BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

# Date: Wednesday 4 September 2019

# Time: 4:00pm to 7.00 pm

# Venue: ESA Headquarters, Black Mountain Meeting Room

# Chair: Dr Sarah Ryan

# Deputy Chair: Natarsha Carney

# Secretariat Contact: Lynda Scanes (02) 62057660 Lynda.Scanes@act.gov.au

Members and Officials

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| **ACTBFC Members** |
| Tony Bartlett | Margaret Moreton |
| Marion Leiba | Bhiamie Williamson |
| Jeremy Watson | Cathy Parsons |
| Kylie Coe  | Steve Angus |
| David Snell |  |
| **ACTBFC Officials** |
| Georgeina Whelan | Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) |
| Mark Brown | Chief Officer, ACT Fire & Rescue (ACT F&R) (ESA) |
| Justin Foley | Acting Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (PCS, EPSDD) |
| Joe Murphy  | Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), ESA |
| **Invited Guests** |
| Rick McRae | Specialist Risk Analysis, Risk and Planning ESA |
| Neil Cooper | Senior Director, PCS, EPSDD |
| **Apologies** |
| Nil |  |

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| **ORDER OF BUSINESS** |
| **AGenda Items** |
| **1** | **Acknowledgement of country** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | The Chair acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land that the meeting was on, the Ngunnawal people. She expressed acknowledgement and respect towards their continuing culture and the contributions they make to the life of this city and this region. She also acknowledged and welcomed other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting. |
| **2** | **Welcome, introductions, apologies and nomination of member to monitor performance checklist** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | The Chair welcomed all meeting attendees and noted apologies.Council congratulated Georgeina Whelan on her permanent appointment as the ESA Commissioner. |
| **3** | **Declarations of interest** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | No declarations of conflict of interest were received. |
| **4** | **Acceptance of minutes from the 7 August 2019 meeting** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | The draft minutes from 7 August 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting with a minor amendment required. |
|  | **Action:** Secretariat to provide BFC with the advertisement for the vacant position on BFC, for distribution via their associates |
| **5** | **Review action list – attached to minutes** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | The Council reviewed the outstanding action items and noted they were either complete, not yet due or covered in the meeting agenda. |
| **6** | **Correspondence**  | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | Correspondence for noting:Incoming:* Letter to the Chair of BFC from ESA Commissioner regarding the Draft SBMPv4 Governance Plan

Outgoing:* Advice to ESA Commissioner on the 2019-20 EPSDD Bushfire Operations Plan, this included comments from Mr Bartlett who was not present at the 7 August 2019 BFC Meeting.
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| **7** | **Report on activities attended on behalf of Council since the last meeting** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | The Chair provided a report from her attendance at the AFAC conference, including the presentations attended in relation to climate change. |
| **8** | **Items from the ACTBFC 2019 Business Plan** | **Presenters:** | **ESA and EPSDD** |
|  | 1. Presentation on the Australian Seasonal Bushfire Outlook by Mr McRae

The Draft Hazard Report was taken as read.A very informative presentation provided an overview of the National Bushfire Outlook. Graphs showed the predicted rainfall, maximum and minimum temperature outlook for September, October and November. The Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) showed that vegetation across much of SE Australia, including the ACT, is in very poor condition. High temperatures and the extreme dryness are also likely to lead to more dry lightning storms in our region. Mr McRae advised he would provide Council with an update when new information becomes available.Council thanked Mr McRae for the very informative presentation. |
|  | **Action:** Provide Council with the Final AFAC (Published) Hazard Report **Action:** Provide Council with comparison maps, commencing from the maps used in the Phil Cheney report into the 2003 Canberra fires until present time, to show the cumulative rainfall deficit |
|  | 1. BFC 2019 Annual Bushfire Preparedness Report to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Council requested some additional information from specific ESA staff members in order to complete their sections of the Bushfire Preparedness Report. Officials agreed that Council Members could contact the staff directly if they require additional assistance; and copy the CO ACTRFS into the email. If Council members need supplementary information, they are asked to send the request via the BFC Secretariat.It was agreed that the Chair will draft a summary of the seasonal outlook for the 2019 Annual Bushfire Preparedness Report.The CO ACTRFS advised the SharePoint online would be accessible to Council members next week and that they will be able to access information from all the BFC Meetings held during 2019. An email will be sent to members via their personal email addresses, with the details to how to access BFC papers via SharePoint online. The details will look like a standard file structure. Council members should try to log in as soon as possible so they can access previous meeting papers and presentations. The Secretariat will continue to email a PDF copy of the meeting papers to members until they become familiar with the SharePoint site. |
| **9** | **Update Draft Regional Fire Management Plan** | **Presenter:** | **EPSDD** |
|  | The Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP) planning continues with all public consultation now finalised, PCS and ESA are working on the identification of future asset protection zones (APZs).  |
| **10** | **Update Strategic Bushfire Management Plan**  | **Presenter:** | **CO ACTRFS and Commissioner** |
|  | 1. Update finalisation project SBMPv3 and SBMPv4

The SBMPv4 will be tabled at Cabinet for consideration on 10 September 2019 and in the Legislative Assembly during the September sitting period (17 - 19 and 24- 26 September). The Minister will also deliver a Ministerial Statement in the same sitting period on SBMPv4 and the commencement of the ACT Bushfire Season. An official launch of SBMPv4 and the Bushfire Season will be held on Friday, 27 September at 11:30am -12:30pm. The Commissioner indicated Council will be provided with an update on the progress of SBMP4 through the machinery of government at the next BFC Meeting in October 2019.1. Draft Governance Plan to enable effective oversight of the delivery of the SBMPv4

Council was provided with a copy of the draft governance plan that has been prepared to deliver on the actions in SBMPv4 and provide oversight and accountability. The plan establishes a governance committee to monitor the progress of each action and endorse its completion based on evidence provided by the action owners. Draft Terms of Reference for the SBMP governance committee have also been developed. The ESA Commissioner advised she has written to key stakeholders seeking their review of the draft governance plan and agreement to deliver on allocated actions. Director Generals are to have the final signoff before the reporting on actions begin. A report on delivery of actions will be provided to Security and Emergency Management Senior Officials Group (SEMSOG) biannually.Council expressed support for the Draft Governance Plan and accepted the invitation to be represented by the Chair or a delegate on the SBMP governance committee as a non-voting member.Council also expressed the view that the Governance Plan deals only with the completion of actions and does not provide a mechanism to evaluate how those actions have collectively contributed to achieving the desired objectives. The Commissioner responded that a separate exercise will be undertaken to develop a mechanism for evaluating achievement of SBMP4 objectives. The selected consultant will consult with the Bushfire Council.In addition, the Commissioner suggested that a role for Council could be included in the governance arrangements in which it could provide a view of what it thinks is a priority over the next six-month period and that this should be reported to SEMSOG. Council could also review actions of high risk and provide advice on them to the Commissioner.It was reported that the development of SBMP v4 has prompted a review of Fire Management Zones. A meeting was held on 19 August 2019 with representatives of the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) to discuss the progress of the review. It was agreed at the meeting a working group be established to develop a work plan. |
|  | **Resolution:** Council supported the Draft Governance Plan and accepted the invitation to be represented by the Chair or a delegate on the SBMP governance committee as a non-voting member.  |
| **11** | **Officials’ Reports**  | **Presenter:** | **Officials** |
|  | Officials’ reports for noting:1. **EPSDD PCS Report**

The report was taken as read.The following topics were highlighted in the report:* The EPSDD PCS 2019-20 BOP was presented and supported at the August BFC meeting, Council have provided a letter to the ESA Commissioner supporting the 2019-20 BOP
* EPSDD are in the process of formally providing a final copy of the EPSDD BOP 19-20 to the Commissioner ESA for formal endorsement and approval
* Prescribed burns will be delivered whenever the weather permits
* The recent recruitment of 24 seasonal fire fighters commenced, they will be doing two weeks of intensive training and then be available for BOP implementation and fire management activities
* Six representatives attended the AFAC conference in Melbourne and provided presentations
* Twenty staff from PCS, NSWNPWS and ACTF&R attended Fireline Leadership Training
* The PCS FMU will be crewing the Fire Towers with the ACT RFS for the 2019-20 fire season
* First ACT female Air Attack Supervisor
* Nadia Rhodes, Ranger has successfully passed the arduous task of becoming an authorised and certified Air Attack Supervisor – the first female in the ACT
* NZ Fire review into the Tasman Fires – Neil Cooper led a team to review the fires that occurred earlier this year in Nelson NZ
* The recent groundwater level readings for the bore in the Orroral Valley Namadgi has shown the second-lowest record, beaten only by the peak of the millennium drought
* Tony Scherl received an ACT Chief Ministers Awards for his innovation around bringing new science to the ACT to look at bushfire risk and impact from treatments, Residual Risk
* Brian Levine received a national award for “Excellence in Prescribed Burning” at the AFAC conference in Melbourne last week. A $2000 cheque that was awarded was donated to the charity SANE Australia
* Dr Adam Leavesley received an award from the BNHCRC for outstanding achievement in research utilisation.

**Resolution**: Council agreed that the Chair would write to the three awardees and congratulate them and to convey its appreciation of their contributions to the ACT.**Recommendation**: Council also suggested PCS organise a forum to publicise the outstanding work of the three awardees.1. **Commissioner’s Report**

The Commissioner’s report and the August 2019 ESA Snapshot Plan (Edition 15) were taken as read. The following topics were highlighted in the report:* Planning for the ESA Open Day is underway, which has been scheduled for Sunday, 3 November 2019 at the ESA Headquarters. This year other government and community organisations have also been invited to attend to demonstrate how the ESA works together with these organisations before, during and after an emergency. The 2019 event will have a ‘quiet time’ from 8.30 to 9.30 for members of the public living with autism, disabilities and the ageing to attend prior to the general public
* An inter-Directorate Steering Committee, led by senior officials in Justice and Community Safety (JACS) Directorate and EPSDD, has resulted in all the recommendations of the Potters Hill Review being implemented
* Letter to MLAs regarding the commencement of the 2019-20 Bushfire Season
* The Minister has asked the ESA to draft letters for him to sign to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, to provide them with information on the 2019-20 Bushfire Season. The letters will offer advice on where Members, and the community, can find information regarding emergencies to ensure they have access to the most current and accurate information. The letters will encourage Members to disseminate this advice to their constituents.
1. **Chief Officer ACTRFS Report**

The report was taken as read.The following topics were highlighted in the report:* ACTRFS senior staff visited NSW RFS on Tuesday 3 September 2019 enhancing cross border relations
* The Rotary Awards evening was held on 10 August 2019 at the Arboretum. Martin Harris, Rivers Brigade, was a finalist with the awards taken away by Colin Pederson (SES) and Anthony Wiggins (ACTAS)
* The Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Annual Planning Forum was held on 21 August 2019 with participants from ACT Government directorates and utilities
* ACT Bushfire Council members are reminded that they are invited to attend the preparedness briefing ahead of the bushfire season with Australian Government agencies on Friday 6 September 2019, 0900 - 1130 at the conference facilities 49 Laverton Ave, Fairbairn
* Council members are also invited to the ACTRFS seasonal brief Tuesday 10 September 2019 from 1800 - 2000 at ESA Training, Hume
* The interagency cross border meeting 17 September 2019 at ACTRFS Helibase is attended by ACTRFS Duty Officers, ACTFR Commanders, ACTPCS officers, NPWS and NSWRFS officers from the four fire zones surrounding the ACT.
* The Volunteers Meeting with the Minister was held on Wednesday 18 September 2019 from 1800
* The 4th Quarter Directorate bushfire operations plans (BOP) audit has been completed
* The Manager Community Bushfire protection is representing RFS in the Fire Zoning Working Group, which includes representatives from F&R, EPSDD, ESA Risk & Spatial Services, and RFS. This working group will ensure that the fire management zones are reviewed and adopted by December 2020.
* Eleven newly appointed Peer Support Officers (PSOs) who have successfully completed their intensive training program
* Seven new leaders emerging who have recently completed 3 months of training for their Crew Leader qualification
* Other training opportunities offered to Members include:
	+ The Village Firefighter course which was held earlier this month with 13 ACTRFS and two NSWRFS Members taking part
	+ ESA Risk and Planning are conducting two Avenza Mapping training and product overview sessions in September with 23 participants scheduled to attend
	+ The final Bushfire Fighter course for 2019 will be held for the 26 most recent ACTRFS recruits and is scheduled to commence in October.
* The Manager Community Engagement position has relocated to the ESA Media Team. The Emergency Services Open Day is fast approaching, and the timing is perfect to push out key bushfire preparedness information Membership and Training
* The preparation for the 2019-20 fire season is progressing very well with 200 plus actions of preparedness that the ACTRFS undertake in the lead up to the season
* One of our biggest pre-season preparations this year has focused on the ACTRFS fleet, with all 69 ACTRFS vehicles being serviced and new radio chargers installed, and the vehicle-based radios reprogrammed
* The new portable radio roll out has been completed
* The second phase of next generation PPC has commenced.
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|  | **Action 11.1:** The Chair to send letters of congratulations to the three PCS staff who have been recognised for their outstanding work**Action 11.3**: CO ACTRFS to follow up when ESA can release the 4th quarter BOP reports to Council members. |
| **12** | **Any other business** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | Council member, Mr Tony Bartlett, was recently awarded the N W Jolly Medal which is the Institute of Foresters of Australia’s highest honour. It was awarded for outstanding contributions to Australian forestry, particularly in relation to his contributions in the fields of fire management and response, forest policy and leadership, and international development over more than 40 years of work.Council congratulated Mr Bartlett for being awarded the significant N W Jolly Medal. |
|  | **Action:** Council to send a letter of congratulations to Mr Bartlett |
|  | * Field Trip arrangements

It was noted PCS staff will not be available to attend the scheduled Field Trip on 4 October 2019. Council agreed that the program this year will focus on some RFS and urban planning issues, and next year focus on PCS work in and around Namadgi. |
|  | **Action:** ESA to draft a schedule of sites Council wish to visit |
| **13** | **Review and adoption of action items from this meeting** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | Action items were reviewed and agreed to and put in the action table.  |
| **14** | **Next meeting 2 October 2019** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting concluded at 7pm. |
| **15** | **In camera meeting if required** | **Presenter:** | **Chair** |
|  | Required. |
| **16** | **Council’s performance checklist report** | **Presenter:** | **Council** |
|  | No issues were reported. |

**Action items Summary– ACT Bushfire Council**

| **Action Items (OPEN)** | **at 4 September 2019** |
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| **Ref Number** | **ACTION** | **DUE** | **ACTION OFFICER** | **STATUS UPDATE** |
| 2018 | Find a replacement for the vacant Bushfire Council Member | ASAP | CO ACTRFS | An update provided Action pending |
| 20190710 | Arrange a dinner for the ACTBFC 80th Anniversary celebration and Christmas, after the December meeting | 7 August 2019 | CO ACTRFS | Pending |
| 20190807-8.2 | ACTRFS to provide a summary to explain what proportion of areas that require a BOP have a current BOP | 4 September 2019 | ACTRFS Manager Community Protection | To be delivered at the October meeting |
| 201908-8.4 | Next year form a BFC sub-committee to meet with PCS one week prior to the BOP being presented at the BFC meeting | Late July 2020 | Council |  |
| 201909-4 | Provide BFC with the advertisement for the vacant position on BFC, for distribution via their associates | 5 September 2019 | Secretariat |  |
| 201909-8.1 | **Action 1:** Provide Council with the Final AFAC (Published) Hazard Report **Action 2:** Provide Council with comparison maps, commencing from the maps used in the Phil Cheney report into the 2003 Canberra fires until present time, to show the cumulative rainfall deficit |  | CO ACTRFS |  |
| 201909-11.1 | Send letters of congratulations to the three PCS staff who have been recognised for their outstanding work | 20 September 2019 | Chair |  |
| 201909-11.3 | Follow up when ESA can release the 4th quarter BOP reports to Council members | 20 September 2019 | CO ACTRFS |  |
| 201909-12 | **Action 1:** Send a letter of congratulations to Mr Bartlett**Action 2:** Distribute draft a schedule of sites Council wish to visit | 20 September 2019 | CouncilCO ACTRFS |  |
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| **Ref Number** | **Actions Items (CLOSED)** | **4 September 2019** |
| 190206-09-9.2 | Arrange a more user-friendly process for Council to access papers.Action from 7 August 2019 - Arrange a demonstration for Council of how to use the SharePoint site prior to Council accessing meeting papers from the site. |  |
| 20190710 | Arrange a presentation from Steven Gianakis and the development assessment team regarding land planning and development application process |  |
| 20190807-8.6 | Members to send their sections to the Chair and David Snell, for the 2019 ACTBFC Preparedness Report to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services by 11 September 2019 |  |