



# ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 3 May 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, 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 (online) Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member (online) Marta Yebra – Member (online)
<b>Apologies</b>	Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACTRFS Stephen Alegria – EBM, EPSDD Kylie Coe – Member
<b>Guests</b>	Commissioner – Georgeina Whelan Bren Burkevics – EGM, EPSDD Ken Hall – A/g Chief Officer ACTRFS (online) Scott Kelly – A/g Operations Manager, ACTAS Fiona Amundson – A/g Director, Public Information and Engagement
<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 acknowledged their enduring presence on the land, their care for the land and hoped their connection continues for time immemorial.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

Nil

## 3. Acceptance of Minutes from 5 April 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: 2023-03-04** – Field trip dates provided by members. Secretariat to follow up with ESA and EPSDD.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

**Action: 2023-04-01** – Dr Bartlett to provide the Block and Section number for the Woden Development and a copy of his letter to the Minister. Secretariat to obtain a copy of ESA's submission to the Territory Planning system.

**Person responsible:** Dr Bartlett, Secretariat

## 5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined correspondence received by the Secretariat:

- Letter from Dr Troy to the Red Cross, Weston Creek Community Council and Professor Jacqui Schirmer thanking them for the input into the community resilience discussion and providing a copy of the Council's advice to the ACT Government.
- Letter from Dr Troy to Commissioner Whelan concerning the draft Bushfire Management Standards
- Commissioner Whelan's interim response to the Bushfire Management Standards.
- Letter from Jon Peach providing an update on the Disaster Resilience Strategy for the ACT.
- Letter from Scott Seymour advising of delays in the SBMP 5 due to resourcing constraints.
- Update on the Strategic Flood Risk Management Plan.

## 6. ESA Community Engagement Strategy

The Chair welcomed Ms Fiona Amundson to the meeting.

Ms Amundson outlined the draft ESA strategy for community engagement for 2023-2025, highlighting its connection to national plans for disaster resilience. The framework is based around 4 principles to Ensure community safety, Engage in two-way communication, Educate and improve preparedness, and Elevate the awareness of ESA in the community. The strategy will be operationalised through engagement with schools and businesses to determine actions for them to take. Different community groups will also be targeted through more tailored communication approaches. A three-tiered evaluation framework will be built into project planning, with guidance from the Chief Minister's Directorate on benchmarking and indicators.

Ms Amundson advised the strategy is in the initial draft stage and proposed ongoing engagement with the Council to help shape the approach. The Commissioner also welcomed the Council's feedback on the strategy and outlined the resourcing made available to develop the strategy and to operationalise and empower engagement. Ongoing consultation will also be conducted with JACS and other agencies to establish cross-agency partnerships and embed it through the ACT Government. The Commissioner suggested a separate workshop session be held with the Council to further discuss the strategy and disaster resilience activities. The Chair welcomed the new approach to strategically guide engagement activities and agreed to a more detailed workshop being conducted with the MHAC.

The Council discussed the engagement strategy and made some initial observations.

- It is not clear how CALD groups are defined. ABS data could be used to identify the demographics of people with English proficiency.



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- The emergency pledge process should be tailored to different groups. Ms Amundson confirmed this would be the approach and advised a resource pack for schools is in development.
- The language used in the strategy could be simpler and less bureaucratic.
- Engagement in relation to specific hazards should include heatwaves, with more focus on working with ambulance and health services.
- The key project plans only go through to 2024 and it is not clear when this will be updated over the three year period.
- Aged care centres should be considered a priority group for engagement.
- The terminology for 'hard to reach groups' is unclear. An alternative phrase could be "Equity of Access".
- More work could be done around engagement with Non-Government Organisations and community groups.
- More consideration needs to be given to the transient nature of the ACT population and how to embed strategies that ensure durability.
- More work could be done to identify vulnerable and diverse groups systematically, rather than anecdotally, using information from the ABS and other sources.
- 'Elevate' as a principle was not considered by the Council to be as clear as it could be.
- More preparedness activities need to be identified, however this could be explored further in the workshop.

Mr Burkevics also identified some of the mechanisms EPSDD use to engage with rural landowners and advised he would be interested in further involvement in the community engagement process.

The Chair thanked Ms Amundson for her presentation and welcomed further discussions with the Public Information and Engagement team.

## 7. Discussion on the Post Hazard Season Update

The Council discussed the ESA's Post Hazard Season Update. They considered it to be a helpful summary and a good start. They agreed the Council should give more consideration to the specific information they required in order to evaluate the plans effectively. They noted there could be more focus on what worked well, what did not go well and whether ESA has the resources to address these. It was suggested more information be sought on:

- Whether any community engagement was conducted through the season.
- Whether the equipment that had been added to the towers was useful in observing and supporting the ESA.
- How this season compared to previous seasons.
- Any key issues affecting the ESA's ability to respond to emergencies, i.e. What each service planned to do before the season, what happened and how they dealt with any barriers.

It was also noted that SES and EPSDD's responses were yet not available. The Council suggested the timing of post-season reports be at a set date and consistent across all hazards and services, including ambulance.

**Action: Updated 2023-03-06** – Chair to work with Mr Kendall and Mr Brickhill to develop a list of information the Council would like from the Post Season Update.

**Person responsible:** Chair, Mr Brickhill and Mr Kendall



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**Action:** Copy of the Inquiry into the West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm to be provided to Nina Allen.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

## 8. Discussion on the ACT Heatwave Plan

The Chair welcomed Mr Scott Kelly to the meeting.

Mr Kelly outlined the ACT Heatwave Plan, which has been reviewed this year to align with the Australian Warning System. The review has also been developed in conjunction with the ACT Health Directorate to ensure consistent messaging. The Plan is an overarching framework and each agency is required to develop operational plans below this. Mr Kelly confirmed there was no set temperature for extreme heat as this is based on Bureau of Meteorology recommendations and the public event activities occurring at the time.

Mr Kelly advised each ACT directorate puts measures in place to address different community needs. He confirmed he could provide data on the demographics of people accessing ambulances related to heatwaves. Work is also being done to negotiate and establish heatwave refuges with Clubs in the ACT. Prior to the season, education messages are released by ESA and other directorates.

The Council noted the Plan seems response-driven, rather than having a focus on preparedness. Mr Kelly advised there are pre-emptive discussions prior to the season, particularly as heatwaves often correspond to bushfires. These discussions help establish roles and responsibilities, and also determine workload increases and operational aspects. The Council agreed it would also be useful to have a more strategic level plan which sets standards around heatwave prevention and risk reduction. Mr Burkevics noted this is also a focus of the ACT Climate Change Strategy.

**Action:** Mr Kelly to provide data on demographics of people accessing ambulance services in heatwaves.

**Person responsible :** Secretariat to follow up

**Action:** Council to obtain a copy of the *Clubs Heat and Smoke Refuge Arrangements*.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

**Action:** Comments on the Heatwave Plan to be compiled and sent to the Commissioner.

**Person responsible:** Council members to forward comments to Chair for compilation.

## 9. Discussion on the Elevated Fire Danger Plan

The Chair sought comments and questions from Council members on the Elevated Fire Danger Plan in order to provide a response to ESA. The Council members noted:

- There could be more education in the community on what the AFDRS means in terms of impacts or probability.
- There is a heavy use of acronyms and jargon (like TOBANS instead of Total Fire Bans), some of which is not well-explained and not well-known by the public.



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- The matrix (Appendix 4, page 23) only implies in-house consultation and doesn't make clear how decisions are made on different locations, requirements and the deployment of resources.
- It is not clear how requirements change if arrangements change, i.e. if better information becomes available from the towers.
- The matrix could be clearer on when the incident management team will activate depending on the severity of the fire, not just the fire behaviour index. The categories could be clearer on when resources need to be deployed quicker.
- The Plan should be moderated by actual operational experience in the ACT and not based on other jurisdictions.
- There should be a single map which provides a picture of all the Directorates' facilities and evacuation centres.

**Action:** Comments on the Elevated Fire Danger Plan to be compiled and sent to the Commissioner.

**Person responsible:** Council members to forward comments to Chair for compilation

## 10. Discussion on SBMP actions (continuation from April meeting)

A further discussion was held in relation to the commentary received on progress against the SBMP, following the response from EPSDD. The Chair and Dr Bartlett will finalise the list of questions/comments and seek further input from other Council members prior to resubmission to the Governance Committee.

**Action: Updated 2023-03-05** – Chair and Dr Bartlett to review remaining responses and circulate to members for review.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Dr Bartlett

## 11. Council member Updates

Council members provided the following updates on activities:

- Dr Yebra advised she will be attending meetings with the Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Western Australia and presenting at a Fire and Air forum.
- Mr Kendall advised he has been involved in a program on impact forecasting which uses Geoscience modelling to predict damage to structures from wind events. This is an automated system that emergency service agencies can access. Hailstorm information is not yet available but could be in future. Mr Morris noted that the BOM could also be approached for a future presentation on the data they use to track events.
- Dr Troy advised she gave a presentation on the 20 years since the 2003 bushfire to the ACT division of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. She also recommended the talk given by Professor Jason Sharples, which is available on the ATSE website (<https://www.atse.org.au/news-and-events/event/act-bushfire-seminar/>).
- Dr Troy advised she attended the SBMP Governance Committee which discussed the Community Engagement Strategy and the Elevated Fire Danger Plan.
- Dr Troy advised she also met with Protiviti, the consultants engaged to work on SBMP 5. They will be holding workshops to explore the main themes of SBMP 5 and have met with ESA and EPSDD. Dr Troy also suggested some other stakeholders they could talk to for a national perspective and relayed the Council's findings in the 2003 bushfire report.



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**Action:** Secretariat to determine if ESA has access to the impact forecasting information.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

## 12. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

The Chair confirmed there had been no response yet from the ACT Government to either the 20 year Bushfire report or the Community resilience document.

The next meeting will be at the ESA Training Centre in Hume. Mr Burkevics advised EPSDD has just completed an autumn burn program, with some interesting learnings on reducing bushfire risk versus protecting high value conservation areas. He will check if a presentation can be provided to the Council.

The next meeting will include

- Dr Yebra's presentation on lightning detectors
- The presentation suggested by Mr Burkevics (if possible)
- An evaluation update on SBMP 4

## 13. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

*On 3 May 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazards Advisory Council received a presentation on the ESA's Community Engagement Strategy from ACT Emergency Services Agency Representative, Fiona Amundson. Council also discussed the ACT Heatwave Plan with Scott Kelly from the ACT Ambulance Service, and received a Post Season Hazard update and discussed the Draft Elevated Fire Danger Plan.*

## 14. Meeting Close

Next meeting 7 June 2023 – ESA Training Centre, 89 David Warren Road, Hume