



**ACT**  
Government



## ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting 4.00 pm to 7pm, Wednesday 2 August 2017  
Black Mountain Meeting Room  
ESA Headquarters

<b>Council Members</b>	Kevin Jeffery (Chair) Andrew Joyce	Marion Leiba Sarah Ryan	Mick George
<b>Apologies</b>	Cathy Parsons (Deputy Chair) Christine Goonrey	Tony Bartlett Steve Angus	Sandra Lauer Natarsha Carney
<b>Officials</b>	Dominic Lane, ESA Commissioner Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue Joe Murphy, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service Neil Cooper, Manager, Fire, Forests and Roads, Parks and Conservation Service		
<b>Invited Guests</b>	Tony Scherl, Parks and Conservation Service, EPSDD Ryan Lawrey, Parks and Conservation Service, EPSDD		

### *Minutes*

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

The Chair arrived at 16:15pm, welcomed everyone and commenced the meeting, however a minimum of six members is required to establish a quorum and decisions could not be made.

Apologies were received from Cathy Parsons, Christine Goonrey, Natarsha Carney, Tony Barlett, Sandra Lauer, Steve Angus

The meeting progressed to the Commissioner’s report in the absence of a quorum.

**Agenda item:** 2.0 – *Acceptance of minutes from previous meeting and update on action items arising from previous meetings* **Presenter:** Chair

#### **Discussion:**

This item was not covered without a quorum.

**Agenda item:** 3.0 – *Commissioner’s Report to Bushfire Council* **Presenter:** Dominic Lane

The Commissioner noted that this was the last meeting of this bushfire council and expressed his sincere appreciation for the work that they have done contributing to bushfire safety within the ACT over the years.

He noted several pieces of key work that the Bushfire Council had contributed to during their current term, including the assistance they provided to the auditor general's report into bushfire preparedness and being a key centrepiece in understanding how things can be done better and how things are implemented.

Since taking the position the commissioner has made steps to increase support for the council, which members acknowledged. The Commissioner noted that members served the ACT through three different Ministers for Police and Emergency Services, all of who would echo his sentiments of appreciation to them.

The Commissioner invited Neil to speak on to the council. He noted that the council is very valuable to the land management agency; especially in the development and implementation of the Bushfire Operations Plan and issues affect the land management agencies. The reports Council bring back to Neil are invaluable. Marion noted the value of Neil's reports and appreciated the effort that goes into them each month.

The Commissioners Report covered the following topics:

- International assistance.
- Recruitment on new fire fighters
- Seasonal outlook
- Response to roundtable process
- Volunteers charter

The Commissioner again extending condolences to the Jeffery family and acknowledge their huge contribution to bushfires in the capital.

**Agenda item:** *4.0 – Presentation of the 2017-18 Bushfire Operations plan from EPSDD* **Presenter:** Neil Cooper

#### Discussion:

Neil provided the Land Managers update that covered:

- 2017/18 Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's (ESPDD) Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP)
- Overseas Deployments
- AFAC 2017 Conference
- Seasonal Fire fighting Crews
- Subregional Fire Plans
- Burns

The Canadian deployment was working well, all feedback was positive and it is the first form of deployment since the latest agreement.

Training is being adapted as a member of staff moves on. The Commissioner would like to have involvement with how that looks like. Christian Ward is focusing on preparedness day and training.

Some funding arrangements were discussed with limited details.

Ryan, Tony and Neil provided a presentation on the latest version of the ESPDD BOP

TM1 database has been improved and report has been improved.

Ongoing engagement is occurring.

Changes in Ha figures provided to RFS and Council.

Ecological Guidelines, applied mostly to the burns – Macquarie Perch and the Cotter burn, need to assess what is actually happening and what are the concerns. Still waiting on some further research.

PCS previously report to the council on the BOP to include smokers and blue gums burns but have now been removed for a reduction of about 6000ha.

28 burns are across different vegetation types.

Trittering has become essential for keeping roads clear and is also being used alongside prescribed burns.

Funding for land management activities was discussed and the effect that it has on the BOP. Council member wanted to understand the increased risk based on reduction in funding. That analysis was not done yet.

The Commissioner departed 5:48pm and thanked Neil, Tony and the team for bring together the BOP.

The Chair noted the risks are increasing year on year, where the pre 2003 fuel loads are a possibility if large burns are not occurring. The concern is from a risk reduction point of view, taking the 2 largest burns increases the risk. The helicopter costs associated with them is what increases the cost of large burns significantly.

The Sub-regional fire management plan is key priority within the budget and provides 5-10 year planning.

It was noted that the vegetation is getting towards 20 years since burning, risks are increasing from global warming and work done on the urban edge won't be enough to stop a large forest fire. Putting off large burns increases the risk exponentially as fuel loads increase and surrounding fuel loads increase. The large burns – blue gums and smokers was deferred from last year's BOP also.

There is an understanding in the group that broad scale fuel management could only be done through burning.

**Action:**

- The Chair to talk to the Commissioner about funding issues
- Provide Council and ESA with renewed version of the BOP

**Agenda item:** 5.0 – Correspondence for noting

**Presenter:** Chair

**Discussion:**

Nil.

**Agenda item:** 6.0 – Topics from the 2017 ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan

**Presenter:** Chairperson

**Discussion:**

6.1 – Seasonal Outlook for 2017-18

The Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre Hazard Note – Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook 2017 was launched at the AFAC17 conference in early September. It can be found at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/38>.

6.2 – Production of Annual Preparedness Report for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

It was discussed that there was more work to be done, however it would not be finalised until after the pre-season briefing on 26 September 2017.

The situation is that the next council will have to sign off on this, with the assumption of continuity of members.

### 6.3 Annual pre-season briefing on Preparedness by the ACT Rural Fire Service

Will take place on the evening of 26 September 2017.

#### Action:

- Nil.

**Agenda item:** 7.0 – Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Report to BFC

**Presenter:** Joe Murphy

**Discussion:** 2

The ACT Rural Fire Service (RFS) Chief Officer (CO) expressed his thanks to the Bushfire Council for their support since he commenced his role. I again expressed his condolences to the Jeffery family on their loss. He provided a handout for his update, which outlined the following points:

- The volunteer attendance at AFAC
- A staff member is offline working on the Incident Controller program
- Good media on returning deployment to Canada
- Fire towers inspected
- Preseason brief on 26 September, open to any member of the service
- Station upgrades are progressing on schedule. Guises will be moving vehicles in soon. Molonglo working out of the West Belconnen ACTF&R station
- Brigade numbers
- Bush firefighter course is currently being run with 35 going through. Assessment to be conducted on Sunday, a new log book system will be available for volunteers who completed the previous bush firefighter course but could not be assessed due to unfavourable conditions
- Potential upgrade of trails coming into the ACT and we may need to upgrade also
- Tumut and Riverina may push their season back
- Hoping to get Electronic fire danger index signs soon
- Planning day went very well
- Community engagement – Open day to be held at Fairbairn.
- Launch of bushfire season media event will take place on 29 September 2017
- Canberra Bushfire Ready campaign to kick off in November
- Bushfire survival plan has been updated.

The Bushfire Council noted the Commissioner has had recent correspondence and meetings with the Volunteer Brigades Association (VBA) and discussed a range of topics, including; field day, training, funds, cancer legislation, bushfire ready, volunteer morale, and the exit interview form. The Commissioner is taking the issues very seriously and is working on progressing each of them. The VBA have expressed that they wish to disengage with the Open Day and the Commissioner is very eager to find out what the issues are and work through them. He has asked for a meeting with all relevant VBA representatives and brigade presidents at Rivers RFS station next Saturday so that they can express their views to him. Stephen Reynolds the VBA president is currently away and will join the meeting via teleconference.

The Commissioner noted the Open Day as a great opportunity to open headquarters up. He noted that in the lead up to the season it would be best if the ACTRFS and VBA see eye to eye.

The Commissioner is very keen to work with the VBA for the Open Day and sought the council's in principle support on this. Nothing has been fed back to the Commissioner that things haven't worked in the past. He is very keen to sit down and work through all of the concerns with the VBA.

Support was given to the Commissioner for engaging with the VBA in such an active way and in seeking to keep the Field Day and Open Day together. In practical terms, it is difficult to fit the two events in on separate weekends. The Chair is aware of some issues that are going on, the council is concerned with morale issues that occur each year. There is not a singular

alignment across VBA representatives about whether the field day should be part of the open day or not but there are other issues.

Neil offered to provide the PCS exit form and check lists for information in further developing the ACTRFS form. A deliverable to the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan relates to morale of staff and volunteers. Morale is difficult to measure but an exit form is one way to gauge and quantify it.

Council members discussed what mechanisms exist to address issues. The most formal recognition is through the charter with the volunteers and recognises the associations but also senior members of volunteer groups and maps. Engagement between operational services and the individual members. Issues should also come through the senior managements group and captains group.

The Chair encourages communication and leadership. For the VBA representatives it's not just a workplace for them. The Commissioner's observation in his time here is that it is a moving feast, with different VBA presidents operating differently.

**Action:**

- Nil

**Agenda item:** *8.0 – General Business*

**Presenter:**

**Chair**

**Discussion:**

Sarah Ryan attended the AFAC conference and reported back to the Council. She considered it terrific, learnt a lot and tried to go to performance measures related talks. She found enough new material to redraft the paper that she has been working on with Tony. Neil is looking at performance measures on a range of things that he may share with Sarah.

Council asked question around the status on appointments and the handover to incoming members and induction.

Minutes may be considered out of session due to the absence of a quorum.

**Action:**

- Follow up with Greg Potts on presentation of other agency BOPS.

**Agenda item:** *11.0 – Next Meeting*

**Presenter:**

**Chair**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 4 October 2017.

**Closing:** The meeting was declared closed at 18:30pm.



## ACT Bushfire Council Meeting Implementation of Action Items

### Active items for current meeting

Action Item / Issue	Originating Meeting date	Assigned To	Meeting Due Date	Status	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2017/18 EPSDD BOP to be presented at next meeting</li> <li>• Parks to presented on progress of BOP &amp; LDA progress</li> <li>• Pre suppression plans (Fire &amp; Rescue)</li> <li>• Parks presentation – trends over time, tenure to be put in the BFC report</li> <li>• BFC like to see LDA BOP when available</li> <li>• Greg Potts to get report from 2016/17 for the next meeting</li> <li>• Greg Potts to provide table to BOPs for the next meeting</li> </ul>	2 August 2017	Tony Scherl  Greg Potts			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynda Scanes to provide progress on the BFC appointments</li> <li>• Introduction of new BFC members when they start (hand over)</li> </ul>	2 August 2017	Lynda Scanes			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on Lower Cotter Catchment for BFC</li> <li>• Parks to provide presentation or executive summary &amp; recommendations of the Fire Management Unit review</li> </ul>	2 August 2017	Tony Scherl			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up on how to find presentations from the Symposium on the website</li> <li>• Investigate possibility of having health messages 'Heat wave' on the new Fire Danger Rating signs, Greg Potts to follow up with lady from Health</li> <li>• Community Engagement report (meant to be presented on the night) to be forwarded to BFC members</li> </ul>	2 August 2017	PCS/ESA  Greg Potts  Fiona Amundsen			

Action Item / Issue	Originating Meeting date	Assigned To	Meeting Due Date	Status	Comments
Council to write a letter of support in the minutes for the budget and structure for preparing for the next phase of SBMP and Regional Fire Management Plan.	2 August 2017	Secretariat (Lynda Scanes)			

### Completed Items

Action Item	Originating Meeting date	Responsibility	Proposed/Revised completion date	Date completed
Agenda item 6 – IBFC would like to be a invited guests at the Senior Operations Group (Operational Officers) and the Senior Management Group (Administrative Officers) next meetings in July and August	3 May 2017	Secretariat		Complete
Agenda item 6 6.1 — BFC to give details about the type of data required for the August presentation on the history of bushfires in the ACT and the history of aviation support for bushfires. 1) <b>Action:</b> Council to write to the CO ACT RFS and relevant stakeholders requesting detailed information to form data for the Annual Preparedness Report to the Minister. 6.3 — Update on the Strategic Reform Agenda Programme <b>Action</b> – Commissioner Lane to provide Council with an update on the SRAP at the next meeting.	7 June 2017	6.2 – Council  6.3 – Commissioner	5 July 2017	Complete
Agenda item 5 Item 5.3 SRAP SBMP update document to be circulated out of session.	5 July 2017	Secretariat	11 July 2017	Complete
Agenda item 6 – email the details for BFC to submit an EOI to attend the AFAC Conference	5 July 2017	Secretariat		Complete
Agenda item 9 – The ESA Community Engagement Report and Canberra Bushfire Ready Campaign update to be included on the August Agenda.	5 July 2017	Secretariat		Complete

Agenda item 11 – Provide a new calendar invitation for the final meeting in September and venue details.	5 July 2017	Secretariat		Complete
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