



ACT
Government



ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting 4.00 pm to 7pm, Wednesday 4 October 2017
Black Mountain Meeting Room
ESA Headquarters

Council Members	Sarah Ryan (Chair)	Marion Leiba	Mick George
	Natarsha Carney (Deputy Chair)	Steve Angus	Kylie Coe
	Cathy Parsons	Margaret Moreton	
	David Snell	Bhiamie Eckford-Williamson	
Apologies	Tony Bartlett	Jeremy Watson	
Officials	Mark Jones, Acting Emergency Services Agency (ESA) Commissioner		
	Mark Brown, Chief Officer, ACT Fire and Rescue		
	Joe Murphy, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service		
	Neil Cooper, Manager, Fire, Forests and Roads, Parks and Conservation Service (PCS)		
Invited Guests	Dean Freeman, Indigenous Fire Officer Parks and Conservation Service, EPSDD		
	Greg Potts, Community Protection, ACT Rural Fire Service, ESA		
	Brian Levine, Fire, Forests and Roads, PCS		

Minutes

Agenda item: 1.0 – Welcome and Apologies

Presenter: Chair

The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians of Country and welcomed new members to the Council. There was an introduction of all members present at the meeting. Apologies were received from Tony Bartlett (member), Jeremy Watson (member) and Brian Levine (guest) who was due to present at item 5.1.

The Chair proposed that the following principles of efficiency should apply to Council Meetings: all issues to be discussed need an agenda item and a supporting paper submitted at least three days before the meeting; presentations should be limited to 15 minutes (including 5 minutes question time); meetings will start on time and aim to be finished between 2 and 3 hours; and respectful meeting etiquette should be followed. In terms of Council effectiveness there was discussion about good governance and the CO ACTRES advised he could provide a risk register template that could be used by Council to monitor the risks to its good performance. The Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS advised he could provide a check list of Council meeting performance used by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC).

There was discussion about the terms of reference (TOR) and the development of the 2018 BFC Business Plan.

Action:

- CO ACTRES to send a risk register template to the Chair
- Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS to send an AFAC meeting check list to the Chair

Agenda item *2.0 – Declaration of Interest* **Presenter:** Chair

The Chair spoke about the ACT Government Boards and Committees Code of Conduct which requires members to disclose whether they have or are likely to have a private interest in any of the items listed on the agenda. If a topic discussed in the meeting causes a conflict of interest to arise, members must declare the conflict and step out of the meeting until that discussion is finalised.

Agenda item: *3.0 – Acceptance of minutes from previous meeting and update on action items arising from previous meetings* **Presenter:** Chair

Discussion:

The meeting noted that the minutes from the August meeting were not accepted at the September meeting which did not have a quorum. The minutes from August and September were accepted as a true and accurate account of the meeting/s (with some amendments requested).

Moved: Marion Leiba Seconded: Natarsha Carney

Agenda item: *4.0 – Correspondence for noting* **Presenter:** Chair

Discussion:

The Council received a letter from the ACT Remuneration Council notifying that submissions could be made to the Remuneration Council for adjustments to the payment rate for attendance at official meetings. It was agreed that the Bushfire Council had no specific reason for seeking an adjustment.

Action:

- Nil

Agenda item: *5.0 – Topics from the 2017 ACT Bushfire Council Business Plan* **Presenter:** Chair

Discussion:

5.1 Review of the PCS prescribed burning program for 2016-17

Review of the EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP) for 2016-17 – Neil Cooper spoke in the absence of Brian Levine. EPSDD has the largest BOP which becomes publicly available on the Environment ACT website when approved. A draft of the ESPDD BOP for 2017-18 was presented at the September BFC Meeting. As per section 78 of the *Emergencies Act 2004* (the Act), the ESA Commissioner has been provided with the draft BOP for consideration and/or approval; a decision is required within 40 working days as per the Act.

Council discussed the revised 2017-18 BOP draft, submitted to RFS, which now has had two major hazard reduction burns deleted. Council members repeated their concerns that had been advised at the previous meeting – that the omission of the two large burns in Namadgi in the EPSDD BOP, reportedly due to budget reasons, raised the risk of severe fire, particularly in the forthcoming season which is predicted to be higher risk than usual. The burns were already carried over from the previous year's BOP. It was noted that 14 years on from the 2003 fires, areas of Namadgi burnt in 2003 but not since are now at maximum fuel loads; and there was concern that continuing to carry forward forest burns compiles risk, especially as the windows of suitable weather are narrowing with climate change.

Council discussed the best way in which to present Council's view in relation to the budget issue with the burning program. The CO ACTRFS and Chair agreed to request ESA to write to the Director General EPSDD concerning the prescribed burns that have been deleted from the draft BOP.

Action: The ESA to write to the Director General EPSDD in relation to the two large hazard reduction burns that have been taken out of the EPSDD BOP

5.2 Update on the AFAC National Burning Project – Manager Fire, Forests and Roads, PCS

The project is a Commonwealth Government funded program to develop a national standard for prescribed burning. The aim of the project is to bring all aspects of prescribed burning together. Principles, procedures, risk management and protocols all form part of the program; the development of national standards allows safer and more effective movement of resources between states when required. AFAC is now setting up a virtual Centre of Excellence to continue to develop and promote National Burning Project products. Products will be available online and national trainers will help deliver the framework, resulting in consistent messaging and training.

Action: Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS to provide an update regarding the National Fire Policy Statement/Best Practice Burning Programs at the November meeting

5.3 Update on Indigenous Fire Management Program - Indigenous Fire Officer

Papers tabled: Aboriginal Cultural Fire Management in the ACT and ACT Aboriginal Fire Plan 2015-16.

A detailed presentation was provided about the Cultural Fire Management and the burning plan and how it fits into the EPSDD BOP.

Action: The Indigenous Fire Officer to provide the Chair with a paragraph on the outcomes of the Cultural Fire Management Program for the Annual Preparedness Report to the Minister

5.4 Overview of the EPSDD, Land Development Agency (LDA) and Health Bushfire Operational Plans (BOPs) – Manager Community Protection

The Manager Community Protection provided a summary of the background for BOPs and the role of the Community Protection Unit with ACT RFS. Section 78 of the *Emergencies Act 2004* and the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan defines who is required to complete a BOP. A draft map of current BOPs across the Territory was provided. Council acknowledged the importance of the BOPs and observed the gaps in the draft map. It

was explained the map is a working document and the data behind the creation of the map required updating. Council requested the data be updated as a priority to display the coverage spatially, to enable Council to identify areas of greatest risk and the work that is required to get to coverage to an acceptable level. There was further discussion regarding the Farm FireWise Program and follow up.

Council members repeated their concerns about the omission of the two large burns in Namadgi in the EPSDD BOP (see 5.1).

Council thanked PCS and ESA staff for the updates.

Action:

5.1 The ESA to write to the Director General EPSDD in relation to the two large hazard reduction burns that have been taken out of the EPSDD BOP

5.2 Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS to provide an update regarding the National Fire Policy Statement/Best Practice Burning Programs at the November meeting

5.3 The Indigenous Fire Officer to provide the Chair with a paragraph on the outcomes of the Cultural Fire Management Program for the Annual Preparedness Report to the Minister

Agenda item: 6.0 – Commissioners Report

Presenter:

A/g Commissioner

Discussion:

The A/g Commissioner spoke on behalf of the Commissioner and welcomed new and past members. All ESA staff members can be contacted if Council requires any assistance.

The A/g Commissioner tabled his report, which covered:

- Acting arrangements
- International assistance – Bushfires in British Columbia
- Seasonal outlook for the imminent bushfire and storm season
- Bushfire Abatement Zone (BAZ) briefing to Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services
- The 2017-18 Bushfire Season Launch on Friday 29 September 2017 by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Council thanked the A/g Commissioner for the update.

Action:

- Nil.

Agenda item: 7.0 – Land Managers Report

Presenter: Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS

Discussion:

7.1 Overview of the role of Parks and Conservation and operational interaction with ACT RFS

The Manager, Fire, Forest and Roads, PCS welcomed members and provided a very informative overview of the role of PCS and operational interaction with ACT RFS, summarised below:

- Fire, Forests and Roads in PCS is responsible for bushfire management on EPSDD and Territory and City Services (TCSS) land. It operates under the EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan which includes prescribed burns, mowing, slashing and other operations to prepare for the upcoming fire season.
- PCS has a legal responsibility which includes managing bushfire fuels on its land and limiting the spread of fire on and from its lands
- PCS has a dedicated fire management section which develops and implements the BOP. PCS also includes a large fire suppression capability (approximately 180 fire fighters) in the form of appropriately trained members of the PCS workforce.

The Manager gave an update on current activities in his unit, which covered:

- 2017-18 EPSDD BOP
- Training activities
- ESA training anomalies - PCS has engaged Cameron Leary (ex NSWNPWS Training Officer) to assist in correcting ESA records for a number of PCS employees
- Staff movements
- Sub regional fire plans
- Fire preparedness days
- Fire mowing programs
- Overseas deployments

Paper tabled: Report on PCS monthly activities

- Secretariat to distribute papers tabled at the meeting to members

Council thanked the Manager, Fire, Forest and Roads, PCS for the update and requested ACT RFS and ACT F&R to provide an overview of the Services at the next meeting.

7.2 Overview of the Regional Fire Management Plans

The current Regional Fire Management Plans (RFMPs) detail the five-year program (2014–19) of work for fuel reduction, access and infrastructure in the ACT. The community was consulted during the development of these plans. The RFMPs are on the ESA website as part of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP). The SBMP V3 specifies the RFMPs for 2019–24 will be prepared during the life of the current SBMP. Note: The next SBMP cannot happen until the new RFMPs are developed. PCS are linked with research done by Melbourne University developing risk based methods for determining the most appropriate burning programs. PCS is running two projects to look at risk and managing costs and the best landscape fire regime model to use for developing future Regional Fire Management Plans.

RFMPs have annual and 5 year targets of the area to be treated by fuel management (prescribed burning, slashing, grazing and physical removal) as well as the distance (km) of access works (maintenance, upgrade and construction).. The Commissioner is responsible for approval of RFMPs.

Action:

- The CO's ACT RFS and ACT F&R to provide an overview of ACT RFS and ACT F&R at the November BFC Meeting

Agenda item: 8.0 –ACT Rural Fire Service Report

Presenter: CO ACTRFS

Discussion:

The Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service provided an overview of current activities and tabled a report, which covered:

- Electronic Fire Danger Rating Signs Project
- Bushfire Operational Plans draft submissions
- Training
- ACT Rural Fire Service Open Day will be held at ESA HQ on Sunday 29 October 2017
- Planning for this year's Canberra Bushfire Ready Campaign
- New Bushfire Survival Plan
- Officially opened the commencement of Bushfire Season
- Preseason preparations
- Annual inspections of fire towers
- Preseason brief from the Bureau of Meteorology
- NSW Aviation Advisory Committee
- Station upgrade to Guises Creek and Molonglo
- ACTRFS Staff movements
- Volunteer Health and Wellbeing Initiative and Employer Recognition Program

Council thanked the CO ACTRFS for the update.

Action:

- Nil

Agenda item: 9.0 – General Business

Presenter:

Chair

9.1 Progress of the BFC Annual Preparedness Report and 2018 Business Plan

ACT Bushfire Council prepares an annual report to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services (MPES), providing advice on the Territory's level of preparedness for the upcoming bushfire season. This year's report is near completion and will be brought to the next Council meeting for finalisation.

The finalisation of the 2018 Business Plan is to be discussed at the December meeting. , This will provide tentative agenda topics for each meeting in 2018.

- Council raised the recent Kowen Forest Hazard Reduction and the deficiency of health warning notification for anyone with health issues that may be exacerbated by the smoke. The Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS advised that members of the public can register on the Environment ACT Website to receive warnings before future burn offs but a registered member said they didn't receive a notification
- Council acknowledged the logistics in sending members on the recent international deployment to Canada, and appreciated the first hand acknowledgment received for their assistance
- Council acknowledged the offer of Executive Director Risk & Planning (ESA) to arrange presentations at the next meeting on:
 - Bushfire Attack Level, Bushfire Prone Area and LIDAR - Mr Steve Forbes
 - Action 65 of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, the building code AS3959 and APZ's – Mr David Horner

Action: Secretariat to arrange presenters to next meeting if time permits

- The ACT F&R 'Community Fire Unit Saturday' event is scheduled for 14 October 2017 and members of the Council were invited to come along.

Actions:

Action: Secretariat to liaise with the Executive Director Risk & Planning to invite presenters to next meeting if time permits

Action: The Secretariat to distribute (email copies) of all the meeting reports, papers and presentations to members following the BFC meeting and future meetings

Agenda item: *10.0 – Next Meeting*

Presenter:

Chair

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1 November 2017

Closing: The meeting was declared closed at 18:50pm



ACT Bushfire Council Meeting Implementation of Action Items

Active items for current meeting

Action Item / Issue	Originating meeting date	Assigned To	Due Date	Status	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on Lower Cotter Catchment for BFC Parks to provide presentation or executive summary & recommendations of the Fire Management Unit review 	2 August 2017	Tony Scherl			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up on how to find presentations from the Symposium on the website Community Engagement report (meant to be presented on the night) to be forwarded to BFC members 	2 August 2017	PCS/ESA Fiona Amundsen			
Agenda item 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO ACTRFS to email a risk register template to the Chair Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS advised he would email an AFAC meeting check list to the Chair 	4 October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO ACT RFS Manager, Fire, Forests and Roads PCS 			
Agenda item 5 5.1 The ESA to write to the Director General EPSDD in relation to the two large hazard reduction burns that have been taken out of the EPSDD BOP 5.2 Manager Fire, Forests and Roads PCS to provide an update regarding the National Fire Policy Statement/Best Practice Burning Programs at the November meeting	4 October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO ACT RFS Manager, Fire, Forests and Roads PCS 			

Action Item / Issue	Originating meeting date	Assigned To	Due Date	Status	Comments
5.3 The Indigenous Fire Officer to provide the Chair with a paragraph on the outcomes of the Cultural Fire Management Program for the Annual Preparedness Report to the Minister					
Agenda item 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CO's ACT RFS and ACT F&R to provide an overview of ACT RFS and ACT F&R at the November BFC Meeting. 	4 October 2017	CO ACTRFS/CO ACT F&R			
Agenda item 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat to liaise with the Executive Director Risk & Planning to invite presenters to next meeting if time permits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> on Bushfire Attack Level, Bushfire Prone Area and LIDAR by Mr Forbes building code AS3959 and APZ's by Mr Horner The Secretariat to distribute (email copies) of all the meeting reports, papers and presentations to members following the the BFC meeting and future meetings. 	4 October 2017	Secretariat	1 Nov 2017		

Completed Items

Action Item	Originating Meeting date	Responsibility	Proposed/Revised completion date	Date completed
Agenda item 5 Item 5.3 SRAP SBMP update document to be circulated out of session.	5 July 2017	Secretariat	11 July 2017	Complete
Agenda item 6 – email the details for BFC to submit an EOI to attend the AFAC Conference	5 July 2017	Secretariat		Complete
Agenda item 9 – The ESA Community Engagement Report and Canberra Bushfire Ready Campaign update to be included on the August Agenda.	5 July 2017	Secretariat		Complete
Agenda item 11 – Provide a new calendar invitation for the final meeting in September and venue details.	5 July 2017	Secretariat		Complete

Council to write a letter of support in the minutes for the budget and structure for preparing for the next phase of SBMP and Regional Fire Management Plan.	2 August 2017	Secretariat		Complete
Provide progress on the BFC appointments Introduction of new BFC members when they start (hand over)	2 August 2017	Secretariat	4 October 2017	Complete