

ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting Minutes

30th October 2008

4.00pm

Conference Room
ESA Headquarters, Curtin

1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman

Kevin Jeffery opened this month's meeting at 4:14pm.

2. Attendees

Brian Parry	(BP) ex Officio (Deputy Commissioner Fire & Rescue)
Tim McGuffog	(TM) ex Officio (Deputy Chief Officer ACTRFS)
Kevin Jeffery	(KJ) Chair/ Member
Tony Bartlett	(TB) Member
Tony Fearnside	(TF) Member
Michael Lonergan	(ML) Member
Simon Katz	(SK) Member
Cathy Parsons	(CP) Member
Ken Batt	(KB) Member

Kaylee McInnes (KM) Secretariat

Apologies

Peter Kanowski	(PK) Member
Gregor Manson	(GM) ex Officio (Commissioner ESA)
Christine Goonrey	(CG) Member
Marion Leiba	(ML) Member
Steven Wise	(SW) Member

CP arrive late at 4:17

Simon Katz departed at 5:25

3. Minutes of previous meeting

- ML corrected a typing error. Stationary Location to "station relocation" (Item 4.3).
- TB would like to have the following recorded into the September minutes. "South Australian CFS has developed a pod type 9000 litre Super tanker that could be applicable in the ACT".
- ML raised the issue of making the minutes public. "The Council must publish the minutes of its proceedings within in 7 days after the minutes are accepted by members of the council". The minutes have not been made public since 2007.

- Minutes accepted by Tony Bartlett, seconded by Michael Lonergan. Accepted by all.
- TM questioned Council members on the structure of the previous minutes. Accepted by all.
- Peter Kanowski needs to be added to the attendance list, instead of the Apologies.

ACTION: Minutes to be published publicly and updated accordingly as a matter of urgency.

ACTION: BFC would like to receive the minutes earlier.

ACTION: BFC would like late arrivals and earlier departures of council members to be recorded in the minutes.

4. Business Arising

4.1 Review Actions from September Meeting

- The Response to the TAMS BOP has been done.
- TM has provided the VESTA booklet to Council members
- Preseason invites were sent out by Nicole Cobb.
- A copy of the presentation from Norm Mueller has not yet been received.

4.2 Update on RFS Business Plan and staffing

- 3 Staff appointments have been made and accepted at the RFS.
- The staffing selection/interview process will be finalised by the week's end.
- Commencing dates will be determined by the new recruits due to giving notice at previous jobs.

4.3 ROAG Meeting 28/10/08 Update

- A report was given on the progress of the 'Women's Enhancement Project', which outlined some of the issues that women face in volunteer brigades. Captains were asked to go back to their brigades and collect feedback.
- A desktop fire exercise was run. It brought out some of the issues, in terms of "what people need to know, times and types of responses that need to be made".
- John Jenkins gave an update on fleet procurement. Re new High Capacity Tanker, "It was agreed upon at the last meeting that this vehicle would carry 2 persons". Since then they have contacted several suppliers, and spoken to several manufactures about the procurement of pre build parts.
- The chassis have been purchased for Tankers, and Mediums and are now sitting in Sydney. There is a wait to have paperwork signed off, but we will have all vehicles by the end of the financial year. The issues with the new exhaust systems have been resolved. The exhaust is now a vertical stack towards the back of the vehicle.

5. Listing of new Agenda items

5.1 Incident Management Arrangements for wildfire control during 2008/09

Members were taken on a tour through the Comcen, DMR and the Incident Control room. General discussion took place on communications and Incident Management arrangements in place and how things would progress as an incident escalates.

5.2 Presentation on ACT Resources and Arrangements – Tim McGuffog

- Prior to 2004, there has been no dedicated team, specific training or funding for the RAFT group. Today a budget has been allocated (approximately \$90,000 p.a. over 4 years). A group of 39 ACT members has now been formed. RAFT guidelines have been developed, along with a steering committee and a RAFT Regional working group.
- Each crew member does a fitness test, benchmarking is done with interstate colleagues to standardise training and assessment.
- The working group is the body that drives and governs the management of the RAFT operations.
- RAFT crew members need to be at the advanced fire fighting level.
- RAFT crews are made up of RFS brigade members, many from Jerrabomberra and Gungahlin. Some members are also full time employees from TAMS. Parks are keen on developing their people in the remote hazard reduction techniques using these teams.
- Training consists of exercises in GPS navigation, working safely around aircraft, hover- exit from aircraft, winch training, a high level of first aid knowledge is trained and is reassessed annually. Other training includes intermediate chainsaw training, helipad construction, remote area communications and pumping operations.
- Exercises are run twice a year; we have the highest level of training of RAFT crews in Australia.
- RAFT kits include: aviation type overalls (Nomex), helmets, rakehoes, and chainsaw winch bags.
- The future outlook is to increase the number of members to 50.

TB - made a comment on recruiting too many RAFT members, “as they tend to become disinterested when they don’t get used”. There could be another 30-40 members that could qualify to do this type of work if we need them.

CP - Asked if members received any special recognition or incentives for RAFT?

TM - responded that nothing has been put in place for special recognition but believes that kudos plays a part in enticing members to become a part of the RAFT crews.

BP - Mentioned there has been a lot of feedback from AFAC on firefighter fatigue, and we need to review our SOPs to reflect national best practice in managing fatigue. He noted that the ESA is having some difficulty in establishing practical systems to manage working times and when you apply this to a RAFT situation there is the added consideration of the physical workloads that need to be factored into fatigue management.

SK - Commented that there seems to be no consideration for the general working hours for volunteers outside of their duties as volunteer members and believes it would be much easier to manage the time of TAMS paid personnel.

CP - Inquired whether there is scope to recruit more full time employees so you're not relying so much on volunteers? The proportion should be around the other way.

ML - Agreed the essential conflict of an 8 hour shift just doesn't seem to be long enough in the instance of a campaign fires.

BP - Stated the new plan to be proposed will include extending the 8 hour shift to a maximum of 14 hours which includes travel time to and from an incident.

TM - Mentioned that someone needs to be dedicated to managing shift changes and shifts during campaign fires.

BP - Welcomes any advice on how we should manage fatigue management.

5.3 Workshop BFC Pre Season Preparedness Report to the Minister

The Pre-season preparedness report to the Minister was reviewed by members and suggested changes are to be incorporated into the report by the Chairman.

ACTION: Council would like a copy of Bob Smith's report before the next council meeting

ACTION: Brian Parry to review Bob Smith's contract to determine the agreed date the report should be completed by.

ACTION: A copy of the Minister's report to be sent to all members before it is passed on to the Minister.

6. Correspondence

Nil

7. General Business

ML- Suggested there is a problem with the progressing of issuing fire permits by Captains.

TM- A draft presentation and manual has been produced by TM. This is under review by BP. Rollout of the training and developing management protocols will be prioritised now that RFS has sufficient staff on board.

8. Reports

Ken Batt

The seasonal outlook indicators are much the same; present indicators are suggesting no signs of this season being wetter or dryer. There is a 55% chance of obtaining medium rainfall over the next 3 months.

RFS Tim McGuffog

- Arthur Sayer's Farm FireWise visits have been picking up as leases are renewed and a requirement of these is to have a fire management plan.
- 39 new volunteer recruits so far this year. Further basic training programmed on the 15th of November 2008.
- Nicole Cobb has found that an Exhibition site for the Canberra show is estimated to cost around \$1000.

Meeting Concluded at 6:20pm.

9. Confirmation of next meeting

Thursday 27th November 2008
4 Point Cook Ave, Fairbairn