



# ACT Bushfire Council Meeting

7 March 2012  
1600-1900  
ESA Headquarters

**Chair:** Peter Beutel (for Simon Katz)

**Note taker:** Lynda Scanes

**Attendees:** Christine Goonrey, Member  
Tony Fearnside, Member  
Natalie Hile, Member  
Michael Lonergan, Member  
Sarah Sharp, Member  
Cathy Parsons, Member

Andrew Stark, Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service  
Michael Joyce, Deputy Chief officer, ACT Rural Fire Service

**Meeting commencement:** 1615

**Meeting concluded:** 1915

## Minutes

**Agenda item:** *1.0 – Opening and introduction* **Presenter:** Peter Beutel

Peter Beutel (on behalf of Simon Katz) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Agenda item:** *2.0 – Apologies* **Presenter:** Peter Beutel

Kevin Jeffery, Andrew Stark (late arrival 5.40 pm), Paul Swain, Neil Cooper, Tony Bartlett, Marion Leiba and Simon Katz.

Moved: Cathy Parsons

Seconded: Christine Goonrey

**Agenda item:** *3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting* **Presenter:** Peter Beutel

**Discussion:**

The minutes from the previous meeting 9 February 2012 were accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting — with requested minor amendments.

**Agenda item:** *4.0 – Actions running sheet* **Presenter:** Peter Beutel

**Discussion:**

**Request for Council to be advised of TAMS restructure when process is finalised.**

It was noted that Neil Cooper was not available to attend the meeting to provide an update.

**ACTION:** Ongoing, Neil Cooper to provide report to next meeting.

**Request for Council to be updated on Elevated Fire Danger Plan.**

The Elevated Fire Danger Plan was tabled.

Michael Joyce advised that the Elevated Fire Danger Plan has been endorsed and is part of the Emergency Plan. The plan has been provided to ACT Government Agencies and can be put into action when required. The plan has been tested by SEMSOG through a desktop exercise.

Council members requested more time to read the document for further discussion at the next Bushfire Council Meeting.

**ACTION:** To remain on agenda.

**Presentation on how ACTRFS is changing as an agency, to be added as an agenda item - Ongoing.**

**ACTION:** To remain on agenda.

#### **Explanation on progress of IMT roles**

Michael Joyce advised that ACTRFS has been training for Level 3 IMT positions and will be inviting stakeholder agencies to participate in an IMT exercise in March or April to further test the functionality of the Emergency Management Room and ECC facilities and to enable officers from different agencies to practice working together in an IMT.

There was discussion concerning risk assessment and training needs analysis with a gap analysis to follow and a request for results to be provided to Bushfire Council. Michael Joyce advised that this will be provided at the next Captains Meeting and will also be incorporated within the Commissioner's presentation of Concept of Operations.

**ACTION:** ACTRFS — Training needs analysis to be tabled at the next Bushfire Council Meeting.

#### **Presentation – Concept of Operations**

Commissioner Mark Crowweller provided Council Members with an overview of progress to date of the Concept of Operations.

The intent is to ensure all key stakeholders are informed and agree, then present to Council before formalisation as a notifiable instrument.

The Commissioner thanked members for the invitation to speak at the meeting.

**ACTION:** Commissioner will circulate a discussion paper prior to the next Council Meeting. The Commissioner to be invited to discuss the Concept of Operations, item to be carried over to the next Council Meeting on 4 April 2012.

**Horse Agistment working group** — Peter Beutel requested a brief overview and history of the report.

The report '*Hightailing into the Fires Bushfire Planning on ACT Horse Agistment Centres*' was produced in relation to horses being evacuated in a fire.

In the bushfire season many horse owners spend time with their agisted horses in locations of high risk from bushfires. After the 2003 bushfires the ACTRFS had the report done into the bushfire operational planning of ACT based horse agistment properties. The report found that there was a need for more specific public communication/education into safety, evacuation planning and procedures. The ACTRFS has established a working group that has been pursuing recommendations from the report working with agistment owners and horse owners.

Michael Joyce advised that he had been given a brief from the group and he would send this out to Council members for their information. He agreed to ask Greg Potts to provide a more comprehensive report to the

next Council Meeting.

**ACTION:** On-going: — to remain on agenda.

**ACTRFS** — Michael Joyce to send out horse agistment progress report and invite Greg Potts to provide a briefing at the next Bushfire Council Meeting.

**Community Awareness/Preparedness Survey** — Bushfire Council raised the issue on a number of occasions relating to what the ACTRFS has in place for public awareness/preparedness in the event of bushfire.

Peter Beutel asked what ESA is doing to educate/engage with the community and how effective current community education is. The Commissioner advised of a change in nature of community warnings with the use of social media etc.

Michael Joyce advised that as a part of the funding provided to the media section within ESA, there was an amount set aside to assess the effectiveness of the community awareness campaigns that were carried out over the year.

Discussion concerning emergency warnings/preparedness and enquires about ESA/ACTRFS marketing procedures and the possibility of having a marketing agency provide a presentation at a Bushfire Council Meeting. It was noted that social media has improved; however members would like to know how ESA/ACTRFS is targeting getting the message to vulnerable/at risk people in educating awareness of procedures in emergency events.

**ACTION:** ACTRFS — Michael Joyce to seek information from the Media Section of ESA in relation to the assessment of community awareness campaigns and provide details to Council. To remain on agenda — for Bushfire Council's discussion next meeting.

**ACTION:** Manager ESA Media and Community Awareness to be invited to next Bushfire Council Meeting to speak about specific ACTRFS strategies for public communications.

<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>5.0 – Correspondence</b>	<b>Presenter:</b>	<b>Peter Beutel</b>
<b>Incoming:</b>			
<u>Nil</u>			
<b>Outgoing:</b>			
<u>Nil</u>			
<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>6.0 – Chief Officers Report</b>	<b>Presenter:</b>	<b>Michael Joyce</b>

**Discussion:**

Michael Joyce advised that ACTRFS responded to a few small fires during the unusually wet bushfire season.

ACTRFS crews provided support to ACT State Emergency Services during storm season, assisting the ACT Community by pumping out areas that had flooded, clearing fallen trees and welfare checks for people in flood affected areas. ACTRFS staff and volunteers provided support within the SES Incident Management Team at ESA Headquarters. The ACTRFS had responded to over 300 requests for assistance that had come through the SES hotline.

Council members advised that ESA media notified the ACT Community very well during the recent storm incidents.

The ACTRFS stand at the Royal Canberra Show went off really well with volunteers assisting by educating people of how to prepare themselves in case of a bushfire. A number of members of the public showed interest in becoming potential new ACTRFS Volunteers.

The ACTRFS has conducted Incident Management Team training with another training session scheduled for 16 March 2012. The training will then be expanded to include other agencies including TAMS and the ACTF&R.

Peter Beutel requested ACTRFS provide a training needs analysis including the number of incident controllers with Level 3 IMT.

Michael Joyce advised that the bushfire season will officially end on 31 March 2012.

**ACTION: ACTRFS to provide training needs analysis including the number of incident controllers with Level 3 IMT qualification.**

<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>7.0 – BFC Project Report</b>	<b>Presenter: Peter Beutel</b>
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### **Discussion**

The ACT Bushfire Council 2012 Performance Management Inquires Recommendations into the 2003 Canberra Bushfires — Revision of Fire Fighting Equipment and System report was tabled for discussion.

Council members discussed the recommendations in the report.

Doogan Report. The recommendation stated ESA/ACTRFS ensure guaranteed availability during the bushfire season of heavy fire fighting machinery and qualified operators ready (standup arrangements) for immediate deployment. There was discussion around the TAMS contracted dozer and graders, and whether there was a list of other contractors who could be called in at short notice if extra resources were needed. Andrew Stark advised that most operators in the region did not meet the necessary safety requirements likes ROPS and FOPS. He suggested that we could tap into the NSW contracted equipment, which did meet the safety requirements.

Council discussed the addition of a recommendation to the report asking about the effectiveness of the current ComCen model. The suitability of heavy fire-fighting machinery/equipment, contractors and the use and effectiveness of retardants was discussed at length.

**ACTION: Bushfire Council to put a formal recommendation that the comments become an action in the 2012 report:**

**ACTRFS to follow-up procurement methodology regarding availability of machinery, drivers and provide clarity around conditions of contract arrangements.**

Aerial firefighting — the use/effectiveness of fire retardant in remote areas.

Doogan Report. The recommendation stated ESA/ACTRFS in consultation with TAMS investigate and implement arrangements for use of fire retardant in remote areas.

The report recommended ACTRFS and NSW Rural Fire Service conduct a joint trial to assess the effectiveness of the use of fire retardant. Council enquired if this had been achieved. Andrew Stark advised that this trial had been done via the Bushfire CRC and conforms to the recommendation.

There was detailed discussion in relation to comments regarding the use of fire retardant in remote areas

Andrew Stark advised that the Incident Controller can use fire retardant in any area of the ACT. However, a risk assessment using the advice and maps provided by TAMS regarding sensitive/high value areas of environmental risk would be considered. This tool would have to be used in cases such as fighting fires like 2003 (type 3 fires).

There was extensive discussion regarding the review of bushfire arrangements and the ability for Bushfire Council to provide additional issues that go beyond the specific recommendations. It was agreed that

additional issues can be added to the risk register.

**ACTION: ACTRFS — Andrew Stark to provide Bushfire Council with the trial of fire retardant report conducted by Bushfire CRC.**

Michael Lonergan raised an issue on behalf of volunteers concern regarding the current roll-out of the trial of the Mobile Data System (MDS) and advised of correspondence sent to ACTRFS.

Andrew Stark stated that ACT Fire and Rescue and ACT Ambulance Service have been using MDS in their vehicles for a number of years.

Members discussed the issue and agreed that Mr Lonergan raise the volunteers concern to Bushfire Council in a written brief.

**ACTION: Mr Lonergan to provide Bushfire Council with a brief — Subject MDS.**

There was detailed discussion in relation to comments regarding the ComCen arrangements. Some time ago, Group Captains discussed obtaining a list of requirements about what was required from the ComCen as a service provider to the ACTRFS.

The voice recording system used in ComCen was discussed. ACTRFS volunteers would like a review into ACT Fire Brigade answering the initial call and would prefer an ACTRFS call taker to be the initial contact.

Andrew Stark stated that Bushfire Council would need to provide justification for any recommendation to change the existing ComCen arrangements.

**ACTION: Mr Lonergan to provide Bushfire Council with a brief— Subject ComCen arrangements.**

<b>Agenda item:</b>	<b>8.0 – Other Business</b>	<b>Presenters:</b>	<b>Christine Goonrey and Peter Beutel</b>
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**Discussion:**

8.1 - Re-assessment of fire management plans due to weather delays

Paper to be emailed out of session (Christine Goonrey) — Result on the Conservation Council appeal on the Coombs development — due to the in-confidence caveat this item was withheld from the minutes. To be discussed further at a future Bushfire Council Meeting.

**Discussion:**

8.2 - Seek Council's agreement to the final document circulated (by Tony Bartlett) on the strategic review of ACT fire arrangements, including who is leading each topic and timing of the presentations.

The Chair noted the final document circulated prior to the meeting and re- iterated the person/s responsible, the topic and timeframes in the review.

Conclusion/Decisions:

**Bushfire Council Members agreed with the table of who is doing what for the review.**

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The Chair thanked members for attending the meeting.

Meeting concluded: 7.06pm.

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 4 April 2012.**