



# ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 7 June 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
<b>Chair</b>	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
<b>Attendees</b>	Tony Bartlett – Member John Brickhill – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member (online) Marta Yebra – Member
<b>Apologies</b>	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council Nina Allen – Member Commissioner – Georgeina Whelan Bren Burkevics – EGM, EPSDD Stephen Alegria – EBM, EPSDD
<b>Guests</b>	Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACTRFS (online) Scott Seymour, ACT SES Justin Foley, EPSDD Tony Scherl, EPSDD Graham Ible, Acting Chief Officer, SES
<b>Secretariat</b>	Lianna Luton – Executive Officer Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

On behalf of the Council, the Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which the Council were meeting, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people and other traditional custodians of the ACT.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

Nil

## 3. Acceptance of Minutes from 3 May 2023 meeting.

The draft minutes were accepted as a true record with no amendments.

## 4. Review of Council Action items

Council action items were reviewed and updated.

## 5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined correspondence received by the Secretariat:



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- Advice from the ACT Ambulance Service concerning the number of requests for assistance received during heatwaves.
- Explanatory Statement for the Gaming Machine (Club Refuge) Amendment Bill 2022.
- Confirmation from the ESA they have access to and currently use (where appropriate) the Impact Forecasting Tools developed by Geoscience Australia.
- ESA Comments on the draft new Territory Plan.

## 6. Presentation by Dr Yebra on lightning detector sites

Dr Yebra outlined some of the work being undertaken by the ANU Bushfire Research Centre of Excellence which aims to evaluate research, technology and innovation to drive resilience against bushfires. Part of this has included the use of lightning detectors to improve forecasting and the detection of lightning strikes to enable rapid deployment of services in the case of ignition. Lightning data is also combined with environmental data, such as fuel loads, to determine high risk areas most likely to ignite.

Dr Yebra explained that a one year pilot project has seen 6 detectors placed in sites around the ACT, which can provide data on how much charge is being transferred to fuel. As the weather has been quite wet this year, the data is still quite limited. In the interim, historical data is being used to calibrate risk. She also advised the pilot is due to finish in August and discussions are being held for further funding.

Dr Yebra advised the ANU is also involved in the development of a new satellite to provide more bushfire and environmental data relevant to Australia. They are also working with ACT Parks and Conservation by attending autumn burns, testing and calibrating ground sensors and providing observations on how fires progressed. Experimental burns have been conducted to test the effectiveness of sensors and cameras have been installed on fire towers to obtain data. The ANU is also assessing the performance of drone technology for fire detection capability, with drones fitted with thermal cameras. Dr Yebra also identified some work on a prototype water glider which can be GPS guided.

The Chair thanked Dr Yebra for her presentation and noted the exciting possibilities of the different technologies.

## 7. Evaluation of SBMPv4

Scott Seymour advised there is an annual review of the SBMP to report against objectives. A document of assessment should be completed by late June for presentation to the SBMP Governance Committee. Following this it will be provided to the MHAC in mid-July. The feedback already received from the MHAC will be incorporated into the review.

The Chair questioned how the SBMP will have clear measures which can be independently assessed. Mr Seymour advised it will be a qualitative assessment on the delivery of outcomes. Conversations will be held within ESA and with other subject matter experts in PCS and EPSDD. Mr Seymour also confirmed that decisions on the evaluation are undertaken by him in consultation with the Governance Committee.

The Council sought an update on the timeframe for SBMPv5. Mr Seymour advised a workshop was held with Protiviti to commence the process and internal recruitment is also progressing. The Chair noted there had been a suggestion the format could be similar to the ACT Women's Plan and the ACT Air Quality and Smoke Strategy, and Justin Foley suggested the Council provide input on what they considered appropriate



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for the plan. The Chair proposed a discussion be held at the July meeting on strategic considerations for the SBMPv5. Dr Bartlett requested a copy of the Protiviti report, if available. He also suggested it would be good for the Council to understand the original purpose of the SMPB and offered to give a short presentation on this at the start of the discussion in the July meeting.

**Action:** Copies of the ACT Women’s Plan and the ACT Air Quality and Smoke Strategy to be circulated to Council members.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

**Action:** Protiviti report on SBMP5 to be provided to the Council as soon as it is available.

**Person responsible:** Secretariat

**Action:** Dr Bartlett to prepare a short presentation to the July meeting on the history of the SBMP.

**Person responsible:** Dr Bartlett

**Action:** Dr Bartlett and Dr Troy to work on how to structure the discussion for the July meeting. Council members to consider what would be appropriate for the SBMPv5.

**Person responsible:** Chair and Dr Bartlett, Council members

## 8. Presentation on learnings from the Autumn Burning Program - EPSDD

Justin Foley explained the presentation would cover the learnings from the Autumn burning program, how decisions are made on burnings and what processes and tools are used to determine burn priorities. Tony Scherl outlined how the planning strategy flows from the BOP and noted the success of the burns this year due to the level of moisture. There is a high focus on training due to staff turnover over the last few years and EPSDD works closely with RFS, Fire and Rescue, PCS and TCCS to assess and plan burns.

Mr Scherl advised that decisions on burns are made in accordance with the Prescribed Fire Manual, with weather conditions, resources and ecological concerns also taken into account. Burns have to be approved in line with ecological guidelines to assess issues around erosion risks and risks to threatened species. During burns, maps are produced according to lighting patterns, and burn severity mapping is used to assess lessons learned. Smoke and particulate monitoring is conducted in conjunction with ACT Health. Values officers have also been embedded in planning to advise on any local, heritage or ecological issues.

The Council noted the use of aerial drip torches and other new technology to reduce burn severity. They commended the commitment to research and the collection of data. Dr Bartlett questioned the plans for a prescribed burn at Blackey’s Hill and Mr Scherl confirmed this has been delayed due to concerns around containment lines. It is on the planning program for this year with the potential for a burn next year. In the interim, they are looking at upgrading trails and using other tools to potentially remove fuels. Mr Morris noted the incidents of people calling 000 during prescribed burning and asked if the Council could incorporate comments around this into their work on community engagement. Mr Foley agreed to the suggestion and confirmed it is an ongoing issue in Canberra and worth investigating further.



# ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

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The Chair thanked Mr Foley and Mr Scherl for their presentation.

## 9. Discussion on Heat and Smoke Refuge response

The Chair noted the information received on the Heat and Smoke Refuge response. She also noted the Council's view that it would be useful to have a more strategic plan on extreme heat, despite the Heatwave Plan already being approved. The Council identified that heat risk reduction would be an area for consideration under the Climate Change strategy and the Territory-wide Risk Assessment. They agreed the issue of extreme heat be revisited once the Territory-wide Risk Assessment is available.

**Action:** The strategy around extreme heat to be revisited by the Council in August, pending the availability of the Territory-wide Risk Assessment.

**Person responsible:** Council

## 10. Discussion on Council Effectiveness

Following completion of other agenda items, the Council held a discussion in camera to review its effectiveness, including the collated results from the anonymous survey related to its operating protocols. Council members were in general very pleased with the provision of a single pack of papers one week prior to Council meetings.

Council members discussed the availability of material in presentations prior to meetings and noted that electronic files were often very large and sometimes not provided to the secretariat until the meeting itself. The Council agreed it would be preferable to at least circulate a PDF of the presentation as soon as it was available, even if that was after the close of the meeting.

Council members expressed concern that no response had been forthcoming from the Minister or ACT government to the advice that it had provided as the culmination of two significant pieces of work for the Council:

- Report on ACT Bushfire management since 2003 (finalised December 2022)
- Community resilience to natural hazard disasters in the ACT (finalised February 2023)

It was agreed that the Chair and Deputy Chair should seek to meet with each of the Minister, the Director-General of Justice and Community Safety Directorate, and the Emergency Services Commissioner, to discuss the Council's effectiveness.

**Action:** Chair and Deputy Chair to seek meetings with the Minister, the Director-General of JACS, and the Commissioner to discuss the Council's effectiveness.

**Person responsible:** Chair

**Action:** The Secretariat to provide Council members with a PDF copy of all presentations, either with the meeting papers or as soon afterwards as they are available, even if this is after the meeting is held.

**Person Responsible:** Secretariat



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## 11. Council member Updates

Council members provided the following updates on activities:

- Mr Brickhill advised of his attendance at the AGM of Creewah Rural Fire Brigade, which included a presentation on a Community Preparedness Plan.
- Mr Morris advised he would be travelling overseas but will be participating remotely in meetings and discussions on the Community Resilience Framework. He also noted the BOM's issue of an El Niño alert, which may impact the bushfire season.
- Dr Yebra advised she would also be travelling overseas for a conference but will also be participating remotely in the next meeting.
- Dr Yebra, Dr Bartlett and Dr Troy advised they attended the discussion with Protiviti on SBMPv5.
- Dr Bartlett advised he had provided some comments to a discussion on the Namadgi Park Management Plan. He also provided some observations to the Council on a flash flood event that occurred in Canada and the need for planning systems to properly address climate change risks.
- Dr Troy advised she attended an ACT Biodiversity Conservation Forum, which raised the issue of managing volunteers in ACT conservation reserves. There was also a discussion on the Blewitt's Block burn which was delayed at the request of conservation groups. The Forum also included a presentation on the response to the Territory Plan, which does not appear to include the submission from the MHAC. The Forum also included a presentation on the Western Edge, outlining the process underway for a strategic bushfire study and a Murrumbidgee flood scoping study. She noted that the Council should keep track of these and receive briefings as they come to hand.

## 12. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

The next meeting will include:

- A draft of the Post-Season Evaluation Terms of Reference
- A discussion on the SBMPv5 and what Council would like to see in the plan.

## 13. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed.

*On 7 June 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazards Advisory Council received a presentation on the ANU's Bushfire Research Centre of Excellence Program from Dr Marta Yebra, and a presentation on the learnings from the Autumn Burning Program from representatives of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate: Justin Foley and Tony Scherl. Council also received an update on the Evaluation of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan version 4 from Scott Seymour of ACT Emergency Services.*

## 14. Meeting Close

Next meeting 5 July 2023