



# ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 5 April 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA Training Centre, 89 David Warren Road, Hume, Webex

Attendance	
<b>Chair</b>	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
<b>Attendees</b>	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council Nina Allen – Member Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member (online)
<b>Apologies</b>	Marta Yebra – Member Commissioner – Georgeina Whelan Stephen Alegria – EBM, EPSDD Bren Burkevics – EGM, EPSDD
<b>Guests</b>	Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACTRFS Justin Foley – A/g Senior Director, PCS FFR Andrew Morphet – Project Manager, Strategic Management Trails, PCS
<b>Secretariat</b>	Lianna Luton – Executive Officer Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

On behalf of the Council, the Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which the Council were meeting, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people and other traditional owners of the ACT. She particularly noted their connection to country since time immemorial and their continuing care of country. She also acknowledged that dispossession of lands over the last two hundred years has caused significant grief and disconnection, but that traditional owners' spiritual, economic, emotional and social connection to the land continues to survive.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

Nil

## 3. Acceptance of Minutes from 1 March 2023 meeting.

The draft minutes were accepted as a true record with no amendments.

## 4. Review of Council Action items

Council action items were reviewed and the following items were updated:



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**Action: 2022-11-04** – Review of Council Effectiveness – Questionnaire on the protocols for the Council to be circulated prior to the next meeting.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Secretariat

**Action: 2023-01-01** – Engagement with volunteer groups – Chair and Mr Morris to discuss the potential approach and provide a brief to the Council.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Mr Morris

**Action: 2023-03-04** – Second field day trip – Secretariat to canvas prospective dates with ESA.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

**Action: 2023-03-06** – Post-season review of the BOP – Chair and Secretariat to discuss what information is required from ESA and EPSDD.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Secretariat

## 5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined correspondence received by the Secretariat:

- Draft Bushfire Management Standards from the ESA.
- ESA's submission to the New Territory Plan.
- Letter from Dr Troy to Dr Margaret Moreton, Executive Director of the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, inviting her to attend a future meeting of the MHAC.
- Dr Moreton's response confirming she would attend a meeting later this year.
- Letter from Dr Troy to Dr Sophie Lewis, ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, concerning progress against SBMP 4 Actions.
- Letter from Dr Bartlett raising concerns in relation to a housing development in Woden where a flash flooding event occurred.
- Letter from Mr Anthony Draheim, Chief Officer ACTSES, in response to Mr Bartlett.
- Response from ESA to the list provided by Dr Bartlett on SBMP progress reporting.

The Council discussed the advice from Mr Draheim and the ESA's role in ACT planning approvals. They noted the Woden development is being built on flood prone land and suggested an urgent briefing be sought from EPSDD Planning on how the development was approved and whether it was considered in line with flood risk reviews. Dr Bartlett advised he would also be writing personally to the Minister and the Council agreed to visit the Woden site during the field day trip. Mr Brickhill also raised similar concerns with the expansion of Kippax shops.

**Action:** Council to write to the Minister expressing their concern the SES have no legislative powers in relation to planning approvals. EPSDD Planning to also be asked for an urgent briefing on how the development in Woden was approved and ESA's role in this.

**Person responsible:** Chair



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A discussion was held in relation to the commentary received on progress against the SBMP. An additional response has now been received from EPSDD which will be circulated to Council members. A number of questions were raised by the Council and further briefings and advice will be sought on some key issues. Dr Troy and Dr Bartlett will compile the list of questions and seek further input from other Council members prior to resubmission to the Governance Committee.

**Action: Updated Action Item 23-03-05** – EPSDD's response to be circulated to Council members. Council's additional questions in relation to SBMP reporting to be compiled and circulated to members for review and input.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat, Chair and Dr Bartlett

## 6. Presentation by Dr Yebra on lightning detector sites

Presentation rescheduled to June 2023 meeting.

## 7. Strategic Review of Rural Roads – Fire Trails

The Chair welcomed Mr Justin Foley and Mr Andrew Morphett to the meeting.

Mr Foley highlighted the difficult situation encountered due to extreme weather events over the last few years and the significant impact this has had on the road network. A Strategic Review of Rural Roads is being conducted to develop an asset management plan and to triage the maintenance and repair of access trails. It will also take a more strategic view of the network in order to better plan for the future.

Mr Morphett outlined the need to build a more resilient network to deal with the increased frequency of climate change driven weather events. His team has been working to identify immediate priorities across the network and three new staffing positions have been created to triage and support the most urgent work in time for the 2023/24 bushfire season.

Mr Morphett further advised that aerial surveys were being conducted which have identified 200 points of storm damage. He noted that intersecting events can prevent remediation work being conducted due to the impact of weather events on other ACT assets. There are also trade-offs that need to be balanced between ensuring hazard preparedness and managing biodiversity. Asset management plans are now becoming essential for insurance and his team will be building an asset register, which will then flow on to lifecycle plans, budget bids, insurance and work plans. In particular he drew attention to the significant work required to maintain culverts, a number of which have not been previously recorded.

The Council noted that insurance can have a focus on building back rather than building to prevent risk of recurrence and Mr Morphett confirmed discussions on this have been held with insurance companies. There will also be options under the asset management plan to support Government funding bids for work not covered by insurance.

The Council questioned how the real time condition of individual tracks could be made available to the volunteer fire brigade and Mr Morphett confirmed this would need to be addressed. He will also be holding discussions with experts from Victoria on how to determine strategic and non-strategic trails from a bushfire management point of view. Strategic bushfire breaks will also be considered as part of this. He



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confirmed there was a process to work through each district to assess which trails are dormant and could be closed in order to effectively manage other trails. The ESA is also involved in monthly meetings to capture their views and ensure a consistent approach across private land, PSC and ESA networks.

The Chair thanked Mr Morphett for his informative discussion. A copy of his presentation will also be made available to the Council.

## 8. Discussion on Bushfire Management Standards

The Council discussed the draft Bushfire Management Standards provided by the ESA. They noted a number of references to NSW circumstances and vegetation and agreed the Standards would benefit from more linkages to the ACT environment and context. In particular, they agreed the Standards would benefit from:

- Explicit inclusion of aspect (east/west/north/south) as a risk factor in the standard
- better editing, including captioning for photos, to improve the presentation of the document and to mitigate reputational risks
- more tailoring to variation in risk in ACT relevant to east/west aspects, downwind/upwind, width of protection zones and the risk of ember attacks
- more consideration being given to areas of the ACT previously affected by bushfires
- more information being provided on how bushfire prone areas are mapped
- more consideration being given to how the adoption and implementation of the standards will be assessed.

**Action:** Council to write to the ESA and provide a summary of their views concerning the Bushfire Management Standards.

**Person responsible:** Chair

## 9. Discussion on Environmental Controls affecting Risk Mitigation Works for EPSDD

The Council discussed whether environmental controls and approvals were potentially affecting bushfire risk mitigation work, including work around Blackies Hill and Stockyard Spur. They proposed more information be requested from EPSDD on whether there are published guidelines for mitigation activities, including what development approval is required, how long it takes and what it costs. They also suggested information be sought on how the ACT compares to Victoria and NSW processes.

**Action:** Council to write to EPSDD requesting a briefing on the work to support the implementation of approved Bushfire Operation Plan activities and whether environmental approvals potentially complicate these processes.

**Person responsible:** Chair, Dr Bartlett and Mr Kendall

## 10. Discussion on Review of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management

The Council discussed the plan for the Review of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management. They agreed the document could have been more forward-looking, with more consideration of lessons learned around the impact of flood and firestorm events on water quality, biodiversity and fire trail management.



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They noted its focus on maintaining existing objectives and activities, rather than taking a more strategic focus on future hazards. It was also recommended more information be included on fire impacts and fire management activities. The Council also highlighted their expectations they would be involved in future strategy work earlier in the process and not just when drafts are available for public consultation.

**Action:** Council to write to EPSDD highlighting the Council's concerns, with letter to be circulated to Council members for comment prior to submission.

**Person responsible:** Chair

## 11. Council member Updates

The Chair thanked Mr Kendall for the comprehensive update he provided prior to the meeting. The Council noted his completion of a severe wind hazard assessment and noted his work to model patterns of heat on hospital admissions.

Council members provided updates on recent activities:

- Dr Bartlett advised he attended an ANU panel presenting different views on fire management.
- Ms Allen advised she attended some ANU lectures on research into different hazards.
- Mr Morris advised he had attended the 'Leave nobody behind' webinar series hosted by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience which concerned disaster risk reduction programs for people with disability.
- Mr Morris advised he had also been working with the community disaster resilience index which provides information on resilience using different indicators. He noted the ACT appears to be quite low in disaster resilience, which would be worth further investigation.
- Dr Troy advised she attended a Resilience and Policing presentation at ANU which covered policing in natural disasters, adapting to environmental risks and effects on governance. She noted the importance of the police in building community cohesion to disaster events.
- Dr Troy advised she also participated in an EPSDD workshop on climate change adaptation. The EPSDD has a program which is considering climate change on nature and barriers to transitioning to new approaches.

The Chair advised an independent review of ESA senior leadership was being conducted by Professor Tony Walker, who has confirmed he would be interested in meeting with the MHAC. Professor Walker has suggested an online meeting on 19 April 2023 and the Chair canvassed council members availability.

**Action:** Council members to confirm if the date is suitable for them.

**Person responsible:** Council members

The Chair also advised she had written to Ms Mary Mudford, a senior Ngunnawal representative and EPSDD staff member, to seek the involvement of a traditional owner on the Council. She will continue to progress this option further. She has also written to ACT Planners to seek a representative with expertise in the ACT planning system.



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The Chair advised she has also accepted an invitation from the ACT Division of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering who are interested in the Bushfire report prepared by the Council. She has been invited to speak to the report, which would provide an opportunity to promote research into fire management in the ACT to better support operational planning by ESA and EPSDD.

## 12. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

The Council discussed plans for the field trip and the next meeting. The next meeting should cover the community engagement strategy of the ESA, the post-season progress against the BOP and volunteer input into operational decision making reviews within ESA. An update will also be sought on the development of SBMP 5. Dr Bartlett noted it would be good to better understand the thinking behind the Plan, i.e. what actions in the last plan were useful/not useful, what actions did not have sufficient resources and what should be done differently in the next version of the plan.

## 13. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

*On 1 April 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazards Advisory Council (formerly ACT Bushfire Council) met with officials from the Directorate of Environment, Planning and Sustainable development, Justin Foley and Andrew Morphett, to discuss the strategic review of fire and access trails. The Council also discussed the draft Bushfire Management Standards and the Review of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management.*

## 14. Meeting Close

Next meeting 3 May 2023 – ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn