



ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 1 March 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
Chair	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
Attendees	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council Nina Allen – Member Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Len Morris – Member (online) Asha Naznin – Member (online) Marta Yebra – Member
Apologies	Kylie Coe – Member
Guests	Wayne Phillips, Assistant Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Matthew Mavity – Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACTRFS Alix Kaucz – Senior Director, Territory Plan, EPSDD Scott Seymour – Project Manager, Assurance, SMBPv4 Andrew Gissing – Chief Executive Officer, Natural Hazards Research Australia Chris Condon – Assistant Director, Strategic Risk Management - Bushfire
Secretariat	Lianna Luton – Executive Officer Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking) (online)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the country on which the Council were meeting, the Ngunnawal people and other traditional owners in the ACT. She paid the Council's respects to elders past, present and emerging. She particularly noted the role traditional owners have played over the past millennia in the care and formation of the land on which we live.

2. Declarations of Interest

Mr Morris advised his trip to Japan concerning an emergency management presentation would be in June.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from 1 February 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 updated.



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5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined correspondence received by the Secretariat:

- Letter from Minister Mick Gentleman in response to the MHAC's Annual Report
- Information from the session on high-risk lightning strikes for bushfire ignition
- Letter from Senior Firefighter Garry Mayo in response to the MHAC's January 2023 Bushfire Report
- Chair's response to Mr Mayo thanking him for his advice
- Mr Rohan Scott's advice to Mr Mayo outlining the selection process for the council and the avenues for volunteers to have input into decisions of the ESA
- Letter from the Chair to Minister Mick Gentleman on the Council's report concerning Community Resilience to Natural Hazards in the ACT
- Copy of the Council's report concerning Community Resilience to Natural Hazards in the ACT.

The Council discussed the letter from Mr Garry Mayo and expressed their appreciation for his comments. They agreed it would be a positive development for more engagement with volunteers in fire management processes. Mr Scott confirmed that volunteer fire fighters have been members of the Bushfire Council in the past. They also have regular meetings with the Minister and are able to comment on operational and service specific activities, including participation in workshops as part of the development of the SBMP.

The Chair noted the role of volunteers would be useful to understand in consideration of the theme of Agency. Mr Scott confirmed he has spoken to Mr Mayo on the issues he raised, but could also address them at the service level too. The Council noted Mr Mayo's suggestions around lessons learned and suggested this be revisited following the outcome of the coronial inquiry into the Orroral fire. They also agreed more work be done by the Council to engage with volunteer groups.

Action: Council to consider how to reach out and engage with key volunteer groups, particularly in the course of exploring its Strategic Topic of Agency capability and resilience.

Person responsible: Len Morris, Council members

6. Planning System Interaction with Emergency Management

The Chair welcomed Mr Scott Seymour and Ms Alix Kaucz to discuss how emergency management would be addressed in the Territory Plan.

Ms Kaucz advised the planning system sets up protections at the district and zone level to mitigate the impact of disasters. Territory planning and district strategies take into consideration areas of higher risk to determine what is developable and what areas should be protected or avoided. This is then specified in the plan, which can include design guides around edge roads, road width, verges and open spaces. Zoning would need to be appropriate for the type of use, e.g. schools, and precinct codes would set the building standards for specific blocks.

Dr Bartlett questioned how district level concepts are translated into decisions around boundaries. Ms Kaucz advised this is done through an estate development plan in negotiation with other agencies, including ESA, and that subdivision approvals include buffer areas for planned residence and vegetation management. She noted policies can change over time but that modelling and studies should assist in ensuring decisions made in 2023 are appropriate for 2050. The bushfire standards will also be linked as a



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separate document to the Plan to enable them to be more easily amended. Ms Kaucz also directed the Council to requests for comment on the subdivision policy under Part F1 of the new Territory plan website.

Mr Seymour outlined the emergency management planning structure that is being developed to complement the Territory Plan. This includes the governance structures for emergency management, including SEMC and SEMSOG, which then flow into operational management arrangements. The plan establishes a framework to support the delivery of disaster responses, including the appointment of an emergency controller who will work with emergency coordinators and the communication team.

Mr Morris questioned how prevention and preparedness were covered by the planning framework and Mr Seymour confirmed the framework would link to national disaster risk reduction strategies. Mr Morris also questioned how it would adapt to changing demographics and Mr Seymour advised it is based on a worst case management scenario. Information on changing demographics could also be gained through public engagement under the Community Communication Information Plan (CCIP). The Chair noted the Council had not received any information on how two-way community engagement occurs, below the CCIP level, and Mr Wayne Phillips took this on notice to see if any material was available.

The Council questioned whether there were exemptions in the planning process for hazard mitigation work, e.g. maintaining fire trails, and Dr Bartlett noted some mitigation work has not been conducted due to the need for planning approvals. Ms Kaucz advised that exemptions for work could come under the planning bill review and new legislation, but that the Territory plan would work hand in hand with management agreements and operational plans for different sites.

Mr Kendall suggested planning strategies include prevention activities and Mr Seymour confirmed it would be a concern if there are impediments to hazard mitigation work. The Council noted that the SBMP does not negate the need for environmental assessments and that this was identified as a problem in the Council's recent bushfire report. They agreed to review the Government's response to the report for possible further assessment on any issues in the planning system. Mr Seymour noted that hazard risks should be identified in bushfire plans but undertook to investigate the issue further.

Action: Council to review the Government's response to the Bushfire Report in relation to environmental controls affecting risk reduction work. Mr Kendall and Dr Bartlett to provide some examples of this to EPSDD via the Council so that the Directorate can assist Council to better understand how these issues are addressed in the planning process. Issue for further discussion at the next meeting.

Person responsible: Mr Kendall and Dr Bartlett

7. Bushfire Management Standards

Mr Seymour advised the Bushfire Management Standards review process will shortly be completed and that a copy will then be provided to the Council and the community for comment. Key stakeholders from the ACT Government have participated in a working group to review the standards which should be released for comment in the next two weeks. The intention is for the standards to be adopted by the end of April and they have also been pre-emptively integrated into the draft Territory Plan.

Mr Seymour explained the standards will cover classification zones, design of houses and the protection of assets from bushfires. It will also provide standards for the mitigation of hazards. The Council requested a copy of the standards now in order to have input at a more strategic level, prior to them going out for



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community consultation. The Chair also identified that the new Council has different members who would be unfamiliar with bushfire arrangements and suggested the ESA give more consideration to the Council's agenda, information requirements and meeting schedule in seeking their input. Dr Bartlett also advised the 2-week public consultation period is insufficient for the community to provide comment.

Mr Scott proposed a draft copy of the new standards be made available to the Council as soon as possible. Mr Seymour will also highlight areas that have been adapted from the NSW standards to the ACT. He will also discuss with Mr Scott the issues raised by the Council around the consultation process. If possible, the review of Bushfire Management Standards will be included in the April meeting agenda.

Action: Review of Bushfire Management Standards to be included on April meeting agenda, if possible.

Person responsible: Secretariat

8. NHA Report Summary – Understanding the Black Summer Bushfires

The Chair welcomed Mr Andrew Gissing from Natural Hazards Research Australia to outline research undertaken on the Black Summer Bushfires and to provide information on the purpose of the centre.

Mr Gissing explained that Natural Hazards Research Australia extends the work of the previous Bushfire and Natural Hazard Cooperative Research Centre. As risks continue to evolve with climate and demographic changes, the Centre is taking a multi-hazards approach and is supporting research that identifies future preparedness, including policy changes and capability uplift. The Centre works with researchers to understand true environmental impacts and to build safer and more sustainable communities. The research agenda is also now driven by an end user approach and supports research that may have a national impact.

Mr Gissing advised the national priorities for research include land use planning, urban design, resilient recovery, environmental solutions, next generation capability and social equity. There is also a focus on building capability around data, indigenous knowledge and interoperability. A key element is learning from disasters, capturing the science relevant to these and investigating the social nature of hazards. Work has also been done on future workforce needs.

Mr Gissing summarised the research undertaken following the Black Summer Bushfires in 2019-2020. Twenty-three projects were funded with 28 organisations. Key questions were investigated around why the season was so devastating, what could be learnt from the season and what new capabilities should be implemented. Some of these projects also had ACT involvement and an upcoming project in the Territory will be looking at bushfire mapping and predictions. Other areas of work for the Centre are around cultural land management, community-centred risk reduction and recovery, data and reconstruction. Scholarship programs are also available to engage early career researchers and promote innovation.

Mr Brickhill questioned why the projects did not have more health representation given the effect of heatwaves and Mr Gissing confirmed this was an area for more work to be done. Dr Bartlett queried when research on aerial firefighting would be finalised and Mr Gissing confirmed it would be next year. He also outlined efforts to exchange knowledge with the international community to enhance learnings on community resilience. Agencies funding research are also broadening beyond Government and now include insurance, banking and construction stakeholders.



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The Chair thanked Mr Gissing for his informative discussion.

9. Field Trip Plan

The Chair advised further discussions were held with Mr Scott and the ACT SES concerning the field trip. It is proposed the original plan be retained with the trip to Googong Dam as this would assist with the review of the Strategic Flood Management Plan. The Chair advised she had raised the possibility of a second trip to cover some of the other suggestions raised by Council members. This would be outside the budget and be an unpaid activity and she sought comments from members on their interest in progressing this. No objections were raised to the April field trip plan and the Council noted the review of the Strategic Flood Management Plan would be an agenda item for next meeting.

Action: Council members to advise the Chair on their interest in a second non-paid field day.

Person responsible: Council members

10. Discussion on Action items from the SBMP

Dr Bartlett explained that the Council has a role in monitoring the implementation of the SBMP and the Strategic Flood Management Plan. Every 6 months a report is provided to the Council, however the majority of actions are listed as ongoing which makes it hard to monitor progress. He has reviewed the actions to determine which items would be useful to have more information on, in order to assess what has been achieved.

The Chair advised the list prepared by Dr Bartlett would be sent to the SBMP Governance Committee but asked Council members to review the list to identify any more items requiring information. In particular, the Council noted that ESA should be asked for feedback on Item 2.6 and Objective 9 – Adaptive Management and Climate Change as this is highly relevant to the Council's agenda.

Action: Council members to review the list from Dr Bartlett on SBMP reporting and identify any other issues requiring progress reporting.

Chair to provide list to Governance Committee and raise the issue of progress reporting.

Governance Committee to be asked to facilitate feedback and a briefing on progress against Items 2.6 and Objective 9.

Copy of SBMP and the traffic light report to be provided to Nina Allen.

Person responsible: Council members, Chair and Secretariat

11. Council Member Updates

Ms Allen advised Natural Resource Management has funding to support efforts to build resilience on farms, including tree-planting, dams and water sources. Rural landholders can apply for grants of up to \$20K with the criteria that projects benefit the whole community not just the landowner.

Dr Yebra advised of an upcoming Natural Hazards Research Australia webinar on the Black Summer bushfires, due to be held on 7 March, which Council members could attend.



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The Chair advised she met with Richard Glenn, the Director-General of JACS, Georgeina Whelan, the ESA Commissioner and John Peach, the Head of Security and Emergency Management Division, to discuss future pieces of work. Some of these still require Cabinet approval but there is a focus on recovery and prevention. She noted the key role the Council could play in reacting to Government strategy and policy development. It is not clear what this means for the Council's own strategic priorities, however more information may be available at the next meeting of the Council.

The Chair advised that membership of the Council was also discussed at the meeting, with gaps identified around floods, planning and indigenous land management. The Director-General undertook to consider ways to proactively engage with groups to improve participation. The potential for the ACT Government to consider an extreme heat strategic management plan was also raised by the Chair.

The Chair advised she attended a biodiversity conservation forum which included a presentation on ecological fire and also included information on EPSDD's work on climate adaptation. She will also be attending an upcoming climate resilience and policing workshop.

The Chair advised she attended a Governance Committee meeting on the SBMP and noted the declining attendance at the meeting. Mr Scott agreed with her concerns and advised executives will be meeting to discuss this issue too. He confirmed that funding had been secured for the SBMP5 project to go ahead.

12. Any other business

The Council noted the April meeting should include a briefing on the post-season review of the BOP. Input will be required from ESA and EPSDD to enable the Council to provide strategic advice on the implementation of the BOP and RFMP.

Action: Input required from ESA and EPSDD on the post-season review of the BOP.

Person responsible: Secretariat

13. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

On 1 March 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazard Advisory Council (formerly ACT Bushfire Council) met with Alix Kaucz from the Directorate of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development to discuss the planning system interaction with emergency management arrangements. The Council also met with Scott Seymour, from the ACT Emergency Services Agency to discuss the draft Bushfire Management Standards. Additionally, the Natural Hazards Research Australia Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Gissing, provided an overview of the work of Natural Hazards Research Australia including research to understand the Black Summer Bushfires.

14. Meeting Close

Next meeting 5 April 2023 – ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn