



ACT
Government



Minutes of the ACT Bushfire Council Meeting held on Wednesday 4 July 2018

PRESENT:

Council Members

Sarah Ryan (Chairperson)

Marion Leiba

Steve Angus

Natarsha Carney (Deputy Chair)

Jeremy Watson

Bhiamie Eckford-Williamson

Cathy Parsons

Margaret Moreton

David Snell

Tony Bartlett

Officials

Georgeina Whelan, Acting Commissioner, Emergency Services Agency (ESA)

Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue (ACT F&R)

Joe Murphy, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACT RFS), ESA

Daniel Iglesias, Executive Director, Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (PCS, EPSDD)

By Invitation

Mick Gentleman, Minister for Police and Emergency Services for Item 3

Alison Playford, Director General Justice and Community Safety Directorate for Item 5

Ian Walker, Executive Director, Environment, EPSDD

Paul Simakoff-Ellims, Manager Membership, ACTRFS for Item 7.1

Dave Pennock, Learning and Development Coordinator, ACTRFS for Item 7.1

Lianna Guest, Membership Support Officer, ACTRFS for Item 7.1

Greg Potts, Manager Community Protection, ACTRFS for Item 7.2

Chris Condon, Senior Rural Liaison Officer, ACTRFS for Item 7.2

Anna Mitchell, Senior Manager, SBMP Version 4, ESA

Secretariat

Michael Joyce, Senior Operations Officer, ACTRFS

APOLOGIES:

Dominic Lane, Lynda Scanes, Ben Ponton, Director General, EPSDD and Kylie Coe

No	Agenda Item	Responsibility
1	The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians of Country.	Chairperson
2	Welcome, introductions and apologies for noting.	Chairperson

The Chair welcomed Minister Gentleman MLA to the meeting and expressed Council's gratitude to him for taking the time to attend the meeting. The Chair also welcomed Ms Alison Playford, Director General, Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Mr Ian Walker, Executive Director, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The Chair also welcomed Council members and invited guests to the meeting and noted additional apologies from Ben Ponton, Director General, EPSDD and Kylie Coe, Member, ACT Bushfire Council.

3 Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Minister Gentlemen thanked Council for the opportunity to attend and acknowledged the important work of Council, as well as the wealth of knowledge members bring to it. He was hoping to gain a better understanding of the work that Council does and was looking forward to following the progress of Council activities over the year.

Minister Gentleman highlighted a recent opportunity he had to attend an Indigenous Fire Conference where he learnt how Indigenous people use intuition rather than science to control fuel loads and when to place fire in the landscape. The conference provided an excellent opportunity to share burning practices and highlighted the need to use a variety of methods to manage fuel.

Minister Gentlemen closed by encouraging Council to keep up the good work it has been doing. He takes the work they do very seriously, and is looking forward to Council's 2018 Bushfire Preparedness Report.

4 Declarations of conflicts of interest

Chairperson

No declaration of conflicts of interest were reported by Council Members.

5 JACS Report (Noting the Risk Assessment – Bushfire Preparedness 2017-18 Report and ESA Response attached to Commissioner's Report at Item 11.1)

Director-
General
JACS

Ms Playford advised Council that an independent review had been commissioned after significant concerns about the coming 2017/18 bushfire season were presented to the JACS Audit and Performance Improvement Committee. The risk assessment was to provide assurance on bushfire preparedness to the JACS Audit and Performance Improvement Committee.

The Terms of Reference for the report were quite narrow, and the outcome was that there was a high risk that the Territory would experience an extreme fire season given the preceding conditions. As it turned out the season was quite benign in the ACT due to significant rain that was not predicted, so the risk was not as extreme as the report identified.

There was a general discussion around the risks identified in the report, but given the report was being used for JACS internal governance the Director General was not prepared to release the document publically. After discussion, it was agreed that the Director General would make a judgement on what detail could be provided to Council and release what was appropriate.

Action: JACS Director General to provide Council with appropriate details from the 2017/18 Bushfire Risk Assessment, including the Appendices referred to in the ESA response paper provided.

6 Introduction of Director-General, EPSDD and the opportunity to meet Council members and discussion

Director-
General
EPSDD

The Chair noted that Mr Ben Ponton (Director General, EPSDD) had provided his apologies, and introduced Mr Ian Walker, the incoming Executive Director of the Environment Division within EPSDD. Mr Walker provided an overview of the Environment Division’s responsibility and highlighted the importance of using fire as a management tool to reduce the risk of fire within the community.

In terms of the agency’s responsibility for fire mitigation, the Directorate has been trialling different ways of controlling fuel loads without harming the environment. A number of eco burns at Symonston have provided valuable data that has helped inform discussion.

Mr Walker was keen to foster the strong partnership that exists between ESA and the EPSDD and to investigate the development of a “Fire Agreement” in lieu of the existing MoU. This would continue to strengthen the partnership and make clear the roles and responsibilities of each agency.

7 Topics from the 2018 ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan

ESA

7.1 Presentation of volunteer brigades in relation to recruitment, retention, succession planning, mentoring, training and competencies

The RFS Membership Team, Paul Simakoff-Ellims, Dave Pennock and Lianna Guest made a presentation to Council. The main function of the team is to provide support, advice,

leadership and management on all areas of RFS membership to prospective and current volunteers, volunteer leaders as well as ESA and JACS staff.

The Team has successfully completed the following projects over the last year:

- Implementation of the Working with Vulnerable Persons (WWVP)
- Majority of Service trained in Asbestos Awareness, ongoing training to be delivered in Basic Firefighter courses
- Inaugural Employer Recognition Awards
- 54 new volunteer members since 1 July 2017

The section is currently working on the following projects:

- Flexible Membership model
- Awards and recognition events
- Recruitment Process
- Interstate Agency Relations – visits to surrounding districts

Council noted the significant work done by such a small team and thanked the team for their presentation.

7.2 Update on monitoring the implementation of SBMP Version 3

- Objective 5 – Planned fire management on rural lands
 - Action 30 - Farm FireWise Program

Council noted that given the time needed to fully consider the documents provided by the Farm Firewise team, it would be more appropriate to roll this agenda item over to the August meeting. Council thanked Mr Condon for preparing the documents and apologised for the need to roll over the item.

Action: Move the presentation on Farm FireWise to the next meeting.

- Objective 10 – Effective land-use policy and planning that reduces bushfire risk
 - Action 57 – Annual Planning Forum between agencies

Greg Potts provided an overview of the annual Bushfire Planning Forum which will be held on 30 August this year. The theme for this year is “Essential Infrastructure” and will be focussing on the need to ensure that strategic asset protection zones are placed around critical infrastructure (electrical, water etc.) to mitigate against the risk of damage to these facilities in the event of a bushfire. At present there are no standards for bushfire protection at these facilities.

In regard to Bushfire Operations Plans (BOPs), work is underway to combine BOPs from all land owners/managers into GIS layers so that any areas that are not currently covered can be identified and either a BOP or a Farm Firewise bushfire plan can be developed.

There was some discussion around the maintenance of power poles on private land and the general view was that this had now been taken over by the electricity providers. To confirm

that this arrangement was in place, the Chief Officer would contact the electricity regulators to clarify.

Action: The ACTRFS Chief Officer to liaise with the regulator to clarify the situation with maintenance of power poles on private land.

8 Acceptance of minutes from the June meeting and update on action items arising from previous meeting Chairperson

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the June 2018 meeting.

After discussion it was agreed that several action items would be marked as “Complete”.

Some of these have been replaced with new items (see Action Item List attached at the end of these Minutes).

The action items for future minutes will be numbered individually to enable easier reporting when they’re completed or changed.

Council had a brief discussion around the action arising from Agenda item 5.2 – Review of the Fire Management Unit. Mr Iglesias advised that he would not be releasing the review because it didn’t contain any recommendations, and was being used internally to develop an action plan. Mr Iglesias suggested that he could instead provide Council with a brief report that outlined the issues that were being addressed as a result of the review. Council accepted this as a suitable alternative and Mr Iglesias agreed to approach EPSDD to see if it would be possible to provide such a report. He will report back at the August Council meeting.

Action: Mr Iglesias to approach EPSDD to determine whether the action plan (or parts of it) can be released to Council.

9 Correspondence – for noting – Nil Chairperson

10 Discussion and planning for the BFC Annual Preparedness Report to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services Chairperson

This agenda item was brought forward so that Minister Gentleman could join in discussion and provide his views on the proposed changes to the structure and process for preparing the Annual Preparedness Report. Minister Gentleman noted that he views the Report as Council’s assurance that the ESA is as prepared as possible for the forthcoming bushfire season.

Council members agreed that as there had been no model to follow previously, the preparation of the report had been difficult, particularly given that each member was responsible for writing a section based on material supplied, with the report being brought together at the end of the process. Council reiterated the importance of the Report also reviewing responses to previous recommendations to ensure that there is continual improvement.

Ms Playford advised that in this regard, the report does not need to delve into the detail, but instead provide a list of the achievements from the past 12 months and any key issues that need to be addressed. Most of the information that was given to Council for its report was being given to other areas as part of normal business reporting, so did not need to be reiterated in the report.

Council agreed to the proposed changes to the structure and process of developing the Report (ensuring that the previous Appendix reporting on responses to recommendations be retained) and the Chair undertook to draft a proposal for how the detail in each of the chapters would be developed.

11 Reports and briefs for noting

Chairperson

11.1 ESA Commissioner's Report

The report was taken as read.

11.2 Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Report

The report was taken as read.

11.3 EPSDD Parks and Conservation Service Report

The report was taken as read.

Of particular interest was the modelling that had been undertaken as part of the development of the next Regional Fire Management Plans (RFMP). Council was interested to learn more about the modelling and how the RFMPs can be assessed against "residual risk". It was agreed that EPSDD officers will provide Council with this information at the August meeting.

Action: EPSDD officers to present on the modelling methodology at the August 2018 BFC meeting

12 Any other business

Chairperson

Nil.

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| 13 | Next meeting Wednesday 1 August 2018 | Chairperson |
| 14 | In camera meeting if required | Chairperson |
| | Not required | |
| 15 | Council performance checklist and meeting conclusion | BFC Member |