



6 April 2016  
16:00 to 19:00

# ACT Bushfire Council Meeting

Black Mountain Meeting  
Rooms  
ACT ESA Headquarters

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<b>Chair:</b>	Cathy Parsons	<b>Secretariat:</b>	Victor Khaw
<b>Attendees:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr Marion Leiba</li><li>• Mr Tony Bartlett</li><li>• Mr Steve Angus</li><li>• Dr Sarah Ryan</li><li>• Ms Natarsha Carney</li><li>• Ms Christine Goonrey</li><li>• Mr Andrew Joyce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr Joe Murphy, A/g Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service</li><li>• Mr Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire &amp; Rescue</li><li>• Mr Neil Cooper, Manager, Forestry and Fire, TAMS</li><li>• Rick McRae, Specialist Risk Analysis, Risk and Planning, ESA</li></ul>	

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## Minutes

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which commenced at 16:10pm. Apologies were received from Mr Kevin Jeffery (Chair), Mr Michael Lonergan (Member), Ms Sandra Lauer (Member) and Mr Mick George (Member). The Commissioner, Chief Officer ACTRFS and TAMS Manager exited the meeting at various stages to attend to an incident in Namadgi National Park.

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

No conflicts of interest were noted for this meeting and agenda.

**Agenda item: 3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting** **Presenter: Deputy Chair**

**Discussion:** Tony and Sarah moved the minutes from February be accepted with an amendment to agenda 10 in relation to BPAs – “is not static and is regularly refined” and typo with Coleman Ridge. Marion and Natarsha moved that March minutes be accepted.

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

The Chair noted the action items list and acknowledged completed items and actions to be taken.

**Agenda item: 5.0 – Correspondence** **Presenter: Deputy Chair**

- Letter from Daniel Iglesias regarding consultation on the draft Management Plan for the Molonglo River Reserve

The response letter regarding the draft Management Plan for the Molonglo River Reserve was

sent to Daniel Iglesias by Kevin Jeffery on behalf of the council.

**Agenda item: 6.0 – Incident Management Exercise (IMX)**

**Presenters: Chief Officer, ACTF&R**

The IMX was held from 13 – 15 October and some members of the council also participated in it. EMA from the Attorney-General's Department were commissioned to take an evaluation of the exercise. The evaluation report is now a final and will be circulated to Council. ESA took the approach that it would be valuable to have an evaluator and the findings took the form insights rather than recommendations.

Having the IMX over several days provided the opportunity to train in transitioning between IMTs and a night shift provided the opportunity for greater volunteer involvement. The exercise was facilitated by NSWRFs who have well tested methodology and used widely across NSW. Key areas of assessment from IMX were trigger points for emergency alters and emergency warnings; and the public information cell, which was running alongside the IMT, providing regular emergency alerts to the community, and got assessed separately. Early on there was a noticeable disconnect between the public information cell and the IMT so a decision was made for the leader of the public information cell to work alongside the Incident Controller (IC), which worked well.

There were issues around the strategic versus the operational focus of different IMTs, which EMA took notice of. The strategic or operational focus was in response to information received by the activation cells. Another area identified for improvement was shared situational awareness so that the whole IMT gets the appropriate update. There were observations of the facilities and it's architecture, which created bottlenecks and difficulty to access radios for everyone. The learnings from the exercise have been taken away and the facilities have been redesigned. Incident Controllers were able to have modules signed off by mentors through experience gained through the exercise.

The ESA scribes were very proactive and professional. Council noted that it was a very successful exercise. The TAMS managers noted that it would be valuable to do exercises regularly in future. There were IT glitches and CO ACTF&R noted that it isn't just important to have IT support during exercises but also during incidents.

The Commissioner's Executive Officer played a role as the Minister in a press conference and was an example of how quickly information is turned around. The Council asked whether assessors were used during actual incidents and not just exercises. One example where that occurred was the Hazelwood fire in Victoria. It was noted by CO ACTF&R that there was some cultural changes that needed to be done before that is commonplace.

An update on the Community Fire Unit Review was provided noting that the selection process for assessors was being finalised.

**Action Item:** The final version of the evaluation report is to be circulated to the Council.

**Agenda item: 7.0 – Wambelong inquiry**

**Presenter: Specialist Risk Analysis, Risk and Planning**

The Specialist Risk Analysis addressed the Council on the Coroner's recommendations following the Wambelong fires in the Warrumbungles National Park. The fire spread more laterally than expected. Interested recommendations came out of the Coroner's report, including flying weather balloons. In March the NSW Government produced a response that varies in their agreement, partially agree and disagree.

Council asked if there are any clear recommendations that apply to the ACT. There was a recommendation regarding Fire Behaviour Analysts and that the positions are adequately resourced. The Council made a comment that there should be a greater link between research information and operational personnel but there is a lot of difficulty with understanding extensive technical papers, however the work is being done for operational people to have access.

The Council enquired about the use of weather balloons or radiosondes, which are attached to

the base of the balloons. There is a sparse coverage with the closest one being in Wagga Wagga as they are no longer based in the ACT. There's also a possibility for the ACT and NSW to work collaboratively in sharing resources.

The Coroner's report

<http://www.coroners.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Warrumbungles%20findings%20Final%2028%2008%2015.pdf>

NSW Government response

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/committee.nsf/0/68BBD71B1A03AC16CA257C23001801CB>

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parliament/committee.nsf/0/7fb99b02f5134d7dca257df10081d07b/\\$FILE/55583688.pdf/Government%20Response.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parliament/committee.nsf/0/7fb99b02f5134d7dca257df10081d07b/$FILE/55583688.pdf/Government%20Response.pdf)

**Action Item:** Nil.

**Agenda item: 8.0 – Update on Himawari satellite**

**Presenter: Specialist Risk Analysis, Risk and Planning**

The Specialist Risk Analyst handed out maps of the Northern Brindabella area, that overlaid data of planned fuel reduction areas, terrain, weather radar feed from the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), and ground temperature data from the Himawari 8 satellite. The heat data takes the form of coloured pixels, as ground temperature increases the colour progression is grey, black, yellow, orange, red. The pixels are 2 kilometres squared. The new satellite this year means that there is near real time data, with the satellite updated every 6 minutes and the radar updated every 10 minutes.

There have been a number of occasions this year, where fire have been detected by satellite in out of the way areas of NSW. Australia is still tooling up its system to automatically pick fires up. Access to this technology is free as a result of an agreement between Japan and Australia.

At the last AFAC conference a workshop was run on Himawari 8. The BoM people run their weather models 94% of data used is satellite data. The technology is indispensable and has pushed Australia to a higher level of skill and forecasting. Himawari 8 has made an improvement but there are more changes on the way in the next few years.

**Action Item:** BoM engineering services to be organised to attend a Council meeting to discuss upgrades and various tools. A long term, strategic level presentation including climate change from BoM is still wanted.

**Agenda item: 9.0 – Review of Terms of Reference**

**Presenter: Deputy Chair**

The main things for the Commissioner were to find the best way the Council can report to the Minister and the timing around that, the Terms of Reference (TORs) should reflect an annual report but not be overly prescriptive of when, noting it should be before bushfire season.

Drafting of correspondence by ESA will be done on a case by case basis rather than designating all correspondence be drafted by ESA. It may not be appropriate for ESA to draft some of the correspondence.

Additions to the TORs are distribution of reports and audits, providing BOPs from other areas to Council.

Council raised concerns about not being provided with papers and a starting point for discussion of some agenda items. These concerns have been incorporated into the TORs.

Council wanted to note that agenda papers should indicate whether items are for information, or there's a recommendation to be developed or a decision to be made. If there are items that the Council would like they also need to indicate that they would like a paper on it. Where possible agenda papers should be circulated a week in advance of the meeting with relevant documentation.

The Council recommends that the TORs are adopted by the Commissioner.

**Action Item:** Nil.

**Agenda item:** *10.0 – Update by TAMS on bushfire mitigation activities under the BOP* **Presenter:** **Manager, Forestry and Fire, TAMS**

Council appreciates the regular updates from the TAMS manager. The BOP is on schedule and progressing well. Most of the activity they are doing is burning and they did an Indigenous burn last week and appeared on ABC and were going to appear on Cairns radio. It's not onerous from a land manager perspective, they just need to facilitate and budget for it. Every single person at the Gibraltar burn got involved in the ceremonial aspect.

Lighting at Bendora and Arboretum started last week for the burn program. Those areas had died down but were being monitored. The current conditions of high winds had been expected and additional resources were allocated to address it. A rotor wind occurred at 2pm, which reversed and burn fairly warm, which will require some recovery. It burnt 400 hectares but it was prepared for with containment lines. Information was provided to the appropriate people for the situation. The fire was in a zone that was already in the strategic burning zone that would have been done in the next year or two. The burn program will be modified around the area.

The Commissioner acknowledged the TAMS manager and TAMS staff for their work and efforts, noting that only one break occurring is a testament to their diligence. The Commissioner's main role is to assure the public that everything is under control. Smoke will remain in the air as conditions are dry and ideal for carrying out the burn program. Smoke from Victoria and NSW will drift in from their burns in any case.

There was a focus on Brandy Flat from TAMS and they were heading to Honey Suckle also. A Council member that inspected that area was comfortable with how things were being managed. Council recognised the opportunity for training and learning during these activities. Work in grasslands was also done well and Council wanted to record that it has been a very good program.

The Commissioner noted that there are outstanding incident action plans that TAMS behind the scenes that reassures the community and there are challenges with the jobs in the current conditions however sending crews and earthworks in can create danger for those crews and not net gains. If the weather does stay dry then burning will continue. There has been a mixture of Parks members and volunteers heading out and ACTRFS has been more organized than in the past to contribute. While ACTRFS may not have been able to provide people they were able to supply vehicles and equipment. Parks also have a fatigue management system.

There are still challenges to work out with Parks and Conservation Services and the development of the BOP. The Fire management unit will remain complete.

Council would like to congratulate all involved and reiterated that they highly value updates.

**Action Item:** Nil.

**Agenda item:** *11.0 – Other Business* **Presenter:** **Deputy Chair**

*ACTRFS Chief Officer Report*

The report was handed out outlining figures from the 2015-16 Bushfire Season. The contribution to the Tasmanian fires was a substantial commitment and provided great experience with only one injury.

*Commissioner's Report – Trip to Taiwan*

Commissioner was invited to Taiwan and attended with the Senior Manager from Risk and Planning to visit and inspect their Emergency Management and Disaster Planning arrangements. The country is half the size of Tasmania with 23 million people that is largely rugged, mountainous terrain. They experience monsoons and typhoons, and they manage it very well within their resources. They recognise their risks and plan for them appropriately, working collaboratively with all other branches of government, private organisation and industry.

Addressing concerns relating to the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

ESA met with Rural Leaseholders to use funding for increasing access and increased grazing intensity through smaller paddocks among other things. Through the SBMP there will be continued support for rural farmers living on the urban edge.

ESA is continuing discussions with EPD on the refinement of the Bushfire Prone Area. It's still being refined and always had its challenges due to different building standards. BPAs raise awareness of what kind of area people live in. In declaring a BPA it is the intent of Government that we eventually implement a bushfire standard for homes that are knock-down rebuild or more than 50% renovated and ESA is working with EPD towards that. The Commissioner will formally write to Council when he consults with them on this.

The media article misrepresented a vegetation management proposal paper from ACTEWAGL. ACTEWAGL began consultation without the knowledge of ESA despite working collaboratively on it. There were issues with the clearance area between power lines, which were represented at 7m in the media, however it was up to 7m.

The current interim Secretariat will be finishing up and a person appointed in ACTRFS will be taking over. The Council expressed their thanks to the interim secretariat.

Strategic Reform Agenda

The position papers will be circulated to Council, members feel that it is timely and would like the SRA to be added to the next agenda with the Director of SRA to attend.

The Council would like to refocus the agendas on the business plan, with the new secretariat to liaise with Kevin or Cathy to that end. The Council would also like people to brief them risk and management and look for other suggestions on how they should inform themselves on current research on risk assessment. Brian and Adam from TAMS to be invited to the next meeting.

Council spoke on the consultation of the Chief Officer ACTRFS position, In-Camera.

**Agenda item: 12.0 – Next Meeting**

**Presenter: Deputy Chair**

**Closing**

The next meeting was moved to Tuesday 3 May 2016, due to the St Florian's Day Last Post Ceremony commencing at 4pm.