

MINUTES



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL (BFC)

11 August 2010

ACTRFS HEADQUARTERS

4 POINT COOK AVENUE

FAIRBAIRN ACT

Wednesday 11 August 2010

AGENDA

- 1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman**
- 2. Attendees/ Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of previous meeting**
- 4. Actions running sheet**
- 5. Correspondence**
 - Incoming
 - Outgoing
- 6. Agenda Items**
 - 6.1 Report on visit to Victoria by BFC Members
 - 6.2 Review of Victorian Royal Commission Report
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Outstanding Items/Issues**
- 9. Confirmation of next meeting**

AGENDA ITEM: 1 – 5

DATE: 11 August 2010 1600-1900Hrs

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

Meeting Opened Time: 1612 Close: 1854

1. Welcome by Chairman

Kevin Jeffery opened the meeting at 1612

2. Attendees/Apologies:

Kevin Jeffery	(KJ) Chair / Member
Michael Lonergan	(MIL) Member
Marion Leiba	(ML) Member
Christine Goonrey	(CG) Member
Tony Bartlett	(TB) Deputy Chair / Member
Tony Fearnside	(TF) Member
Simon Katz	(SK) Member
Neil Cooper	(NC) Ex-officio ACT Parks Conservation and Land Management
Andrew Stark	(AS) Ex-officio RFS Chief Officer
Beth Burgess	(BB) Secretariat

Apologies:

Cathy Parsons	(CP) Member
Peter Kanowski	(PK) Member
Kenn Batt	(KB) Member

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

Minutes of the 7th July 2010 meeting tabled.

Changes to the minutes to be updated:

No changes identified however **CG** wanted her disappointment noted about the lack of attendance at the Women in Wildfire Conference. Her comments were expressed to Fay Steward at the time but wanted to express her concerns at the Council as well. The Council agreed that it is appropriate to express their disappointment as well.

NC spoke on this item giving an overview of what the process was to get approval to send people to this conference but the time-frame was too short and the approval did not come in on time.

CG would like Council to keep their eye out for future opportunities in the future and supported women in fire fighting through these opportunities. **AS** mentioned there were two members from RFS (one staff and one volunteer) that attended this conference and their reports will be forwarded on to Council once they are done.

Motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting was moved by Christine Goonrey, seconded by Marion Leiba, and carried by the meeting.

4. Actions Running Sheet:

There are no outstanding actions from the previous meeting. Thanks to Neil for organising the trip and the people that helped us out down there.

Current Actions:

1. **AS** to forward on to Council the reports from the two ladies that attended the Women in Wildfire conference once they are complete.
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5. Correspondence

Incoming: Responses from Neil Cooper regarding the BOP

Outgoing: Nil

Action:

**NC to get the responses that Dylan drafted regarding the BOP back to Council for review.
NC to also bring the final report from last year's BOP to next Council meeting.
KJ to draft recommendations on the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission to the Minister.
Discussion around the processes and costs involved in the ACT (using Mt Franklin Rd as an example) to be held at a future meeting – perhaps in 6 months once information has come back from ACTPLA and others.**

AGENDA ITEM: 6.1

SUBJECT: Report on visit to Victoria by BFC Members

After the 2009 Victorian Bushfires it was identified by Council that it would be a great opportunity to go down to Victoria and have a look at the impact of these fires on the landscape and the people. Most of the visit focussed on Marysville as the weather deteriorated and the time ran out by the time the group got to Kinglake.

The comments from the Members that attended were:

CG said she was extremely grateful for being given the opportunity to go. She would not have understood without seeing the landscape and the area and also got an understanding of just how close it was to Melbourne. There are some things you just have to see on the ground and this trip was very useful.

SK mirrored these thoughts and found the opportunity to get a visual of the landscape and the topography was invaluable. Having the people standing there talking to us was really good too.

KJ said seeing where the fire ran was a really important part of the understanding and by looking at the landscape to get a really good sense of exactly what happened.

ML loved having the map on the bonnet of the cars and being able to translate that to what they were actually seeing and having the times on the map were just great. **ML** also mentioned the rebuilding process in VIC and quickly some have re-built but how slowly other things are happening.

AS talked about the flank turning into the front and assimilated it to a ski jump. He said the fire travelled approximately 60km in just over 3 hours which, when the wind changed, became a 60km front.

There was much discussion about the oval at Marysville and how it had an impact on the evacuation of the residents (and the size of it). This discussion turned to a presentation of the photo's **AS** took with lots of talk on each one which was followed by discussion on the convection column that collapsed on Marysville and the impact it had.

Action:

Nil

AGENDA ITEM: **6.2**

SUBJECT: **Review of Victorian Royal Commission Report**

AS gave a background to the release of this report saying that the recommendations are in general terms and explained the reasons why they needed to be. Also he noted that even though there are 67 recommendations in the report there are, in fact, 139 with all the dot points. The preliminary response to these recommendations is due at the end of August.

There was also discussion around National approach and local approach and interpretations based on jurisdiction. Council agreed to consider these notations when reviewing the recommendations. We need to wait until there is a national position developed before we can adopt it, Stay or Go is a good example of this.

The recommendations discussed in detail were:

Rec. 1 Bushfire Safety Policy and Education

Our aim with this is to define **a)** who we are talking to and **b)** what should we be telling them? Does Farm FireWise meet part of this recommendation already? Council recommends that the ACT participate in a national approach to incorporate bushfire education into school curricula, emphasising the need to various modules tailored to different age groups.

Council recommends:

- The ACT participate in any national approach to education;
- The resulting national approach is then adapted to the ACT situation;
- The level of effort and resources are allocated appropriately to this task; and
- The use of the CFU's is strongly encouraged as a key delivery mechanism for this recommendation.

Rec. 2 Revised approach to community Bushfire Safety education

The ACT needs to get education into schools at all levels with tailored curriculum for each level of schooling. This would need to be done on a national level (even though it used to be done at a state level here in the past). If we want to do that then the Council will need to take a leading role in it. The Community Fire Units are another way of educating the community which we currently have in place but unfortunately they are not allowed to do random community education as per the GSO.

Rec. 3, 4 & 5 Community refuges and vulnerable people

All agreed that this recommendation is very important and that we should have community refuges. The bigger issue is the rural areas and how we would evacuate them. **AS** mentioned that there is a body of work being done to identify the definition of vulnerable and also with the Elevated Fire Danger Plan. Documenting the locations of vulnerable people is important particularly in high fire danger areas, both rural and urban, especially in the ember zone. ACTRFS is liaising with John Brokerbry on this issue already and **AS** will come back to Council with the list that is provided. Council will advise the Minister that there is a process in place at the moment and any outcomes will be forthcoming.

Rec. 8 Training accreditation and standby for level 3 incident controllers

The ACT has at least one trained and accredited level 3 controller at present being **AS**. Council believes that this is an important requirement that we currently do not meet. It appears that we have been waiting for a long time for AFAC to come up with a standard, of which there have been draft competencies developed. Council notes that if we keep waiting for AFAC then we will be in the same position next year. The Chief Officer RFS is currently developing a framework to enable a gap analysis to be done in the ACT. The Council supports this approach, and would also encourage an interim measure from the Chief Officer that ensures the highest qualified people we have are able to undertake the role if necessary.

Rec. 16 Improved mapping support

The ACT has taken on a suite of Tolhurst Phoenix applications that are now being used by the ESA mapping section. Council agrees that this is an important issue for the ACT and acknowledges that we are covering it pretty well at present. Council supports the provision of support for IMT's in using this predictive model.

Rec. 27, 28 & 29 Single-Wire Earth Return (SWER) power line replacement

Council believes that the minimising of bushfire ignitions is an important issue, and the review of electricity infrastructure in ACT rural areas (and areas of NSW to the north and west of the ACT) would be beneficial to identifying any risks of bushfire ignition. **MIL** advised that there are no SWER's in the ACT, and never have been, but the problem that the VBRC identified that started some of the fires was the aging infrastructure – conductors, wires, poles etc. and the people doing the checking that were not sufficiently trained. This is an issue for ACTEW however this recommendation may not be supported.

Rec. 36 Arson

Arson is the single greatest cause of ignitions. Council notes that Richard Woods, in conjunction with ESA Training and the AFP, is developing a training and data collection framework to develop arson prevention and investigation strategies. The point of the data collection is to geo-map the incidence of fire, and the causes, and to use this information for fire prevention. Council recommends that the Minister see advice from the AFP regarding their involvement.

Rec. 37.2 Mapping Bushfire risk

There needs to be a definition on what is bushfire prone land. We need to get Government to review what this is and how it is defined. Bushfire prone land zoning should be done

Rec. 44 Fire resistant gardens

RFS is developing a fact sheet that will be available on the web for developing fire resistant gardens including information on fire resistant species and landscape and garden design. As a result of the VBRC recommendation these fact sheets will now also be distributed as a hard copy during Bushfire Awareness Week. The council commends the active broadcasting of this information to householders in the ember zone.

Rec. 51 Building code and modification of buildings

AS suggested these words are provided to the minister "Undertake a review of the ACT government planning and development approval processes to ensure there is early engagement

providing advice and assessment in relation to building codes, land use, planning, construction and bushland interface.”

Rec. 56 Hazard Reduction burning target of 5%

Council has participated in the development of the SBMP, and the regular endorsement of regional bushfire plans and the annual BOP, and is confident in our strategic hazard reduction processes. Council believes that the detail within the VBRC Report on which this recommendation was based has a better discussion about the strategic use of hazard reduction burning than the crude application in Recommendation 56. Council believes the ACT should be active in the National work and review after a national position is drafted.

AS will be submitting a response to this recommendation that says:

“A range of bushfire hazard reductions activities which include prescribed burn is undertaken in the ACT which exceeds the targets identified in this recommendation.”

Rec. 57 Reporting on hazard reduction outcomes

Council supports ongoing implementation of the BOP and public reporting system. Council notes that Neil Cooper is chairing a body on the development of national bushfire reporting indicators. Council supports keeping the monitoring funded.

Rec. 58 Upgrade of long-term data collection

In light of the number of positions that are not continuing in TAMS Council supports the need for continued resource allocation to achieve the items in the BOP.

AS will be providing a report into these recommendations to the VBRC with evidence on each one and will provide a copy of this report to Council once it is complete.

AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: Other Business

7.1 Re-appointment of Members

Members questioned whether the appointments have been finalised yet and were assured by **AS** that he has sent off the relevant paperwork and that the appointments should have come through already. **SK** advised he has received his letter but no-one else has despite them all being submitted at the same time. **AS** will follow up on the progress of the documentation and report back to Council.

ACTION: AS to follow up the paperwork for re-appointments.

7.2 Cost of Bushfires

MIL suggested that somewhere in the report it mentions the lack of expertise in the country on the assessing and establishing the cost of bushfires. Something needs to be done about it and this could potentially be a big opportunity for the ACT.

AS responded saying that the CRC is proposing a program in its extension which is looking specifically at economic costs which he is the lead user for this program and it is being conducted out of the ANU. Council agrees that it should be mentioned to the Minister. Council would also like to continue their membership on the CRC, separate to AFAC, despite the considerable cost. Council supports these comments being passed on the Minister.

AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: Next Meeting

Time and Date of Next Meeting:

1 September 2010 at 1600hrs at Fairbairn

DRAFT