



3 February 2016  
16:00 to 19:00

# ACT Bushfire Council Meeting

Black Mountain Meeting  
Rooms  
ACT ESA Headquarters

**Chair:** Kevin Jeffery

**Secretariat:** Victor Khaw

**Attendees:**

- Ms Cathy Parsons, Deputy Chair
- Dr Marion Leiba
- Mr Tony Bartlett
- Mr Andrew Joyce
- Mr Steve Angus
- Dr Sarah Ryan
- Ms Natarsha Carney
- Ms Sandra Lauer
- Ms Christine Goonrey
- Mr Mick George

- Mr Andrew Stark, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service
- Mr Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue
- Mr Dominic Lane, Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency

For Agenda Item 10

- Mr Neil Cooper, Manager, Forestry and Fire, TAMS
- Mr Tony Scherl, TAMS
- Mr Christian Ward, Project Officer, TAMS

## *Minutes*

**Agenda item: 1.0 – Welcome and Apologies**

**Presenter: Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone including visitors to the meeting. Apologies were received from Mr Tony Hanson, Executive Officer and Mr Michael Lonergan, Member.

Tony Scherl and Christian Ward have recently been employed by TAMS as planning officers within the fire unit. Christian has been with TAMS for a number of years and his main role will be looking after the Lower Cotter Catchment (LCC). Tony Scherl comes from Forest Corp NSW and Melbourne Water and takes the role of fire planner. They will work closely together and there will be one TAMS Bushfire Operational Plan with a LCC section.

**Agenda item: 2.0 – Disclosure of “Conflict of Interests” of Council Members**

**Presenter: Chair**

No Conflicts of Interest were reported by Council Members.

**Agenda item: 3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting**

**Presenter: Chair**

**Discussion:** The minutes from the previous meeting on 2 December 2015, were accepted with some amendments. Moved: Christine Goonrey Seconded: Tony Bartlett

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

**Presenter: Chair**

**Secretariat to follow up on action list with Tony Hanson**

**Motion: Bushfire Council wish to express their thanks to Tony Hanson for his service as he will be taking up a position with courts.**

**Action Items:**

- Nil

**Agenda item: 5.0 – Correspondence**

**Presenter: Chair**

- Letter of thanks sent to Tony Hanson
- Letter sent to the Commissioner with Council's advice regarding the ESA Communications Centre
- Letter sent to Minister re Review of the Emergencies Act
- Letter to Standing Committee on Public Accounts re Auditor General's report on the restoration of the Lower Cotter Catchment
- Letter from Daniel Iglesias regarding consultation on the draft Management Plan for the Molonglo River Reserve

**Agenda item: 6.0 – Briefing on Mt Clear Bushfire**

**Presenters: Chief Officer ACTRFS**

The ACTRFS Chief Officer tabled a report with dot points outlining the main points of the incident.

BFC held a special meeting on 27 January 2016, and Council noted that concerns were expressed to the Commissioner on the conduct or management of the fire and to highlight the concern of community stakeholders in relation to this.

BFC noted that they had requested a copy of the After Action Review (AAR) but had not yet been provided a copy.

CO ACTRFS noted that the AAR had been distributed to the AAR Group.

The BFC would like to be informed of the process following the AAR. There is community concern following an event like this and they would like to look at the lessons learnt. The Council emphasised that we need to learn from a fire in this area and get on quickly with thinking what the implications are. The Chair reiterated that they do not need to see all the specific points, but are interested in what the lessons are and how they're being handled.

CO RFS described that there will be new versions of plans and a new BOP that this information gets incorporated into. Council noted the value of incorporating learnings into the Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP), and asked what other areas would have lessons taken.

**Action Item:** CO ACTRFS to circulate AAR to BFC members

**Agenda item: 7.0 – Community Fire Units – Overview and Review**

**Presenter: Chief Officer ACTF&R**

CO ACTF&R provided an overview of the CFU program, which was established in 2004 after major fires and modelled on the NSW program. It's based on the concept that as urban firefighters chase the fires around the urban area, local residents are equipped to put out spot fires where the firefighters have moved on. CFUs are trained and equipped by the fire service. They are constrained to a location in and around their properties. They are not formed into teams and sent to areas. They are successful in NSW, however they haven't been tested in the ACT. When this issue was in front of Estimates late year they suggested it be reviewed or evaluated. The CO ACTR&F described the proposed review. The first draft of the Terms of Reference for the review was circulated to BFC. It hadn't been circulated very widely at that stage. There's a requirement for the review to be completed by June 2016 and an independent consultant will be engaged to undertake the task.

Risk Frontiers were engaged to review the NSW CFU programs after the 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires. Mr Brown commissioned that report when he was in NSW. He was happy to circulate

that to BFC. That review produced good outcomes.

Council noted that standards and protocols for CFUs was located on the ACTF&R website and would be circulated to council.

Andrew Joyce noted that case studies would be useful, for example the recent Mt Taylor fire. New activation procedures were utilised and it was used as a CFU training drill. The CFUs are also being utilised for the Canberra Bushfire Ready program, which has been really effective. That should be included in the review as well as the open day and CFU Saturday.

The number of CFUs has been stable with around 1000 members.

**Action Item:** NSW review to be circulated to BFC by ESA. CFU learning manual and business plan to be circulated.

**Action Item:** Feedback for the CFU evaluation Terms of Reference to be provided back to CO ACTF&R in a week.

**Agenda item: 8.0 – Cross Border Arrangements**

**Presenter: Chief Officer RFS**

Minute on Cross Border arrangements circulated to Council members.

Memorandum of Understandings are Ministerial agreements that create the framework for cooperation and assistance to flow between NSW and ACT.

Mutual Aid Agreement's are about direct response either over the border or into the ACT by NSW. One zone may be in a total fire ban, and not the ACT, but the MAA allows them to ask that fire towers are stood up, for example.

The cross border meetings discuss details such as radios, mapping and sharing of information and potential sharing of resources. Discussions also occur around fleet and mitigation activity during winter, as well as what staff movements have occurred.

A capital aviation group has been established to assist with coordination of aircraft in the region. This is supported by the MOUs and MAAs.

The Southern Tablelands Annual Exercise at Gunning was run in 2015 for the fourth time.

There are also numerous agreements between ACT and NSW parks.

CO ACTRFS outlined the arrangements of the concept of operations and the movement of ACT staff and volunteers to NSW and vice versa. Council discussed these arrangements.

**Action Item:** ConOps is available electronically and on the legislation register at <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2012-400/default.asp>.

**Agenda item: 9.0 – Conference Participation in 2016**

**Presenter: Chair**

Council discussed the 5<sup>th</sup> International Fire Behaviour and Fuels Conference, Melbourne 11 – 15 April 2016

It was noted that a very operational conference, the draft program is now available at <http://melbourne.firebehaviorandfuelsconference.com/program/program-schedule/>

Council discussed attendance options. Members who are interested can discuss it through email.

The Commissioner indicated that he is happy to consider different options for attending the conference and the BFC would need to put a plan together for ESA to consider.

The Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP) is the legislated requirement that TAMS must prepare. The reporting and tracking system was initially built in excel, but there is a new database (TM1) which produces reports.

Handouts tabled:

- Implementation Dashboard 2015-16
- Cumulative Report
- Activity Priority Report

The TAMS manager noted that the handouts provide an overview of the TAMS BOP implementation. An exception report will be produced, which will relate issues with planning. He noted that 75% completion means finished but the paperwork hasn't been lodged. 50-75% means all work approvals have been gained and the work is currently being undertaken. Some items won't be completed until the end of the year.

The number of jobs and the progress through the year doesn't correspond with the amount of the BOP that has been completed, because of variation in job size and complexity.

The TAMS manager asked that if there are things that BFC would like in the reports TAMS can look at changing them. TM1 is working well for reporting but not very well for input and spatial.

TAMS clarified that the activities are ahead of the plan and asked at what point do you start changing the plan. This is the first report generated and there are a lot of errors that need to be fixed such as the date of generation. The last report that was seen by BFC indicated that they were just on track with the BOP. The current report breaks it down into priorities.

The TAMS manager introduced the new fire planning team, Christian has been employed to look after fuel management and mitigate fire risk across the LCC, whilst looking out for the ecological considerations and managing the land for water quality and address the auditor-general's reports. Tony Scherl has come up from Melbourne looking after water and catchments. The reports tabled come from his work and he is looking into improvements and linking spatial data to reports.

The TAMS manager reported regarding the fire risk tool – a number of the fire investigations around the country have highlighted the fact that there is a risk of plans being prepared and then a long time between them being implemented. Brian Levine has developed the Prescribed Burn Risk Assessment Tool. This will be part of a national planned burning toolkit. Forest Fire Management Group are coordinating this toolkit.

The TAMS manager reported hazard reduction activities on burning at Coolamen Ridge and Fraser went well. Burns in Namadgi will be problematic and there are some issues that need to be addressed before the next sub-regional plan. A lot of these burns have no boundaries and there are some different views on ridge top burning. Conditions for ridge top burning aren't common. A lot of options can work but are expensive. TAMS noted that they will be doing burns up against burns that they have done previously, and high intensity burns need to be done.

Council asked is there a process for informing the community or the Conservation Council regarding changes in burning planning. Tony Scherl and Christian Ward are looking at different ways to do it.

Land Development Agency (LDA) are purchasing a lot of land on the Western side of the ACT and there is uncertainty around the fire plans for that. These were previously held by rural land

owners and they will likely be added to the LDA Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP). Neil Cooper expressed concerns that any land purchased will need to be managed through the LDA's BOP.

TAMS noted that recent rain will affect burns in Namadgi, rain gauges will measure and regular fuel sampling will be mapped and compared against predicted weather for full extent.

Minutes from the meeting on 27 January 2016 regarding the Mt Clear fire will be circulated. There was strong acknowledgement of the work being done but information wanted to be taken from the lessons.

Council then discussed the results of the AAR and the follow up of lessons learned. The key points of the discussion were:

- Communications with stakeholders and the benefits of engaging with the community and interested stakeholders.
- What the process was to understand the issues and develop and implement lessons learned.
- Review of trail opening and other access activities, including viewing a video of the trails and helipad. Council, TAMS and ESA discussed the need for the trails, cost and plans for rehab activities.

**Action Item:** NA

**Agenda item: 11.0 – Other Business**

**Presenter: Chair**

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference discussion will be moved to the next meeting to give members an opportunity to compare the new draft with the current ToRs.

The Molonglo corridor management plan was circulated for response before Christmas. Council will put a placeholder. Response to be drafted out of session. Fire Intervals were identified as an item in the plan and a preliminary discussion occurred regarding a balance between ecological conservation and fire safety.

Draft Management Plan for the Molonglo River Reserve is also a time critical and will be discussed out of session.

CO ACT RFS provided a Tasmania Fire situation briefing, ACTRFS crews on the Lake Mckenzie Complex, Arthur River, Zeehan, Strathgordon. Crews consisted of Parks and Volunteers. Unique drought stricken country.

BFC acknowledged CO ACTRFS Andrew Stark, who is taking up a new position in Adelaide and this is his last meeting.

**Agenda item: 12.0 – Next Meeting**

**Presenter: Chair**

2 March 2016

**Closing: The meeting closed at 19:00pm.**