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| Act rural fire service | ACT Bushfire Council Meeting | 6 Feb 2013 |
| 16:00 to 18:30 |
| Black Mountain 1 & 2 Meeting Rooms  ACTESA Headquarters |

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| Chair: | | Kevin Jeffery (KJ) | | | | Secretariat: | | | Brioni Young (BY) |
| Attendees: | | Simon Katz (SK), Member  Christine Goonrey, Member  Cathy Parsons (CP), Member  Peter Beutel (PB), Member  Marion Leiba (MLe), Member  Sarah Sharp (SS), Member  Natalie Hile (NH), Member  Michael Lonergan (ML), Member  Tony Bartlett (TB), Member | | | | Michael Joyce (MJ) DCO ACTRFS  Paul Swain (PS) CO ACTF&R  Neil Cooper (NC), Mgr Fire Forest & Roads, PCS | | | |
| Invited Guest | | Dominic Lane , ACT ESA Commissioner | | | | | | | |
| Meeting commencement: | | | 16.00 | **Meeting concluded:** | | | | 19.00 | |

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| Minutes |

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| Agenda item: | ***1.0 – Apologies*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Andrew Stark | | | |

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| Agenda item: | ***2.0 – Acceptance of minutes of 5 Dec 2012 meeting*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Discussion: | The minutes from the previous meeting held on 5 Dec 2012 were accepted as a true and accurate record.  Accepted by Cathy Parsons and seconded by Simon Katz | | |
| Agenda item: | ***3.0 – Update on action items arising from previous meetings*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Discussion: | Refer to implementation of action items report (attached to end of minutes).  KJ and AS met with the ESA Commissioner two weeks ago and were asked about the status of the 10 year report - KJ stated that he was still waiting for a response from the Minister. | | |
| Action: | KJ to chase up whether he has received the Ministers response for both the 10 year report AND the Annual report then circulated to members | | |
|  | It was also noted that broader reports such as the “Bob Smith” report were also not on the public domain as tabled in the Legislative assembly. The BFC Annual report should also be on the website once the Minister has received and responded to it. | | |
| Action: | KJ will write a letter to the Minister to request permission to publish the BFC Annual report. | | |
| Action: | AS and MJ to discuss with the Commissioner what material will be placed on the website and advise members | | |
| Agenda item: | ***4.0 – Correspondence*** | Presenter: | **CO RFS** |
| Discussion: | See attachment “2012 ACT Bushfire Council’s Report on Bushfire Season Preparedness” | | |
| Agenda item: | ***5.0 – Chief Officers Report*** | Presenter: | **DCO RFS** |
| Discussion: | MJ welcomed Simon Katz to the ACTRFS staff team. He then gave a brief overview of the previous month and how hectic it has been with the various IMT’s etc.  **RFS Ops December 2012 - January 2013**  **Bush & Grass Fires ACT**  Significant Fires:  Mt Ginini  Sentry Box Mountain  Rendezvous Creek (8 separate lightning strikes)  Uriarra Crossing East  These fires were responded to with a total of 58 vehicles and 173 personnel who undertook over 2,300 hours of firefighting activities.  A further 96 incidents have been attended by the ACTRFS since the start of the bushfire season on 1 October, of which 6 occurred in October, 7 in November, 33 in December and 50 in January 2013. Further details are provided at Attachment A.  **IMT Activation**  A full IMT to support RFS operations was established with staff and volunteers from RFS including Parks, ACT Fire & Rescue, SES, and at times NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service.  The IMT was stood up from 6th Jan to the 9th Jan on a 24hr cycle to support operations in the Namadgi National Park and interstate deployments to NSW, from the morning of 11th Jan to the evening of 12th Jan including night shift – local and interstate operations, and again on the 18th of Jan due to elevated fire forecast and conditions.  These multi-agency teams filled all required functional roles across the IMT structure. RFS staff and Parks staff filled all key roles at different times including IC, DIC, Ops Officer & Planning Officer.  In total over 1006hrs of rostered IMT work hours were recorded as part of these operations.  **ECC Activation**  A whole of government ECC was activated in support of these operations. The ECC was fully supported with representatives from all ACT Directorates and ACTEW & Telstra at all times.  This resulted in appropriate exchange of information, support to RFS, and whole of government coordination.  **PICC Activation**  The Public Information Co-ordination Centre (PICC) was activated to support operations. The PICC is run out of the ESA headquarters from a dedicated room on the ground floor which has full operability to enable rapid dissemination of information to the press, the government and through social media content.  **Interstate Deployment**   * ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) sent a taskforce of one Group Officer Vehicle and seven medium tankers and crew to the bushfire that occurred near Yass. Crews worked on the fireground for 3 day and 3 night shifts. * ACTRFS sent one Group Officer Vehicle and 5-7 Light Tankers on a four day deployment to assist the NSWRFS in fire operations near Cooma, NSW. * ACTRFS sent 2 Group Officer Vehicles, 4 Heavy Tankers and 1 Medium Tanker over 1 evening shift to assist with the Mt Fairy fires in Tallaganda, NSW. * ACTRFS sent 2 Group Officer Vehicles, 10 Heavy Tankers and 1 Bulk Water Carrier over 1 evening shift, 1 morning shift and 1 day shift to assist with the Sandhills Road fires near Bungendore, NSW   **Storm Operations**  In addition to the response to bush and grass fires, the ACTRFS also assisted the SES during a number significant storm events in the ACT during January. ACTRFS crews cleared over 100 Requests for Assistance received by the SES during the storms.  **Public Events/Community Awareness**  During the period the ACTRFS has also participated in a number of public and community events including:   * Summernats – providing information on the ACTRFS and volunteering; * The 2003 10 year Anniversary Memorial Service at the ACT Bushfire Memorial * Set-up of a display at the Mt Stromlo observatory to promote and educate the public on bushfire safety; * Participating in the Kids with Cancer Convoy – 30 vehicles and crews joined the convoy from Mitchell to Tuggeranong and provided advice on bushfire safety to the large crowds that were in attendance; and * Provided support to the opening of the National Arboretum.   **New recruit enquiries**  The elevated fire danger over the January period, along with significant exposure of the ACTRFS through the media has resulted in an influx of people wanting to join the ACTRFS and become a volunteer fire-fighter. We have received over 240 expressions of interest and are in the process of responding to these.  A new recruit course is currently underway with 22 participants who will receive their Basic Fire-fighter training over the next 2 weeks, after which they will be assessed and become probationary fire-fighters if they are deemed to be competent. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***6.0 – BFC Yearly Plan*** | Presenter: | **Members** |
| Discussion: | The BFC plan for the year was discussed in detail. There are a couple of people that Kevin will ask to present at the BFC meetings before putting a calendar of events together. | | |
| Action: | KJ and MJ to put BFC meeting calendar together and send to members | | |
| Agenda item: | ***7.0 –* Proposed inspection of the Mt Ginini fire site** | Presenter: | **Members** |
| Discussion: | This inspection will take place on **Saturday 2nd March.**  SK suggests the tour takes a brief detour to view ex pine forest area (i.e. Blue Range area). Concerns of increasing fuel loads and risk associated. | | |
| Action: | NC to send out itinerary to members. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***8.0 – ACTF&R redefinition of Bushfire Prone Area of the ACT*** | Presenter: | **Paul Swain** |
| Discussion: | PS tabled “A case for redefinition of the Bushfire Prone Area in the ACT”  He is hoping to draft a briefing to the Minister to recommend that he consider supporting the redefinition of the BPA. Since 2003 many of Canberra’s suburbs have undergoing significant redevelopment and are not designated as Bushfire prone. The paper provides  a brief overview of the construction requirements for bushfire protection in the ACT, drawing attention to the designation of the “Bushfire Prone Area” (BPA) as it currently exists. It is intended to recommend that the BPA be redesigned to better reflect the national trend in bushfire protection and importantly better capture the threat of bushfire to the urban interface. | | |
| Action: | Members to read and send any comments to Paul Swain ASAP. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***9.0 – Visit from the new ESA Commissioner*** | Presenter: | **Dominic Lane** |
| Discussion: | The Commissioner asked members to introduce themselves as he was interested in each individual’s role and expertise and the group if any that they represent.  He thanked the Council for submitting the 10 year report. He explained that everyone would have their own view in relation to the various recommendations of the report and that he looked forward to seeing the RFS view on that and to providing further advise to government in relation to the issues that are raised – especially on the points where there are room for improvement. The Auditor General is also taking a keen interest in this space in terms of the overall organisational preparedness of the territory for Bushfire.  The Commissioner advised us that he had had the opportunity to meet with NC and to talk about the BOP and the importance of this work and its continuance. The timeliness of the BOP and the meeting of the July deadline is of particular concern to the Commissioner to make sure that the Statutory function is in place and that everyone is clear how it works. He is very impressed by the work and the detail that is in it.  He is also very keen to assist where he can through his role and past experiences to help advocate for a safer community in terms of bushfire preparedness, response, mitigation and prevention etc.  He asked KJ if there was anything in particular that he wanted to discuss. KJ advised that this year the 10 year report was a significant piece of work and that the next version of the Strategic Bush Management Plan (SBMP) is to follow. They agreed that the more the consultation etc in a public sense the better in regards to ‘driving’ the BOP’.  There was more discussion about the big challenge in getting the community involved and to change their attitude when it comes to bushfire preparedness. Especially when most of the Canberra community feel that they will not be affected by bushfire.  The Commissioner explained the importance of fire ecology and the balance between burning the bush and maintaining it. It is crucial to maintain our biodiversity and we need to understand how to protect our city without compromising other natural values. NC agreed that their (TAMS) biggest challenge is balancing this.  He noted that the ESA had budget pressures but he will certainly provide the support needed to undertake the necessary functions of the Council and is happy to take advice through AS on additional projects that the Council needs to undertake that will be beneficial to the Territory.  KJ questioned the visibility of Council reports and asked if they can be made available to the public as people keep asking for them. The Commissioner needs to get more guidance before advising the Council.  KJ invited the Commissioner to all of the BFC meetings. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***10.0 – Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre*** | Presenter: | **Neil Cooper** |
| Discussion: | NC discussed the importance of keeping the Bushfire CRC in operation.  The Bushfire CRC was establish in 2003, it has completed a diverse range of research and achieved many key outcomes. It promotes individual agencies to maintain their own research. They have had up to 30 PHD students doing fire and landscape research. At the moment the Commonwealth funding for the CRC will stop in 2013. There was a proposal to change it to an ‘Institute” but this has since been cancelled and it’s been overtaken by National Emergency Management plan to get a ‘Disaster resilience” CRC up instead. A number of Fire agencies are concerned that replacing the Bushfire CRC with a Disaster Resilience CRC is that ‘Fire’ is going to be a very small part of the research and will be driven by Emergency management instead. Also, even if this **does** happen it will not be until 2014 and there will be no research what so ever for over 12 months.  NC stated that we are in one of the three most fire prone regions in the world and our fire research has been used internationally. The head of the BCRC has been pushing at trying to get an institute model up and is starting to get support from some Ministers. NC feels that we should also show our support and would like to Council to write a letter to the Prime Minister. | | |
| Action: | TB will write a letter to the Prime Minister in support of the Bushfire CRC’s continued funding and moving toward an “Institute’. | | |
|  | ***11.0 – Other*** | Presenter: | **Neil Cooper** |
| Discussion: | NC advised the Council that Parks only had 20 Hazard Reduction burns to go (about 20000 HA) This is the first time that burns have been considered during Summer. Next Tuesday they are planning to do another burn depending on the weather. They are taking every opportunity possible.  SK raised that as he is shortly to commence as an employee of the ACT RFS, his ongoing membership on the BFC Council may not be appropriate. | | |
| Action: | MJ to approach the Minister to seek his views on this matter. | | |
|  | TB expressed concern that the Parks supertanker (Parks 16) was being taken out of service mid way through the fire season. MJ noted that Rivers 19 now provided the capacity for carting large amounts of water. PB noted that Parks 16 had probably been doing more work than many of the other tankers and had been seen at most fires for water cartage. The tanker also has an operational fire fighting capacity if needed. ***For the information of Council, subsequent to this meeting, Parks 16 has been retired and will be auctioned through Pickles auctions.*** | | |
| Action: | TB asked for a raised a concern about the sale of Parks 16 and asked for a rationale behind the decision | | |
|  | ***11.0 – Next meeting*** | Presenter: | **Secretariat** |
|  | The meeting was closed at 7.00pm. The next meeting is scheduled for 6th Mar 2013. | | |

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| RFS LOGO.png act BUSHFIRE COUNCIL  implementation of ACTION ITEMS |
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**~Principles~**

* The register will include all action items that have yet to be implemented or where implementation is in progress. The status of implementation should be reviewed at each Bushfire Council meeting.
* The status update information is the only information that will be regularly updated in the relevant column. The only exception to this is if a revised completion date is suggested, the status must clearly detail rationale for this change.
* Status of implementation will continue to be regularly updated until action item is fully implemented.
* Action items will only be indicated as “Complete” after due consideration by the Bushfire Council.

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| **Action Item / Issue1** | **Originating Meeting date** | **Responsibility** | **Proposed / Revised completion date** | **General Comment** | **Status Update** |
| 1. Discuss the Councils budget allocation in relation to Council members | 5/9/12 | Kevin Jeffery  Andrew Stark | **Mar 13** | AS and KJ to meet and discuss | Ongoing |
| 2. Provide the two calendars (RFS Community Ed and the ESA Public Education) to members | 2/5/12 | Andrew Stark | **February 2013** | ESA Community Group are now developing the 2013 Calendar and will be circulated out of session | Just waiting for the Media Calendar to be finalized. |
| 3. Chase up whether we have received the Ministers response for both the 10 year report AND the Annual report then circulated to members | 6/2/13 | Kevin Jeffery | **March 2013** |  |  |
| 4. Write a letter to the Minister to request permission to publish the BFC Annual report. | 6/2/13 | Kevin Jeffery | **March 2013** |  |  |
| 5.Discuss with the Commissioner what material will be placed on the website and advise members | 6/2/13 | Andrew Stark  Michael Joyce | **March 2013** |  |  |
| 6. Draft BFC meeting calendar for this year and send to members | 6/2/13 | Kevin Jeffery  Michael Joyce | **March 2013** |  |  |
| 7. Email itinerary for the Mt Ginnini Field trip to members. | 6/2/13 | Neil Cooper | **20/2/2013** | POSTPONED DUE TO BAD WEATHER. NEW DATE TO BE IDENTIFIED |  |
| 8. Write a letter to the Prime Minister in support of the Bushfire CRC’s continued funding and moving toward an “Institute’. | 6/2/13 | Tony Bartlett | **March 2013** |  |  |
| 9. Members to read the ***‘Redefinition of Bushfire Prone Area of the ACT’*** *as tabled by the CO ACTF&R* and send any comments to Paul Swain ASAP. | 6/2/13 | Members | **15/2/13** |  |  |
| 10. Seek the Ministers view on Simon Katz still being a member of the BFC now that he is an ACTRFS Staff member | 6/2/13 | Michael Joyce | **March 2013** |  |  |
| 11. Rationale on the sale of Parks16 to be provided to Council members | 6/2/13 | Andrew Stark/  Commissioner | **March 2013** |  |  |