

## ACT Bushfire Council

### Meeting Minutes

1<sup>st</sup> May 2008

3.00pm

**Conference Room  
Air Support Operations Centre  
4 Point Cook Avenue Fairbairn**

#### **Attendance:**

Kevin Jeffery	Chair/ Member
Peter Kanowski	Member
Tony Bartlett	Member
Tony Fearnside	Member
Simon Katz	Member
Michael Lonergan	Member
Stephen Wise	Member
Conrad Barr	ex Officio (FB)
Jenny Andreev	Secretariat
Darren Cutrupi	Invited Guest

#### **Apologies:**

Tim McGuffog	ex Officio (DO RFS)
Brian Parry	ex Officio (Deputy Commissioner ESA)
Gregor Manson	ex Officio (Commissioner ESA)

#### **1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman**

- The Chair opened the meeting at 1620pm.

#### **2. Apologies**

- Apologies were received from Tim McGuffog, Brian Parry and Gregor Manson

#### **3. Minutes from Previous Meetings**

- The members agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were good.
- Amendments to the following items were suggested:-
  - **Agenda item 5.4 - Natural Disaster Mitigation Program, paragraph 4** - *A survey has been done on the towers and a report has been submitted with what is required of the towers to bring them up to standard. The Commissioner believes that this would be a good project to put up. TAMS will probably continue with their upgrading strategy of the fire trails.*

Members suggested that the survey was probably meant to be standard and asked which standards were being referred to. It was suggested that it possibly referred to the OH&S standards i.e. talking about access stairs, but however not sure. Members agreed that “survey” should be changed to “standards” and ask TMc to clarify.

- **Agenda item 5.1- BOP Update, paragraph 2** - *TMc explained that the initial burn proposal was based on the fuel assessment, which takes all fuels into account mid level bark etc. There is quite a bit of fuel at the mid storey level but none on the ground so the only way to get it to burn would be on a day of high fire danger so the proposed burn has been cancelled.*

Members requested that minutes be recorded in either past or present tense.

The motion was moved by SK and seconded by ML.

### **Action Items**

- **Item 5.4 - Hydrological effect (31 Jan 08)** - Commissioner invited Malcolm Gill to provide a presentation at the next meeting. Malcolm was unavailable therefore this item to be held over until the next meeting. Members were reminded to watch Catalyst tonight on the ABC. DC asked if they would like the media section to tape the program. KJ said yes.
- **Item 5.4 - NDMP (27 Mar 08)** - Commissioner was to provide TMc with a list of bids to be circulated via Council Members for review. Members have not been provided with this list therefore item to be held over until the next meeting.

**ACTION:** K J to remind Commissioner.

- **Item 8.1 - AEMC communiqué** - Commissioner was to provide an email of this document to Council Members for review. Members have not been provided with this list therefore item to be held over until the next meeting. KJ to speak to the Commissioner.
- DC explained that the communiqué was about the AEMCCommunity Safety Working Group research into community education programs of which the Commissioner is Chair of the National Committee. Nothing has been done on it for a number of years, however phase 1 is completed and work has commenced on phase 2. DC will forward the document to Council Members.

**ACTION:** KJ will find out what the initiatives are that the Commissioner was going to circulate to Council as per action item 8.1 (bottom of pg 5).

### **4. Business Arising**

- **Item 4.5 - Time of meetings (27 Mar 08)** - Note change to meeting times.
- **Item 5.3 - Bushfire season closed (27 Mar 08)** - Bushfire season closed at the end of March, however a TOBAN was put in place the following day.

- **Item 7.2 - New nominations for Council** - KJ advised the members that five nominations have been recommended. These have been provided with advice to the Minister regarding all existing memberships that are coming up for renewal remain, those being PJ and SK with the exception of Joe Matthews (Community Rep), who hasn't attended a meeting for some time.

The nominations were provided to the Minister in order of recommendation. KJ, BP and the Commissioner who would like to get environmental, conservation and community representatives with practical and scientific experience, agreed to these. The Minister is currently looking at these and hopefully they will be finalised within the next month or so. Additionally, they will also need to go through Cabinet for approval.

Current memberships expire on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 08. SW's membership is due to expire at the end of the year and this will need to be looked at due to how many meetings he attends. The current number plus the five nominations will bring the total up to the number allowed under the Act.

- **Item 5.9 - South Australian Coroner's** - ML asked about the South Australian Coronial findings that BP was going to discuss in a meeting. The report has been circulated to members. KJ said that it has been discussed briefly but can be added to the agenda for the next meeting. TF suggested that it be discussed with Brian to see if he wanted to say any more about it. CB said that he thought BP wanted to discuss the lessons that may need to be evaluated for application locally.

**ACTION:** To be put onto the agenda for the next meeting and see what BP wants to discuss.

- **Item 5.2 - Station relocation** - KJ advised that this was pushed back. Conrad advised that extensive revision has been undertaken of the last report provided and that consultation is to be done in the next week or so. Revised due to additional evidence.
- **Item 5.7 - Tanker** - KJ said that the extra heavy tanker was mentioned to the Minister the other night. There is a small revision of specs to be signed off by captains to make it a firefighting strike vehicle. KJ will try and hurry the process through ROAG and once it has been signed it will be ordered from the new financial year budget. It was thought that it was coming out of this financial year's budget however; KJ confirmed that the monies are from this financial year but it won't be ordered until the next. CB advised that if there was a cab chassis available we could take delivery of that in this financial year but it didn't happen so the monies will be carried over into next financial year.

KJ raised an additional item, mention of overall large tanker replacement, (seven) concern that fleet or someone has decided on automatic transmissions. It was thought that the Captains had gone against that idea about six months ago. Tony Hill has written a comprehensive brief this week. KJ said that it is \$20,000 per vehicle to be converted to auto. CB advised that the ACT FB is going with the auto transmission. Tony Hill's report talks about CFA and CFS who have plenty of urban edge vehicles, interface vehicles that are automatic which they are happy with but haven't been tested off road.

There are major concerns about buying these vehicles and using them in the mountains.

## **5. Agenda Items**

### **5.1 Darren Cutrupi - ESA Media & Community Info Business Plan**

- DC thanked the Council for the invite and is happy to take feedback and questions relating to media issues.
- So far this financial year, the Commissioner has allocated funding towards the bushfire campaign and to date, approximately \$20,000 has been spent on the bushfire season campaign (early December 2007). This included - commercials on WIN TV, the local radio stations and the Chronicle. This was also part of the Business Plan.
- DC is in the process of reviewing the Business Plan for the next financial year and is keen to gain feedback from Council on what could or should be done to get the message out to the community and what the message should be. The current message to the community is *“to prepare their properties, that the ESA is constantly training and ready to respond, however the community need to do their bit”*. DC asked if we need to move away from that message and go in another direction or should it be reinforced? *Feedback on this would be appreciated.*
- There are also other initiatives, eg the Canberra Show attendance. DC is open to any suggestions the Committee may have. DC will also ask for feedback from the Brigades and the Captains. DC will ask BP to communicate this through ROAG. DC would like to get this together in the next month, month and a half so that he can approach the Commissioner to request funding from the ESA to run the campaign.
- DC has accessed some NSWRF Bushfire Campaign footage for winter fire safety in conjunction with the NSWFB. DC was given permission by NSWFB for ESA to edit and use it for our own local specifics and to put our own logo on it.
- TF said that timing is important, not necessarily according to the calendar but according to the fuel drying out. DC suggested that a brain storming session be set up to ask each agency of their ideas, priorities and timing for the relevant seasons in regard to community education for the next 12 months. DC is working on the plan to be finalised by July and have everything done within the following month or two. This would include the commercials and scripts done, briefs prepared for the Minister, the Minister’s diary cleared to go ahead as soon as required.
- KJ said that another factor could be the hazard reduction burns happening in September where there would be a lot of smoke around so maybe start preparations then. DC said one of the ideas that was discussed by the services community education representatives is where to do an all hazards approach in maybe August to say prepare your homes for emergencies, then do the storm and then the bush fire separately. ML stated that the all hazards campaign is confusing. DC suggested this may be because of the use of terms like “all hazards”, we know what it means but the community doesn’t. ML said that in a previous meeting he suggested there is a need to look at Victoria. ML thinks that there is not enough emphasis on that fact that ESA cannot protect everyone. That we will do all we can to assist but that the responsibility remains with the community to protect their assets whether they are on the urban edge or in a rural situation.

- PK said that the Bushfire CRC is doing effective work on community communication and asked DC if this has been feed back into what we are doing. PK said that the key message should be joint responsibility but he is not sure if this is what the community is hearing. So PK suggests that we be informed on the most recent research outcomes done by the CRC and look at the best practice amongst other jurisdictions and implement them. PK said that we have particular challenges due the nature of Canberra and therefore need to look how the message is communicated in the context of Canberra. PK suggests that more money should be spent on this.
- CB said that the Emergency Plan and the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan both have as key elements a prepared and informed community and a joint responsibility. DC said that the campaign is based on getting the message, how should this be done, media, a letterbox drop. DC is keen to do a brainstorming session to look at the wording of the key message. So that once everyone is agreed on the wording it can be promulgated out so everyone will say the same thing and then DC can tell the Minister the key message to be conveyed to the community. KJ said that the information given to the public during incidents has come a long way since 2003 across the country.
- DC believes that more work is required on this area and the process between his area and the RFS and said that there during the off season there is a need to discuss this with agencies so that every one knows what the agreed processes are and follow it.
- DC said that one of the priorities in the Business Plan is to develop a media-training package. DC is trying to work out with ESA training how this can be done so it can be accredited. The package will be developed and the agencies will be asked who should do the training.
- CB said that there is an ESA policy where in each agency there are certain levels at which officers can comment to the media. A framework needs to be developed and agreed on. DC advised members that he is hoping that the package would be developed by December and used in the new-year.
- DC suggested that we work hard this summer with WIN TV and maybe take them out with crews including DC and a RFS staff, look after them as part of their media training and get footage of the work being done. It is good to have local footage to get the message across.
- ML said that the recruitment cards that went around last year were really good. Could be used again
- KJ said that the Council is happy to assist with the campaign
- KJ and TF said that the feedback should be done via the Volunteers' Newsletter. They also wanted to note that the Newsletter was very good, very informative and that it addressed moral issues. Council said that they would provide information for the newsletter. It is hoped that it will be done each fortnight.
- A request to ask DC back to a meeting prior to the bushfire season for an update on where he is up to. DC asked if he could provide feedback to the secretariat when he has a draft ready so that time can be allocated for discussion or maybe have a separate meeting to brainstorm the wording. KJ said that would be good. DC said he would circulate the draft before the meeting so that Council can read it and comment on it at the meeting
- KJ thanked DC

## **6. Correspondence**

- Nil.

## **7. General Business**

- ML mentioned the articles and letters in the Canberra Times regarding hazard reduction burning. The articles by Rosslyn Beeby and the letters by David Hortin suggested that HR burns were harmful to the environment. ML suggested that the Council develop a position paper on the benefits and costs of HR Burns and the limitations of it and say specifically that HR burns do not necessarily protect against bushfires but protect the soil from a hot fire. ML also suggested that they quote from other reports. PK suggested that the Council get a copy of the CSIRO report to see what it said. KJ is concerned that lobbyists may take this on and others who do may not support burns.

- PK said that Malcolm Gill regarding burns in catchment areas at the next meeting would inform Council.

**ACTION** –Secretariat to obtain copy of CSIRO report and distribute prior to next meeting and to be put on as an agenda item for next meeting. JA will ask Tracey to chase that up.

- KJ advised Council that SBMP2 group is doing a field trip to Melbourne to look at catchment management issues. PK said that would be a good focus for discussion at the next meeting, try and link catchment management issues with climate issues.

**ACTION:** Secretariat through Brian to find out which report that is and get a copy. KJ said that there would be a report from the SBMP group trip.

## **8. Reports**

### **8.1 Commissioner**

- Nothing to report.

### **8.2 Rural Fire Service**

- Nothing to report.

### **8.3 Fire Brigade (CB)**

- Formal launch of ten CFUs was done. This brings the total number of units to 38. Any expansion on this depends on government funding. These are a great resource and asset to the community and there is a real growth in support.
- Graduation of ACTFB 16 recruits on Wednesday 7th May 2008.
- ACTFB going through the procurement process for the medium tankers.
- CFU's and RFS volunteers will work together in incidents. The ACTFB has developed an information session for RFS Volunteers to let them know what the roles of the CFUs are. Rivers has been done.
- Involvement with control burns in the vicinity of CFU units. There has been great feed back from CFU units involved in the burns. They gained a lot from watching and working with other Fire Services and are keen and enthusiastic. This was the first

time they had seen any real action and are 100% supportive of this type of involvement.

#### **8.4 Council Members (ML & SK)**

- ML asked if UHF is going into all RFS vehicles
- CB advised that they were already programmed into (portables) zone C. The hand held TRN radios have been programmed with the 40 UHF frequencies. Done in the portables and all the vehicles have them.
- ML advised members that on the website latest BFC minutes are dated 29/11/07 and the website stated that Volunteers manned fire towers?? Need to look at these issues  
**ACTION:** DC and Commissioner to chase up
- KJ said that an email was sent today to Council members regarding the core principles of the SBMPs. Members asked to read and comment. SK asked when this would be complete. KJ advised a few months away.
- KJ advised members that the consultant for the coronial review has been employed but hasn't commenced yet due to procurement requirement of to do with his insurance certificate. He will possibly attend the next meeting.

#### **9. Confirmation of Next Meeting**

- The Chair closed the meeting at 1734pm.
- The next council meeting will be held at the ASOC on Thursday 22nd May 4pm.