

## ACT Bushfire Council

### Meeting Minutes

26<sup>th</sup> June 2008

4.00pm

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

#### **Attendance:**

Kevin Jeffery	Chair
Tony Bartlett	Member
Tony Fearnside	Member
Simon Katz	Member
Michael Lonergan	Member
Stephen Wise	Member
Gregor Manson	ex Officio (Commissioner ESA)
Brian Parry	ex Officio (Deputy Commissioner ESA)
Tim McGuffog	ex Officio (DCO RFS)
Neil Cooper	Invited Guest (TAMS)

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

- The Chair opened the meeting at 4.00pm.

#### **2. *Apologies***

- Professor Peter Kanowski, Member

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

- The BFC is satisfied with the new format of minutes. Council would like to see more detail recorded in some instances. A question was raised in regards to the use of initials rather than full names. KJ explained that there had been some general discussion in the past about this and agreement had been reached that we would move away from identifying people directly for the majority of the time. BP advised that the recordings of meetings would be available as a resource to draw further information from as part of the minute taking process.
- One change to be made to previous minutes – ‘Malcolm Gill’ is not part of ACTEWAGL;
- Minutes were moved by Mr Tony Bartlett, seconded by Mr Tony Fearnside and adopted.

#### **4. *Business Arising***

##### **4.1 Review Actions from May Meeting -**

**Action Item 5.4 – (Tony Fearnside) – Hydrological effects of the 2003 Fires (Namadgi field trip)** –We are seeking ACTEWAGL to look at pre and post-fire, on a catchment wide basis, to correlate rain fall events over periods of time and identify in-flows and water quality variations into the dam. In particular to gain an understanding

on what the difference is between a rainfall event of 20mls of rain in the same catchment pre and post the fire on yield (measured as inflows) and water quality. This would provide an indication of what the vegetation has taken up and the impact on water quality.

The Commissioner, as requested by Council, wrote to Mr John McKay Chief Executive of ACTEWAGL and to Mr Mike Zissler Chief Executive of TAMS inviting these agencies to present to Council on the above issues. The Commissioner has received positive replies to the invitation. Mr Norm Mueller and John Neal from ACTEW Corporation will be attending the next BFC meeting and Mr Zissler advised that Mr David Butt and Mr Russell Watkinson would attend and present in relation to Policy and Catchment Water issues described above. The Commissioner provided the group with a copy of an email received.

**Action Item 4.3 (Commissioner) – Invite Mr Malcolm Gill, Mr Norm Mueller and Mr David Butt to next meeting** – Invitations done and organised (attendance of Mr Malcolm Gill CSIRO, Mr John Neil and Mr Norm Mueller from ACTEW, Mr Russell Watkinson and David Butt from TAMS).

**8.1 Commissioner’s Report** - The RFS 2008-2009 budget allocations will be provided electronically to Council. Copy of last years budget tabled. This year’s draft budget not yet available from RFS and will be provided when completed.

**ACTION: 2008 – 2009 budget to be provided to Council when available.**

**The National Disaster Mitigation Fund (Commissioner)** – TAMS and ESA joint bid to the Commonwealth for Fire Reduction and Bush Fire Mitigation is due on the 30<sup>th</sup> June.

**ACTION: Tim McGuffog to provide Council copies of previous bids by the next meeting. Council to be provided a copy of new bid when finalised.**

**ML asked if UHF is going into all RFS Vehicles? (Commissioner)** – Mr Jim Hewitt provided advice that currently the capability of the radios allows for another channel band to be added into the radio system. A separate radio set may not be necessary.

**ACTION: Tim McGuffog to confirm which vehicles have this capacity and provide his findings to the next meeting.**

- It is necessary for two radio sets in one vehicle.

Conformation that all RFS appliances, Command Vehicles and Staff vehicles have UHF CB radios separate from the UHF TRN radios. This enables dual monitoring, and interoperability, particularly with leaseholders.

**Duress Buttons (Commissioner)** – This issue has been raised on a number of occasions. The Commissioner is still to receive a satisfactory reply on whether the duress button can be activated and used by the RFS. Currently they are not switched on at the request of RFS. The Commissioners’ understanding is that it is a back up safety system and for this reason needs to be raised at the next ROAG meeting for consideration and recommendation whether they should be switched on.

**ACTION: Tim McGuffog to provide advice on the duress activation to ROAG, Council and the Commissioner by next meeting.**

TRN is only recently beginning to provide ACT wide coverage. Duress will only work effectively within the TRN footprint. Mt Tennant and soon, Mt Clear will provide us with the reliability that is required for the Duress to work effectively across the ACT. This has to be programmed into the CAD system to enable operators to identify the location of the activated duress call.

BP advised that a new report had been received from InTACT about the scanning feature to be programmed into the radio system.

BP added that the by programming this new feature in the radio system it would provide a standing capability for use by TAMS negating the cross over link to the VHF network as it was causing interference. It will be operational by the next fire season.

**ACTION: Mr Jim Hewitt to visit with each brigade station before the start of the next fire season to provide them with an update on functionalities.**

**ACTION: Tim McGuffog to advise Council with the outcome in detail and where it fits in with the RFS communications plan.**

Requirements:

1. Reactivate Scan Function in RFS Radios
2. P25 Upgrade of Code Plug – consistent with NSW
3. ESA Communications Plan needs to be finalised.
4. AVL needs to be integrated into RFS system before duress can be reliably activated. RFS has developed a draft statement of requirements (forwarded to ICT)

**NOC Sydney (BP)** – ESA recently received advice that the NSW Government is providing the funding to update the NOC in Sydney. This relates to the P25 upgrade. This new technology system is being upgraded to a new operating system. This means ACT and NSW will align with the new system simultaneously.

**Initiatives Moving Forward for RFS Budget (Commissioner)** – The Chair suggested that members use the ‘wiki’ page for tabling ideas for the next ACTRFS budget estimates. Council could then consider them for future recommendations. The ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (V2) review will also assist with identifying potential budget bids. The Commissioner will meet with Brian Parry and Tim McGuffog to discuss further.

**ACTION: Tim McGuffog to collate a paper to next Council meeting.**

#### **4.2 TAMS Bush Fire Operational Plan and the Stromlo/Black Mountain area Works Program – Mr Neil Cooper.**

Mr Neil Cooper provided a presentation on the Stromlo and Black Mountain area works program. The Bushfire Operational Plan includes the entire current activities and actions TAMS plan on doing over the next Financial Year. It is still in the developmental stage and is awaiting final sign off and input by various parts of TAMS.

**ACTION: Council requested an early opportunity to examine the TAMS BOP, specifically the ACTAGL.**

When the plan is finalised it will be provided to Council for endorsement and final comment. BFC comments and recommendations will be forwarded to the Commissioner for approval.

General discussion continued surrounding potential fire paths and fuel loads and work programs in the areas west of Black Mountain and Stromlo. NC advised that TAMS only looked at risk and fire potential on TAMS land and not on leasehold land.

It was agreed that it would be useful for BP or TMc to identify some key areas for discussion with ACT Planning and Land Management Authority. It will be beneficial to gather further information from various land managers in order to allow Council to consider the overall fuel load picture.

The Commissioner would like a combined strategy before the next fire season for the Council and the Commissioner's report due to the Minister in November 2008.

Council were happy with the plans (BOP) development to date and will review it again when presented by TAMS for BFC endorsement.

**ACTION: RFS to approach ACTPLA re grazing non-TAMS lands. RFS to provide advice on an integrated risk reduction map, including the areas referred to above and other relevant parts of the ACT.**

#### **4.3 High Fire Report (Rick McCrae - Verbatim) –**

A presentation regarding the High Fire project was provided by Mr Rick McCrae, Risk and Planning Unit, ESA.

The Council discussed the merits of ACTESA / TAMS / ACTEWAGL involvement in the Bushfire CRC. In particular the benefits of leverage of the joint approach to researching bushfire issues.

Council supported ACTESA/TAMS commitment for two years of full membership of the Bushfire CRC, elevated from the current associate membership.

- A question was raised in relation to the 'High Fire Report' presentation provided by Rick McCrae and how it would be adopted into the SOPs.

Council discussed the processes for education of future and current fire managers and the opportunities for advance learning noting this area is not well advanced in Australia.

**ACTION: Mr Michael Lonergan to provide to the Commissioner with his proposal in relation to education of "mountain" fire managers.**

**Motion:** Council, from a policy perspective, supports and encourages active participation from ACT ESA / TAMS in the Bushfire CRC program. Moved by TB and Seconded by TF – **Carried.**

**ACTION: The Commissioner will speak with Bushfire CRC next week with a view to getting a summary of the key objectives in the proposed rebid of the Bushfire CRC and present them to Council to consider and provide advice.**

#### **4.4 Council Members to attend AFAC Conference in September**

ESA has pre-purchased Conference attendance. Council supported that two Council members and two Volunteers would be appropriate representation.

**ACTION: Members are requested to advise Tim McGuffog if they wish to attend.**

Confirmed that Kevin Jeffery and Tony Bartlett will attend as ACT BFC representatives.

#### **4.5 Tanker and Appliance Update (Tim McGuffog)**

Tim McGuffog provided an update on the medium fire appliance units replacement program and the discussions he had had with Fleet and Procurements Director and RFS Fleet Manager, John Jenkins.

The replacement large Tanker program is moving along well. ROAG has considered the transmission issues and recommended against the evaluation panel advice on auto transmissions.

The RFS fleet technical working group is working on specifications for the Super Striker Tanker. The specification will be reviewed by ROAG and ROAG will make a recommendation to Deputy Commissioner.

#### **4.6 Business Plan Update** – The Consultant, Mr Chris Morley, has facilitated many fruitful discussions in relation to actions and strategies for the plan as well as future strategic key issues that may impact on the Rural Fire Service. Mr Morley is making very good progress with the plan and feedback is currently very positive on his empathy and approach.

### **5. Listing of new Agenda Items**

Mr Malcolm Gill, Mr Norm Mueller and Mr David Butt to present on catchment issues

Consultant, Mr Bob Smith, will also provide an update on his review of Government agreed Coronial and McLeod recommendations.

**ACTION: Secretariat to list items at next meeting.**

### **6. Correspondence**

Nil

### **7. General Business**

**Bushfire Council Review Consultant**, Mr Bob Smith, is to examine RFS related risk management processes in undertaking his review in accordance with a recognised risk management framework.

**Progress with New Members of Council** – The Commissioner is progressing this with the Minister and awaiting the Minister to make announcements.

#### **Presentation on Catchment issues and Council members:**

The Chair will invite guests to attend the presentation as appropriate to ensure full information sharing.

## 8. *Reports*

- 8.1 Commissioner** – The ESA Station Relocation Study is moving along well. In relation to SES and RFS sheds there may be some minor changes to location.

As requested at the last meeting by Council, the Commissioner provided advice on progress of Namadgi Plan of Management. The Planning and Environment Committee of the ACT Assembly is yet to report on its inquiry into the Namadgi Plan Management.

- 8.2 RFS** – TMc attended the RFS Conference in Mudgee NSW. NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons presented an overview of NSW Rural Fire Service. The Surf Lifesaving Association of Australia provided an interesting paper in relation to volunteer recruitment and retention. Some strategies and concepts could be useful to the RFS.

At the last ROAG meeting there was discussion on the fire appliances and a number of other business issues and the minutes of ROAG are available for members.

RFS GALA Dinner was an overwhelming success. Approximately 204 people attended including the Minister, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and RFS staff.

The Minister welcomed everybody, presented service awards and had time to meet many Volunteers and members and to discuss current issues in a casual atmosphere.

Mr Greg Bayliss (ABC) did a wonderful job as MC for the evening.

The Commissioner provided a list of RFS achievements and advised that the BAZ operational review and Comcen working arrangements were being addressed and would be completed by September.

Air Observer Training - currently being run from the Air Support Operation Centre.

Bushfire Mitigation Program –NC, NL and others are working through this year's program.

- 8.3 Fire Brigade** – The AIIMs training last week went well. Some 34 people attended from all Agencies.

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Project – A meeting was held last night and approximately 70 people attended from a range of different nationalities. There were presentations from a number of ESA staff and Ms Jan Dachs, Risk and Planning Unit has arranged access to a range of magazines that service different cultural groups. Those groups are keen to have Jan provide input that is relevant to emergency situations. Ms Dachs is coordinating other services to represent at a local CALD conference and has been given a 3hr presentation period.

- 8.4 Council Members** – Fire Weather Course – The Bureau of Meteorology runs a South-Eastern Australian pre fire season weather course in each of the NSW RFS Regions. NSW RFS have provided 8 positions for the ACT in their SE Region program.

## 9. *Confirmation of Next Meeting*

- The Chair closed the meeting at 6:30pm.
- The next council meeting will be held at the ASOC on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008 at 4:00pm with the main agenda item the presentation and discussion on Water Catchment Issues.