



ACT Bushfire Council Minutes

Date: 7 April 2021

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: Black Mountain Room HQ ESA and WebEx

Attendance	
Chair	Sarah Ryan – Chair, ACT Bushfire Council
Attendees	Natarsha Jakubaszek – Deputy Chair, ACT Bushfire Council Tony Bartlett – Member Steve Angus – Member Cathy Parsons – Member David Snell – Member Nick Lhuede – Member Jeremy Watson – Member Kylie Coe – Member Bhiamie Williamson-Member Georgeina Whelan – ESA Commissioner Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) Daniel Iglesias - Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)
Apologies	Nil
Guests	Minister Mick Gentleman – Minister for Police and Emergency Services Alicia Turner – Ministers Office Neil Cooper - Parks and Conservation Service, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)
Secretariat	Tara Bucknall – Executive Officer ESA Deputy Commissioner

Item	Topic	Action or Decision	Area Responsible	Due
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>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 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p> <p>Nil Apologies.</p>			
2.	<p>Declaration of Interest</p> <p>The Chair asked for any declaration of interest – Nil.</p>			
3.	<p>Discussion with Minister – Government response to 2020 BFC report</p> <p>The Minister opened the discussion by thanking the Council and government agencies for their efforts in working to ensure the protection from and safety of the ACT Community in the event of a bushfire. He confirmed the ACT Government’s intention to move towards an All-Hazards approach to emergency preparedness and response and that this intention be a part of the current review of the ACT Emergencies Act. This review will include a heavy focus on the bushfire risk. The Minister indicated that the government response to the Council’s 2020 report indicated an agreement in principle to all recommendations, with some of these having been completed and a number to in progress. He invited the council to make comments on this response.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Minister for the response and noted the detailed and through nature of this response and that this was appreciated as a recognition of the work undertaken by the Council in the preparation for the report. The Council had the following comments / questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 1: It was noted that the Council is of the opinion that the statement that hazard reduction burns “have a limited impact on reducing fire risk” is a highly contestable statement and it does not agree with this generalised statement. It was noted that the Government Response has been updated to now read “they have a limited impact on reducing fire risk, under extreme conditions.” There was agreement on this and confirmation that ACT 			

<p>Government is not intending to move away from prescribed burning in the EPSDD BOP but that this is only one tool in the preparedness and management of bushfires. There needs to be ongoing consideration of options available should planned hazard reduction burns be unable to be undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was asked if the Bushfire Council would be invited to provide input into the review of the ACT Emergencies Act. The Minister confirmed that relevant stakeholders would be approached as the process continues. Several matters need to be considered across this review, not just those related to bushfires. The ACT needs to be best placed to deal with all emergencies. • Recommendation 11. Council asked for confirmation that Government is confident that the establishment of an edge road in the Denman Prospect development is in place. The Minister has confirmed that this will be included within the development plan. • Recommendation 12. It was noted that the response indicated that non-EPSDD Directorate BOP would only be presented to Council after the Commissioner’s approval. Concern was raised that the Council would not have the opportunity to provide advice to the Commissioner on these BOPs if they did not review them prior to approval. The Commissioner confirmed that ESA does intend to seek Council advice prior to approving all the Territory BOPs. ESA is currently reviewing the entire process, including timelines for this. • Recommendation 13. The Council sought confirmation of the status of building standards in bushfire prone areas for knock down – rebuilds in existing suburbs. The Minister was of the view that this had already occurred but agreed to confirm this. • Recommendation 14. It was noted that the latest standard for building in bushfire prone areas is not the version referred to on the Access Canberra website. • Recommendation 2. Council raised concerns that they do not believe that the review of suppression actions undertaken during the 2020 bushfire was sufficient to provide a detailed review of the actual event and actions taken. It was noted that the Government response indicated that this had been completed. The Commissioner confirmed that there is some further work being 	<p>Commissioner to confirm the new process regarding BOP consultation and Council involvement.</p> <p>Confirmation of status of building regulations particularly in relation of knock down – rebuild.</p> <p>Confirmation that ACT Government had the latest regulations publicly available</p>	<p>ESA</p> <p>Minister’s Office / Secretariat</p> <p>Minister’s Office / Secretariat</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>
--	--	--	----------------------------------

	<p>undertaken that will look at several key events during the 2020 bushfire and that several Council members will be invited to participate. Council reiterated that they were of the view that there still needed to be a detailed review to be able to inform future preparedness through the provision of case studies. Additionally, this enables incorporation of learning and review of these in future reviews to identify progress against these learnings.</p> <p>The Minister concluded the session by again thanking the Council for their efforts in producing their annual report and acknowledged that external advice greatly assists in enabling government agencies to provide for a safer Canberra.</p>	Minister will take on board this advice. Commissioner will confirm the process that will be undertaken as part of the Captains Review.	ESA	TBC
4.	Aboriginal Fire Management Zones – Presentation by PCS			
	<p>Neil Cooper from PCS provided a summary of the how Aboriginal Fire Management Zones were established and the progress that has occurred in establishing and setting up the management of Aboriginal Fire Management Zones. It was identified as a work in progress and PCS was not at a point of being able to provide a formal presentation as the formal engagement with the traditional custodians had not been finalised. Once this occurs the relevant traditional custodians will be invited to present to the Bushfire Council.</p> <p>Discussion occurred around the original intent of the request by Council as the Aboriginal Fire Management Zones were not included in the earlier presentation on the RFMP. EPSDD has confirmed that the intent for the Aboriginal Fire Management Zones has not changed although EPSDD has updated their general RFMP presentation to include reference to the Aboriginal Fire Management Zones.</p>	<p>Action item 202102-07 to be updated as follows:</p> <p>EPSDD to provide an update before Sep to enable Council to include status of Aboriginal Fire Management Zones in their annual Report.</p> <p>Traditional custodians will be welcome to present a more detailed presentation once EPSDD has finalised the processes that will be used.</p>	EPSDD	<p>Aug meeting</p> <p>When available</p>
5.	AFAC Rural Land Management Group – Presentation by PCS			
	<p>Neil Cooper from PCS provided a presentation on the AFAC Rural Land Management Group and the key areas of focus that this group is currently working on. The work being undertaken and the relevance of outcomes to the ACT was discussed. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile to receive a brief from EPSDD after the May AFAC meetings to provide an update of key outcomes from the AFAC RLMG.</p>	<p>EPSDD to provide a presentation of key outcomes with respect to the RLMG from the May AFAC meetings.</p>	EPSDD	July Meeting
6.	Acceptance of Minutes and Action items from last meeting			
	<p>Council accepted the February minutes.</p>			

	Action items were addressed and updated			
7.	Correspondence for noting			
	<p>The following correspondence was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to the Minister regarding short extension of the current term of BFC • Letter from the Minister in response to the 2020 Preparedness Report • Invitation to attend the public consultation for the revised BMZ and RFMP • Anonymous letter with suggestions of airborne technologies that could improve bushfire response <p>The Chair asked for an update on when the Council would receive a response from the Commissioner to their letter sent in December 2020.</p>	ESA to provide an update on a response to their letter.	Secretariat	
8.	Workshop on evaluation of SBMP objectives			
	The Chair advised that significant work was being undertaken within ESA in reporting on SBMP objectives. She proposed that the Council invite ESA to provide a presentation on this after the Commissioner had approved the work.	ESA to advise the best time to provide a presentation on the evaluation of SBMP objectives.	Secretariat	
11.	Report on activities undertaken			
	<p>Chair attended the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 March – meeting with the Commissioner regarding request for short extension • 22 March – RFMP Stakeholder engagement meeting • 25 March – SBMP Governance Committee 			
12.	Reports from SBMP Governance Committee			
	<p>The Committee had made little progress due to the shortened timeframe between the last two meetings.</p> <p>A presentation on proposed reporting on SBMP objectives, as discussed earlier, to be approved by the Commissioner.</p> <p>One action description is still outstanding but is expected to be completed shortly.</p>			

13.	BFC Business Plan			
	<p>Council confirmed activities / presentations for May meeting as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban interface protection – presentation from SLA • Forward planning for protection of new suburbs from bushfire – presentation from EPSDD • Western Edge Preliminary bushfire risk assessment – presentation by EPSDD 	<p>Cathy Parsons to provide to secretariat draft invitation letter for these presentations. Secretariat to confirm appropriate official to invite.</p>	<p>Council Secretariat</p>	
15.	Officials reports			
	<p>14.1 EPSDD provided a report with updates of actions undertaken and planned, noting that weather had affected delivery of several planned activities. EPSDD indicated that they had requested resources from RFS to support planned activities in the next few weeks.</p> <p>EPSDD provided the quarterly BOP report, noting that access work has been delayed due to high rainfall in the first quarter</p> <p>14.2 ESA Commissioner provided an updated Statement against Resources and Capability that is the ACT extract of the National Capability Statement. Council sought confirmation as to whether the document provided was just ESA or all ACT resources. ESA confirmed that document is all of ACT. It is titled ESA as in response to a bushfire the PCS resource become a part of the response (Brigade of RFS).</p> <p>14.3 CO RFS advised that a whole of Service, in partnership with SES, exercise would be conducted on 18 April. This will include each Brigade (include PCS) and is intended to test and provide upskilling for members who participate.</p>			
14.	Other business			
	<p>Nil.</p> <p>The Chair recorded appreciation for the support provided by the Secretariat.</p>			
15.	Action items from meeting			

	Action items arising from meeting were confirmed			
16.	In Camera session held.			
	Meeting closed 6.42 pm. Next meeting: Wednesday 5 May 4-7 pm			