



ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 6 September 2023

Time: 4 pm – 7 pm

Location: ESA HQ, 9 Amberley Avenue Fairbairn, Webex

Attendance	
Chair	Dylan Kendall – Deputy Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
Attendees	Tony Bartlett – Member Len Morris – Member Asha Naznin – Member (online) John Brickhill – Member Nina Allen – Member (online) Marta Yebra – Member Nicola Smillie – Member Romeo Gaubert – Member
Apologies	Sally Troy – Chair, ACT Multi Hazards Advisory Council
Guests	Rohan Scott – Chief Officer, ACTRFS Anthony Draheim – Chief Officer, ACT SES Cameron Beresford, EBM, Emergency Management, SEMD Dianne Gordon, Senior Director, Planning and Preparedness, ESA Caitlin Roy, Senior Director, Workforce Strategies, CMTEDD Craig Meer, Director, Workforce Strategies, CMTEDD
Secretariat	Lianna Luton – Executive Officer Judith Bielleman – HorizonOne Recruitment (Minute taking)

1. Welcome and Apologies

On behalf of the Council, the Chair acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which they were meeting. He acknowledged their continuing connection to the land, water and community and paid respects to the peoples, their culture and elders past, present and emerging.

The Chair welcomed two new members to the Council, Mr Romeo Gaubert and Ms Nicola Smillie. Mr Gaubert previously worked as a firefighter with NATO on nuclear and chemical incidents and was also an advisor to the Victorian Government. He now has a small business providing data visualisations for flood management. Ms Smillie has a background in environmental science and energy security and is an SES Volunteer.

Action: MHAC Member profiles on the website to be updated to reflect Council membership.

Person responsible: Secretariat

2. Declarations of Interest

Nil



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3. Acceptance of Minutes from 2 August 2023 meeting

The draft minutes were accepted with amendments provided by Dr Bartlett. Dr Bartlett also requested amendments to the previous action items requesting information on Bluett's Block and fire management approvals. A new action will be created to request the correct information from EPSDD.

Action: Supplementary request to be made to EPSDD to request clarification on what information is available to the public on the approvals for and implementation of EPSDD prescribed burning activities. Advice to also be sought from EPSDD on the thinning of red stringybark as required under the Development Approval.

Person responsible: Secretariat

4. Review of Council Action items

Council action items were reviewed and updated.

Dr Bartlett provided an update to the Council on his meeting with Rohan Scott to discuss the Elevated Fire Danger Plan. He advised the Elevated Fire Danger Plan is a formal document and its appendix sets out the minimum standards, rather than what specifically happens on the day. They also discussed how the Fire Behaviour Index works in practice. Dr Bartlett advised he is satisfied the processes in place are appropriate.

5. Correspondence for noting

The Chair outlined correspondence received by the Secretariat:

- Letter from Bren Burkevics, Conservator of Flora and Fauna, responding to questions from the Environmental Approvals Presentation.

6. Strategic Preparedness Program

The Chair welcomed Cameron Beresford to the meeting.

Mr Beresford outlined the ACT Government's plan to deliver a more coordinated approach to emergency preparedness due to increasing incidence of complex emergencies and compounding events. A program has been established in SEMD that will draw together ACT resources to realise common capabilities and ensure collaborative emergency planning over the next twelve months. The program will also work in partnership with ESA to align capabilities to the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework. Mr Beresford advised the initial focus areas will be Exercise Management, Emergency Planning capability and Lessons Management, to be delivered prior to the High-Risk Weather Season 2024-25, with a full brief to the Council at that time.

The Council questioned how lessons learned would be embedded in strategic discussions and incorporated into processes. Mr Beresford confirmed that the current focus was on post-operational reviews and that the intention was to create a more robust emergency management framework to better understand thematic and strategic lessons and build these into programs. He noted the large amount of work involved to understand principles, collate lessons learned and contextualise the approach. The Program will work in collaboration with NEMA and state Governments and there is a strong focus on entrenching lessons to



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ensure ongoing accountability. He also confirmed the Strategic Preparedness Program would involve Whole-of-Government hazards outside the remit of the Council, like cybersecurity.

Mr Beresford advised they would also be looking at ways to establish frameworks and mechanisms for community consultation, with a focus on establishing a shared responsibility model. He acknowledged the importance of engaging with a variety of different community groups in the development of strategies. Mr Morris noted the use of the DRR framework, rather than Sendai, and Mr Beresford advised there was some divergence as the framework is contextualised to meet the needs of the ACT.

The Council noted the use of sophisticated systems in emergency management and queried whether there were sufficient redundancies for the community and firefighters to receive information if network connectivity is lost. Mr Beresford advised there is a plan for a separate program to look at critical assets from a continuity sense, with a focus on ensuring backup systems and contingencies.

The Chair thanked Mr Beresford for his presentation.

7. ESA Strategic Plan – Strategy and Transformation Office

The Chair welcomed Caitlin Roy and Craig Meer to the meeting.

Dr Meer explained that the Strategy and Transformation Office in CMTEDD had been approached by the ESA to assist with the development of the next Strategic Plan (covering 2024-2029). The development of the plan involves extensive consultations and workshops with staff, volunteers and stakeholders and there have been productive discussions around organisational challenges and the strategic objectives for ESA.

The Council questioned what Dr Meer considered to be some of the systemic risks that needed to be addressed through a strategic plan and he advised that issues around climate change, population growth and urban sprawl were exacerbating other risks. Dr Bartlett noted that these were also a key focus of the Council and questioned how strategies could be turned into actions. Dr Meer confirmed this is a key challenge and advised they will need to be factored into business planning to cascade actions through the organisation. The Strategy will also need to align with the recommendations from the Leadership review and be in accordance with the fundamentals of the legislation.

Ms Roy outlined that the next steps will include drafting and testing assumptions. She welcomed further opportunities to engage with the Council and any suggestions they might have for further consultation. A copy of the Council's strategic plan and Community Resilience document will be provided to the Strategy team. Council members also provided some recommendations on persons the Strategy team could consult.

Action: Copies of the MHAC's Strategic Plan and Community Resilience document to be provided to the Strategy team.

Person responsible: Secretariat

The Chair thanked Ms Roy and Dr Meer for their presentation.



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8. Discussion on All Hazards Pre-Season Report

The Chair welcomed Rohan Scott and Anthony Draheim to the meeting.

Mr Scott provided an overview on the High-Risk Weather Season outlook for 2023-24 and the potential for elevated bushfire and heatwave risks, due to forecasted higher temperatures and less rain. ESA is monitoring fuel loads and moisture content and the key concern at this stage is spring growth and the potential for grass fires on the northern edge. He outlined the preparations being made around vehicles, staffing and training, with new technology also being implemented to improve information for front-line crews. There is also a new volunteer portal and a brigade call-out app.

Mr Scott highlighted other activities including interoperability exercises, drone usage, aviation training, cross-border engagement and pre-season workshops. Regional planning has been conducted with land managers and he also noted the lightning detection project and the use of fire modelling simulations. Mr Scott advised there would be some weekend programs in October on preparedness, response and recovery with a strong focus on community engagement, with messages to also be broadcast in the media. He noted a focus of the engagement will be on horse agistment areas due to concerns around grass fires.

Ms Allen noted that the farm fire wise plans are out of date and Mr Scott advised these will be added to the field iPads and updated as they become available. She also asked what the current plans were for slashing, as the growth cannot be managed with livestock. Mr Scott advised he would take this on notice as the responsible area is in EPSDD.

Action: Mr Scott to provide advice on the plan for the slashing program.

Person responsible: Secretariat to follow up

Dr Bartlett commended Mr Scott on the presentation provided. He suggested some firebreaks might be useful through the bigger blocks in the north of Canberra and Mr Scott advised he would raise this in the planning forum with land managers.

Mr Draheim outlined the arrangements in place for the storm and flood season, which covers the same period as the bushfire season. The weather outlook for this season is very different to the last 3 years, which generated a high level of growth and was the busiest period for storm and flood damage. He advised the SES is prepared and has emergency management procedures in place. A capability activity was completed last weekend and he recommended the community also review their own storm plans. Improvements have been made in recruitment and training, as there was a downturn in the number of volunteers due to Covid. The revised Flood sub-plan has been used to familiarise people with flood behaviours and a sub-plan is also being developed for Storms. A new flood warning system should be available by the end of the year.

Ms Allen noted the loss of electricity after the Belconnen supercell in 2020 and questioned the subsequent arrangements put in place to manage this. Mr Draheim advised the responsibility sits with utility providers but that there is now more engagement with the emergency coordination centre. He also noted this was part of a broader issue around community resilience and education.

The Chair thanked Mr Scott and Mr Draheim for their presentations.



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9. Discussion on SBMPv4 Full Evaluation

Item held over to next meeting. Scott Seymour to be asked to discuss this at the next meeting as he is also due to present on the SBMPv5.

Action: Scott Seymour to be asked to discuss the SBMPv4 evaluation at the October meeting.

Person responsible: Secretariat

10. Post Season Progress against the BOP

Item held over to next meeting as Justin Foley is working on a response to the Council.

Action: Justin Foley to be invited to the October meeting to provide a response.

Person responsible: Secretariat

11. Any other business and next meeting arrangements

Dr Yebra asked if it was possible for a Council representative to attend the High-Risk Weather Season Summit being run by NEMA.

Action: Secretariat to check if a Council representative can attend the HRWS Summit.

Person responsible: Secretariat

The Chair also noted the request for input into the MRC Planning document. Council members were asked to provide input if desired by 18 September to be provided to ESPDD by 22 September.

Action: All members to provide input, if desired, by 18 September and secretariat to provide input provided by members to ESPDD by September 22.

Person responsible: All members and Secretariat

12. Council Member Updates

Council members provided the following updates on activities:

- Mr Morris advised he attended the AFAC Conference in Brisbane. He noted the different perspectives put forward around community resilience and considered the Council's focus on community rather than individual resilience to be the correct approach. He also attended a workshop run by the ACT Government on a social recovery framework and will be attending future sessions. His disaster education hike on Mount Stromlo commences this weekend and he will share how this went in the next meeting. He is also moving from the BOM to NEMA in his employment.
- Dr Yebra advised the Centre of Excellence is conducting a field demonstration on 10 October 2023 to demonstrate different technologies for fire prevention and she invited Council members to attend.



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- Mr Kendall advised he had been involved in a trip to the Philippines on behalf of the UN to improve the incorporation of science into disaster management, with the outcome being the establishment of a project to address issues around climate change risks. He has also been involved in a project with DFAT to monitor volcano activity in Bougainville and another project with DFAT to run an exercise in based on an earthquake in PNG.

The Council noted that some activities they have previously undertaken should be recorded in the Minutes:

- On 15th June 2023, Council members participated in a workshop on an ESA community engagement strategy.
- On 30th August 2023 the Council undertook a field trip to observe:
 - fire management issues at Tidbinbilla nature reserve
 - a large hazard reduction burn on the Bullen range
 - where the 2003 bushfire entered the Canberra urban area
 - fire hazards at Blackey's Hill on the western urban edge

The proposed Council dinner has been scheduled for 1 November 2023.

13. Confirmation of Communique

The draft meeting communique was discussed and agreed:

On 6 September 2023, the ACT Multi-Hazard Advisory Council received a presentation on the work being undertaken on the ACT Emergency Services Agency Strategic Plan from representatives of the Strategy and Transformation Office, Caitlin Roy and Craig Meer. The Council also received a presentation on the Strategic Preparedness Program from Cameron Beresford and received a report on fire, storm and flood preparedness for the 2023-24 High-Risk Weather Season.

14. Meeting Close

Next meeting 4 October 2023