



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 4 November 2020 4pm-7pm

WebEx

Members Present

Sarah Ryan – Chair
Natarsha Jakubaszek – Deputy Chair
Tony Bartlett – Member
Cathy Parsons – Member
Marion Leiba – Member
David Snell – Member
Jeremy Watson – Member
Nick Lhuede – Member
Kylie Coe - Member
Steve Angus – Member
Bhiamie Williamson – Member

Officials Present

Georgeina Whelan – ESA Commissioner
Ray Johnson – ESA Deputy Commissioner
Rohan Scott – A/g Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS)
Justin Foley, A/g Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)

Invited Guest(s):

Neil Cooper - Senior Director Land Strategy and Environment
Justin Leonard – Research Leader, Bushfire Adaptation (CSIRO)

Secretariat:

Kerri Clarke – Executive Officer, Commissioner’s Office (until 31 Dec 2020)
Tara Bucknall – Executive Officer, Commissioner’s Office (from 1 Jan 2021)

Apologies:

David Foot, Executive Branch Manager Risk & Planning
Glenn Brewer – A/g Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue

Minutes

Item

Presenter

1. Acknowledgement of country

Chair

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 all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the meeting.

The Chair reminded Council members (and invited officials and guests) that there is an expectation for everyone to uphold values that are important for everyone to work together.

These values are based upon the four ACT Public Service values of:

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Innovation

Council members agreed that all members (including invited officials and guests) should uphold these values at all BFC meetings.

2. Welcome (Introductions, apologies, and nomination of member to monitor the performance checklist) **Chair**

Executive Branch Manager, David Foot and Chief Officer, ACTF&R were apologies for this meeting.

3. Declarations of interest **Chair**

Nil.

4. Acceptance of minutes and actions from previous meeting **Chair**

The previous minutes from the August, September and October meetings were reviewed by Council. All minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of events with minor amendments accepted and made.

Action Item 0411-01	Action Officer/ Due
The Council requested a copy of the Annual Report from the Conservation Research Branch in PCS that includes the results of monitoring the ecological impacts of planned burning.	Ian Walker

5. Correspondence for noting **Chair**

Nil

6. Report on activities attended on behalf of Council since the last meeting **Chair**

Nil. The Chair noted that there will be an SBMP Governance meeting tomorrow afternoon (Friday 6 November 2020).

7. Quarterly BOP Report **Justin Foley**

Council were advised that the Quarterly BOP report has not yet been released. Due to tight time frames for the approval process and the data entry requirements, Council agreed that this agenda item can be held over to the next meeting in December.

Action Item 0411-02	Action Officer/ Due
There will be an amendment to the BFC Business Plan to move the Quarterly BOP Report to December rather than the November meeting. This will allow for the tight time frames PCS experience in the approval process and data entry requirements for the BOP.	Chair

8. Presentation: Today's building research preparing cities for a more severe bushfire climate **Justin Leonard (CSIRO)**

Invited guest Justin Leonard provided a presentation to Council on *'Today's building research preparing cities for a more severe bushfire climate'*. The presentation described a number of fire modelling tools and data sources that are being packaged up by CSIRO in a national project for use by all states and territories. The package has the capacity to model bushfires under a range of future warming climate scenarios, and its fine scale modelling, down to 20m, will enable more sophisticated modelling of the passage of bushfire in built up areas. PCS acknowledged that the Phoenix model they currently use for predicting fire spread cannot achieve this resolution and they will pick up these newer tools when they become available. The presentation also touched on developments in building standards in fire prone areas. The Chair thanked Justin for his presentation.

9. Revisions to BFC Business Plan and Meeting procedure **Chair**

The Chair advised that this paper is to assist in streamlining procedures and to agree on an altered structure for the BFC Business Plan for 2021.

Council agreed that there need to be a degree of flexibility around delivery of requested items as time

pressures are sometimes evident

The Chair proposed to Council that a presentation from an outside source occur perhaps every other meeting. Council agreed to this proposal for inclusion into the Business Plan. Council also agreed to identify some strategic issues that it would like presentations on in the 2021 Business Plan.

Action Item 0411-03	Action Officer/ Due
When producing the business plan for the December meeting, BFC members to draft a set of strategic issues for review.	ALL Members/ Due Prio to December Meeting.

1. Proposal about SBMP governance:

The Commissioner advised that she was supportive of a cross-designed, collaborative approach to monitoring the SBMP action items. Council agreed that the SBMP Governance Committee is the auditing body of the SBMP and it will be asked to provide consolidated reports on the progress of actions to Council twice a year, in March and September.

The Commissioner further advised that the SBMP will become a part of SEMSOG as an auditable document, ensuring that action item owners can be held accountable for their action items.

The proposal to develop an approach to evaluating how the actions collectively contribute to achieving the objectives was agreed by Council and the CO RFS agreed to further discuss this work with the Chair.

Action Item 0411-09	Action Officer/ Due
The Chair and CO RFS will further discuss how to develop an approach to evaluating achievement of SBMP objectives.	Chair/ CO RFS

2. Proposal for Attendance:

The Council and invited officials agreed to the proposal that –

- the Chief Officer RFS (ESA) and the Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service (EPSDD) be invited to be present through every meeting.
- the Executive Group Manager, Fire, Forests and Roads, ACT Parks and Conservation Service be invited to be present for items beyond their direct responsibilities if discussion of those items would benefit from their expertise.
- the Commissioner, ESA and the Executive Branch Manager, Environment, EPSDD have a standing invitation to attend any items/sections of meeting that are of interest to them; and/or may be specifically invited by Council to attend particular items.
- presenters will be invited to attend for their items only. This will require the Chair, with the cooperation of members and presenters, to manage meeting times carefully.
- staff with a close interest in a particular item remain welcome.

3. Proposal for Order of Business:

Council agreed the proposed order of business for Council meetings.

Council also agreed that ESA could provide a combined RFS and Commissioner's report instead of two separate

reports.

Council agreed that these reports are an excellent resource for its work but signalled that they do not have to be detailed.

Council agreed that the Council's Performance Checklist can be removed from the agenda, with the Chair verbally requesting that members provide feedback on the meeting during closing comments.

In camera meetings were discussed and Council agreed that it would schedule periodic in camera meetings next year.

Action Item 0411-04	Action Officer/ Due
When producing the 2021 Business Plan at the December meeting, Council to include a schedule for in-camera meetings	ALL Members/ Due Prior to December Meeting.

4. Managing Action Items:

Council agreed that the set of incomplete action items from previous meetings, plus the draft action items from the most recent meeting should be distributed to Council members and action officers quickly after the meeting so they do not have to wait for circulation of the minutes.

5. Minutes:

Council agreed to the proposed changes of the style of the minutes. Key points would be summarised, and Council resolutions noted.

10. Standing Item – ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan

Chair

The Chair advised that Council include an agenda item on the ACT Bushfire Council Plan in the December meeting.

Action Item 0411-05	Action Officer/ Due
For next meeting Council will include an agenda item to work on the ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan	Secretariat

11. Standing Item – Reports from Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Governance Committee

CM'Tee Chair

Nil reports. Meeting scheduled for tomorrow (Friday 6 November 2020)

12. Officials' reports for noting:

Officials

12.1 (formerly 16.1) EPSDD Report

EPSDD

This report was taken as read with the following added:

- PCS advised that the tankers would be visiting Jerrabomberra Wetlands over NAIDOC week and invited Council to attend and view the new artwork on the vehicles.
- Council noted that the annual Council field trip will likely follow a similar route to the recent field trip undertaken with the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA). PCS advised Council that there may be minor route changes due to ongoing flooding damage in the area.
- PCS advised Council on the slashing process for this year noting that the rains have produced a faster than usual grass growth which will become a fire hazard when it cures beyond 70%.

Action Item 0411-06	Action Officer/ Due
A presentation on the draft RFMP will be given to Council at its February meeting	Justin Foley

12.2 (formerly 16.2) Commissioner's Report

Commissioner

Nothing to report this month, business as usual.

The following item was discussed at Agenda Item 7, 3 February 2021 meeting with agreement from Council that this occurred during at this item and should be recorded as such. Action Item 0212-05	Action Officer / Due
Council requested an update on the preparation of the Statement of Resources and Capabilities for SBMP4, as required by Section 76 of the Emergencies Act, noting that previously Council had been advised that this would be presented to Council in October 2020.	CO RFS

16.3 Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service Report

CO ACTRFS

The report was taken as read.

Council raised the issue of the risk to Canberra from grass fires this summer, given the enormous plant growth response to near record spring rainfall to date. While different land managers are taking actions, there is no tenure-blind assessment of the vulnerable areas as a whole. It was agreed that the new RFS Strategic Planner and PCS would collaborate on such an assessment.

Action Item 0411-07	Action Officer/ Due
The RFS Strategic Planner and PCS will collaborate in producing an assessment of grassland areas to the north and west of Canberra suburbs on a tenure blind basis to identify those areas that present the highest risk to urban areas and to critical infrastructure from bushfires; and indicate what actions are proposed to reduce these risks. The findings should be presented to Bushfire Council at the December meeting.	CO RFS/ Justin Foley

13. Finalisation of the Annual Preparedness Report

Chair

Council members undertook this agenda item in-camera.

14. Any other business

Chair

Action Item 0411-08	Action Officer/ Due
Council requested a report on the status of the recommendations in the Operational Review and the Royal Commission in February	Secretariat

15. Review and adoption of action items from this meeting – completed.

Chair

16. In camera meeting if required –

Chair

In camera meeting occurred: See agenda item 13

17. Council's performance checklist

Chair

Not applicable.

18. Close

Chair

The meeting concluded 6:40pm

Next meeting: 4pm, 2 December 2020

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Appendix A

ACTION ITEMS – ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

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Action Items			At 20 October 2020	
Ref	ACTION	DUE	ACTION OFFICER	STATUS UPDATE
0212-05	<p>Council requested an update on the preparation of the Statement of Resources and Capabilities for SBMP4, as required by Section 76 of the Emergencies Act, noting that previously Council had been advised that this would be presented to Council in October 2020.</p> <p>NOTE: Action item 0212-05 moved to November 2020 meeting on agreement of Council.</p> <p>Reference Agenda Item 7, ACT Bushfire Council 3 February 2021</p>	February Meeting	CO RFS	0212 – Action Opened
0411-09	The Chair and CO RFS will further discuss how to develop an approach to evaluating achievement of SBMP objectives.	Next Meeting		0411- Action Opened
0411-08	Council requested review and discussion on Operational Review and Royal Commission in February	Next Meeting		0411 – Action Opened
0411-07	The RFS Strategic Planner and PCS collaborate to assess grassland areas to the north and west of Canberra suburbs on a tenure blind basis to identify those areas that present the highest risk to urban areas and critical infrastructure from bushfires and indicate what actions are proposed to reduce these risks. The findings should be presented to Bushfire Council at the December meeting.	Next Meeting		0411 – Action Opened
0411-06	RFMP presentation due in February Council meeting due to time constraints	Next Meeting	Justin Foley	0411 – Action Opened
0411-05	For next meeting Council will include an agenda item to work on the ACT Bushfire Council Plan	Next Meeting	ALL	0411 – Action Opened
0411-04	When producing the business plan for the December meeting, BFC members to include a schedule of in-camera meetings	PRIOR TO Next Meeting	ALL	0411 – Action Opened

0411-03	When producing the business plan for the December meeting, BFC members to draft a set of strategic issues for review.	PRIOR TO Next Meeting	ALL	0411 – Action Opened
0411-02	There will be an amendment to the BFC Business Plan to move the Quarterly BOP Report to December rather than the November meeting. This will allow for the tight time frames PCS experience in the approval process and data entry requirements for the BOP.	Next Meeting	Chair	0411 – Action Opened
0411-01	The Council requested a copy of the Annual Report from Conservation Team on Research Monitoring.	Next Meeting	Ian Walker	0411 – Action Opened
0710-05 (In Camera)	Chair to prepare a discussion paper and draft Business Plan for circulation to Council members prior to the next meeting.	Next Meeting	The Chair	0710 – Action Opened (In Camera Meeting) 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0710-04 (In Camera)	All members to provided updates and edits of their respective chapter to David Snell by Wednesday 14 October	14 Oct	All Members	0710 – Action Opened (In Camera Meeting) 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0710-03 (In Camera)	The Chair will draft a letter of response for Council's consideration, noting the Council is working as intended under legislation, and to clarify the Commissioner's position in relation to the status of the advice Council provides in the exercise of its function	Next Meeting	The Chair	0710 – Action Opened (In Camera Meeting) 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0710-02 (In Camera)	Chair to progress a guideline for the attendance of appropriate officials.	Next Meeting	The Chair	0710 – Action Opened (In Camera Meeting) 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0710-01 (In Camera)	Cathy Parsons to contact Ian Walker to follow up on land management issues	Next Meeting	Cathy Parsons	0710 – Action Opened (In Camera Meeting) 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0209-08	The Chair to officially write to the Commissioner to explore the option of having an applicant from the previous round of Council appointments possibly fill the position recently vacated by Margaret Moreton	Next Meeting	The Chair	0209- Action Opened 0411 - ongoing
0209-07	The Chair to provide additional agenda items for October meeting, noting space for assembly report, Denman Prospect, a follow up on S3959 and a possible presentation	Next Meeting	The Chair	0209- Action Opened 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0209-06	The CO RFS to provide a date for the BOM Report out of session	Next Meeting	CO RFS	0209- Action Opened 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE

0209-05	The CO RFS to provide a date to Council out of session for the Annual Planning Forum once the date has been decided.	Next Meeting	CO RFS	0209 – Action Opened 0411 – CO RFS will follow up out of session as this meeting has already occurred. The Minutes of the meeting should be forwarded to Council.
0209-04	Justin Foley invited Council member Steve Angus to discuss recovery with him in an out of session meeting to address some of Steve’s concerns. Justin noted that recovery is his jurisdiction. Council member Nick Lhuede and Deputy Commissioner to be included in this process.	Next Meeting	Justin Foley	0209- Action Opened 0411 – Has not yet finalised, timing to be arranged.
0209-03	In relation to the Operational Review, Council will consolidate their comments and discuss them with the Commissioner and mention them in the preparedness report	Next Meeting	The Chair	0209- Action Opened 0411 – Ongoing
0209-02	Justin Foley to provide Council with an overview of what goes into drafting a BOP when available.	Next Meeting	Justin Foley/ CO RFS	0209 – Action Opened 0411 - Ongoing
0209-01	Council member Tony Bartlett to provide preferred amendments to the secretariat for August meeting minutes before final approval from Council can be sought.	Next Meeting	Tony Bartlett	0209 - Action opened. 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
0508-10	CO ACTRFS to explore option on the possible field trip to Orroral Valley fire in October, in line with Covid restrictions. Itinerary and transport to be drafted if going ahead.	Oct meeting	RFS/ EPSDD	0107 – Action opened. 0209 – Ongoing. 0411 – Planning in process. CLOSED COMPLETE
0508-08	CO ACT RFS to pass on to the TCCS team the request for data to be included in the reporting of objectives. For inclusion into the Council report to the Minister.	Sept Meeting	CO RFS/ TCCS	0107 – Action opened. 0209 – RFS have actioned, however a response has not yet been received from TCCS. 0411 – Ongoing
0508-04	Actions from resolution papers to be added to August 2020 minutes once response is received from EPSDD Council to meet out of session to discuss resolution proposal, if necessary	Sept Meeting	Secretariat/ Chair	0107 – Action opened. 0209 – Not decided. 0411 – Ongoing
20191002-2	Documents from June to December 2018 to be put on an online platform 20200603-04 Action: Arrange ACT Government login for all Bushfire Council Members to access meeting papers and presentations on ESA G Drive	Sept Meeting	Commissioner	0107 – Council advised that ESA will be providing Council members with an iPad and SharePoint access all papers to an online platform. Members will also be provided with an ACT Gov logon. 0209 – close to completion

				0411 – Council members to collect iPads and receive refresher course on how to use Microsoft Teams. COMPLETE CLOSED
2020304-13	ESA to provide formal advice on public comment conflict of interest for Council members.	August Meeting	Secretariat	In progress – agenda item for discussion. Someone from ACT GOV to provide input in what is expected. 0508 – Item to be added to September meeting for discussion 0209 – Ongoing 0411 – CLOSED COMPLETE
20200406-13	The CO ACTRFS to seek further advice in relation to making BFC reports into the level of bushfire preparedness (each bushfire season) that are provided to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services be publicly available on the ESA website; including any restrictions on reports from recent years.	Ongoing	Commissioner and CO ACTRFS	Commissioner advised this is ongoing– Tony Bartlett to provide details to publish. 0508- SR to discuss with MO 0209 – Ongoing 0411 - Ongoing

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Action Items (CLOSED)

Ref	As at 4 November
20200603-12.3	Greg Potts to arrange a meeting report on Farm Fire Wise (FFW) in the Bushfire Abatement Zone (BAZ) with data and an explanation of the constraints to meeting the target of 100%.
20200603-8	Provide Council with a copy of the draft After Action Review Report and add to the July Agenda
0508-01	The Chair will formally write to the Minister declaring the conflict of interest
0508-02	Council requested an additional agenda item for the September meeting to discuss guidelines around public comment conflict of interest for Council members.
0508-03	Ian Walker to prompt response from EPSDD in a timely manner before the commencement of caretaker period, and provide advice back to the Council
0508-05	EPSDD/ PCS will advise Council on a date for the BOP out of session working group meeting.
0508-06	CO ACTF&R to provide statistics and details on the success of the Juvenile fire awareness and intervention program
0508-07	SBMP Obj 1 (1.3) not provided at meeting. This will be carried over to the next meeting in September. A presentation will be provided to secretariat
0508-09	EPSDD to provide presentation to secretariat by September meeting for Obj 9 (9.2)
20200603-12.2	Send Council the relevant transcripts of the Royal Commission hearings when they are available and add to the July Agenda.
20200406-08 (3)	Neil Cooper to arrange a Phoenix model analysis of the likely impacts on Denman Prospect from a bushfire burning through the forest blocks located to its west, following discussions with Tony Bartlett and Nick Lhuede on the specific modelling requirements.
20200406-08 (1)	The BFC Chair to write to EPSDD Planning to request an update on where the Cabinet Submission is up to in relation to AS 3959:2018 being incorporated into the ACT Territory Plan and to request that a briefing be provided to Council on the agreements with developers on the fire protection measures to be applied at the final western boundaries of the suburbs of Denman Prospect and Whitlam, including the expected locations of edge roads and asset protection zones and the details of the proposed thinning of the red stringybark forest.
0107-02 (2020)	Council requested an adaptive management (Objective 9), noting that information for this objective was not adequately provided to Council.
0107-01 (2020)	Chair to review and discuss options with Margaret out of session and work on a conflict of interest plan on how to manage the conflict moving forward. To be discussed further at next meeting. ITEM CLOSED 05082020
20200603-9	Facilitate meetings pre and post Council Meetings with key stakeholders to provide Council access with the information they have requested in line with their business plan. The Commissioner, CO ACTRFS and Chair to discuss the outcome out of session.
20200406-07	The BFC Chair to draft a response to the Minister for Police and Emergency Service (MPES) seeking clarification to his response to the recommendations in Council's 2018-19 Bushfire Season Preparedness Report.
20191204-9	ESA to advise Council if they provided comment on the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan, and if so, provide a copy of those comments to Council.

200304-10	EPSDD PCS to provide the Secretariat with an electronic version of the BOP Quarterly Report to be circulated to Council members out of session.
20200406-08 (2)	Secretariat to add to the June BFC Business Plan a presentation by Greg Potts and Scott Seymour on the status of the Bushfire Management Standards (including an ACT & NSW comparison) and the review of Fire Management Zones. Greg Potts undertook to provide his paper/presentation prior to the meeting.
20200406-08 (4)	Secretariat to send the ACT Bushfire Management Standards to Council Members.
20200406-08 (5)	After each BFC meeting, a short meeting between the CO ACTRFS the Council members whose focus objectives are in the Business Plan two months ahead will be held to discuss and agree on the nature of the information that BFC would like presented at that meeting.
20200406- 12	Secretariat to update the BFC Business Plan to reflect requests for information arising from the May meeting and to add Nick Lhuede as a Council member who will focus on objectives 3, 7, 8 11 of the SBMP version 4.
20200406-14 (1)	Secretariat to ensure the WebEx meeting invite and details is sent out to all Council Member and Officials.
20200406-14 (2)	The Chair, David Snell and Tony Bartlett to review the section in the BFC Terms of Reference that requires that after a new SBMP is made the Commissioner must conduct an assessment of the adequacy of the resources to deliver the Plan and must give that assessment to the BFC and the Minister; and then provide a recommendation from BFC to the Commissioner and the CO ACTRFS.