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| act rural fire service | ACT Bushfire Council Meeting | 3rd April 2013 |
| 16:00 to 18:50 |
| Black Mountain 1 & 2 Meeting Rooms  ACTESA Headquarters |

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| Chair: | | Kevin Jeffery (KJ) | | | | Secretariat: | | | Brioni Young (BY) |
| Attendees: | | Christine Goonrey, Member  Cathy Parsons (CP), Member  Marion Leiba (MLe), Member  Sarah Sharp (SS), Member  Natalie Hile (NH), Member  Michael Lonergan (ML), Member  Tony Bartlett (TB), Member | | | | Dominic Lane (DL) ESA Commissioner  Andrew Stark (AS) CO ACTRFS  Michael Joyce (MJ) DCO ACTRFS  Paul Swain (PS) CO ACTF&R | | | |
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| Meeting commencement: | | | 16.00 | **Meeting concluded:** | | | | 18:50 | |

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| Minutes |
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| Agenda item: | ***1.0 – Apologies*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Neil Cooper | | | |

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| Agenda | ***2.0 – Education & Awareness Update*** | Presenter | **Virginia Dixon** |
|  | See Attachment Below | | |
| Agenda item: | ***3.0 – Acceptance of minutes of 6 Mar 13 meeting*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Discussion: | The minutes from the previous meeting held on 6th March 2013 were accepted as a true and accurate record.  Accepted by Marion Leiba and seconded by Michael Lonergan. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***4.0 – Update on action items arising from previous meetings*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Discussion: | Refer to implementation of action items report (attached to end of minutes). | | |
| Agenda item: | ***5.0 – Correspondence*** | Presenter: | **CO RFS** |
| Discussion: | Nil | | |
| Agenda item: | ***6.0 – Chief Officers Report*** | Presenter: | **CO RFS** |
| Discussion: | **RFS Ops March 2013**  **Bush & Grass Fires ACT**  There were no significant fires within the Territory during February 2013. After the hot weather in January, February saw much cooler weather and with some heavy rain experienced, the bush and grass fire risk has eased considerably.  The ACTRFS responded to 2 bush/grass fire incidents in March.  **Public Events/Community Awareness**  During the period the ACTRFS has also participated in a number of public and community events including:  The Gungahlin Brigade attended the Bergman Anglican School Fete. The Gungahlin brigade members provided advice and information to the public on bushfire awareness and preparedness;  Guises Creek Brigade held a display at the popular Snowy Hydro South Care Open Day. The Guises brigade members provided advice and information to the public on bushfire awareness and preparedness; and  The display continues at the Mt Stromlo observatory to promote and educate the public on bushfire safety.  **Hazard Reduction Burns**  Hazard reduction burns took place in the following locations:  Umbagong Park; and  Stirling Ridge.  Volunteer Brigades also assisted with 2 burns in NSW  Brindabella Valley; and  Webbs Ridge.  **Farm Fire Wise**  105 Farm Fire Wise plans are in place across the 146 Rural Lessees of the ACT. A further 10 are under development at this time. A program of recontacting people who have previously declined the development of Farm Fire Wise plans for their leased areas has been instigated and has resulted in most of the new plans under development at this time . Simon Katz is leading a review into the program as part of his new role with RFS. The review will seek input from a number of areas to ensure it continues to deliver quality outcomes. Simon has made contact with the Rural Lessee’s Association for their feedback.  **Commonwealth Managed Land**  (Map Tabled)  The RFS has completed an audit of Commonwealth Managed Land within the ACT and is producing a map that shows the areas of Commonwealth Land, the type of plan for each of these areas, the time period it covers and produced/renewal dates. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***7.0 – Update from Auditor General*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Discussion: | KJ talked to Jonathon Brown from AGS and they stated they were ‘still working on the Audit report”. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***8.0 – Working Arrangements of the Council*** | Presenter: | **Chair** |
| Discussion: | Discussed with Actions items. A working group with 3 BFC and 3 RFS/ESA representatives will be established to develop the TORs for Council. The ESA Commissioner will provide secretariat support to the working group. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***9.0 – Land Managers Report (TAMS)*** | Presenter: | **Christine Goonrey** |
| Discussion: | It was agreed to include the TAMS Land Manager reports as a ‘Standing item’ on future agendas. | | |
| Agenda item: | ***10.0 – Communication Strategy*** | Presenter: | **Christine Goonrey** |
| Discussion:  Action: | Discussed as part of Agenda item 7. It was suggested that there needs to be an overarching document detailing the communication strategy relating to fire, management and fire awareness and how they all interlink.  The Commissioner explained that one of his statutory functions is Community Education. One of the governance arrangements in place is the establishment of the Community education group which Darren Cutrupi (ESA Media) runs. He suggested there may be an opportunity to link in with that group as it is very important to get information and messages out to the community.  There was discussion about the penetration and acknowledgment of social media and what the impact is. The Commissioner stated that Darren Cutrupi can provide statistics which can be tabled and attached to the minutes. In the recent peak activity, there was more volunteer interest and “The Fires Near me phone app” was in the top 5 downloads for example.  Darren Cutrupi and /or TAMS media to meet with Council to discuss the Communication strategies, focusing on the concept of what we are trying to do for fire management and whether the community may be reacting against it. | | |
|  | ***9.0 – Next meeting*** | Presenter: | **Secretariat** |
|  | The meeting was closed at 6.50pm. The next meeting is scheduled for 1st May 2013. | | |

**ACT Rural Fire Service response to the**

**DRAFT ACT Emergency Services Agency Telephone survey of Awareness and Attitudes to bushfire preparedness and emergency communications prior to Summer 2012-13**

**(Conducted by Winton Sustainable Research Strategies, November 2012)**

**Section A**  ***(Virginia Dixon’s comments in italics)***

**Summary of findings:**

* 1006 people sampled (18+ years) aligned with key demographics of Canberra community.

1. **Prepare. Act. Survive (P.A.S.)**

* Only 1 in 10 (9.4%) knew the “Prepare. Act. Survive.” bushfire slogan without prompting and very few of these recalled it correctly (0.7% out of 9.4%). However, once told what the slogan was knowledge of its key elements and underlying message was quite high. Less than 1 in 10 (7.9%) were unable to contribute a meaning to the slogan.

*So they have heard it somewhere at some point but it weren’t able to recall without prompting, so it’s not embedded yet. This is a good result based on the short time the slogan has been in circulation (since 2009) – early days – and behavioural change takes many, many years to embed. This would demonstrate it was a good choice of words in the slogan, that they are relatively well understood and that some form of awareness is getting through, even though it is in an initial and basic form. This provides a good platform from which to build on and was not unexpected as it is still a new concept.*

* Nearly 8 in 10 people (78%) related P.A.S. to either bushfire survival plans, seeking out and acting on daily fire danger ratings, activating bushfire survival plans and that the safest place is to be away from the fire.

*Do not assume that this means they act on/fill in the Bushfire Survival Plans, but some level of awareness is there. Next stage is to have them fill one out and then act on it.*

* Older people tend to mention practical aspects and actions whereas younger people are more likely to mention planning aspects. Women far more likely to mention planning aspects than men.

*This type of information will assist us in targeting our future awareness.*

* Nearly half (46.5%) say they have taken some form of action largely due to experiences/living through the 2003 bushfires. The numbers saying they did take some form of action is higher in 2012 survey than in 2011 (46.5% versus 32.1%).
* Of the 53.5% who did not take action, around half had not done so because they felt they were not at risk, it was not their responsibility; or they were too busy (in order of highest to lowest score).

*More did not take action than those that did. Just over 500 people did not take action as they felt they were “not at risk”, which is of some concern. We are currently plotting the nominated streets on a map with Ember zone to visually see if the 53.5% who believe they are not at riskactually aligns with the number who fall within a high risk area. This confirms the need to better define bushfire risk for the community and help them to better self assess this in its most basic form.*

1. **Risk**

* 6 in 10 (59.8%) people claim there is grassland or bushland within 300m or 3-4 streets of their boundary.

*So almost 60% of the respondents live within/near an area that may be high risk.* *Yet in question 2.1 apparently around 53.5% of total respondents did not classify themselves as at risk. Needs more assessment.*

* Close to 3 in 4 (72.3%) say that they undertook 1 or more of the activities that we classified as putting them “at risk of bushfire” at some point, eg. Horse riding, bushwalking, camping, mountain biking, working in rural areas etc.

*So even if they are not living in a high risk bushfire environment there are 72.3% who may be exposed to bushfire risk at some stage in their lives through work or recreational activities. This is essentially when people are actually least aware or prepared. This may be a result of living in the bush capital where accessing the rural or bushland areas is easy and as a result, wide spread. As such a targeted campaign to help people see the links between say, owning a horse and their bushfire risk would be a worth wild direction for future program.*

1. **Farm FireWise**

* *Issue with section 2.2 Farm Fire Wise program, see Section B for relevant comment.*

1. **FDR**

* Close to 9 in 10 people (87.1%) claim to know what the FDR is with almost all able to provide reasonably accurate description. *(Interviewer was provided with various descriptions in a table format from which they could tick as the interviewee made mention).* Around 40.5% of these had actually sort out the FDR in one form or another and of those that knew, but did not seek it out felt they were not at risk.

*This is a significantly high statistic particularly when comparing it to the much lower recognition in Victoria post 2009 surveys. The consistent approach to educating about the FDR over the years may well be paying off.*

1. **Emergency Alerts**
2. 6 in 10 people (58.7%) say they know what these are unaided. When prompted with a definition there was no real change in the numbers that had an understanding.

*So those that don’t know what these alerts are really have no idea, no matter how much prompting provided. Having said that, we are only in the early stages of this concept (a new concept launched only three years ago) and as such is this is a good result and confirms that the consistent and basic level approach may be having an effect. However, there is still 58.7% who do not have any recognition of what these alerts are, not even when prompted, so it is in our interest to make them aware through targeted education.*

1. **Bushfire Survival Plans (BSP)**

* *Issue with this section as I am concerned about the difference in “community interpretation” of a BSP and ours. Detailed issues listed in Section B.*
* 1 in 5 people (22.3%) say they have a BSP which is lower than 2011 survey of 34.2%. Older people more likely to have one.

*This may well be related to the fast/busy lifestyle of younger people and that they are less likely to put pen to paper as our BSP cannot be filled out online. Older people have a tendency to still take the time to use pen and paper even if they are technologically advanced and also tend to have responsibility for the safety of others, such as family (vested interest/guilt/a need to do it). Older people also start to accept they are not “invincible”. This result backs up need to develop a BSP app to connect with younger group. And upgrade our current BSP to simplify and allow online completion.*

* Of the 22% who had one, 71.4% of these say that they lived through 2003 or experienced bushfire in past, 32.6% just wanted to be prepared, and 25.1% have children or vulnerable family members, with only 16.1% of the 22% claiming to live in high risk area.

*This last number is of concern as there were at least 500 interviewees that said they live within 300m or 3-4 streets from grassland or bush land yet only 16.1% of a lowly 22% actually recognised that living in a high risk area meant they should have/complete a BSP. On the positive side we can target people with families and vulnerable family members to increase action. The high number who had a BSP because they had had experience of bushfire will fade over time, so we need to work on improving peoples understanding of their risk and help them to identify that they are in fact vulnerable to bushfire. Perhaps through their recreational activities would facilitate greater buy-in. Simply pushing the BSP is not working, it would appear you need a vested interest to do it.*

* Of the 22% claiming to have a BSP, 75.9% claim to have discussed their plan with family and neighbours, which is slightly higher than previous survey at 69.5%.

*Concern with this question/statistic, refer to comment in section B.*

* Of the 77.7% who did not prepare a BSP, 76.3% said it was because they were not at risk of bushfire.

*That means that of the 1000 people surveyed 76.3% say they are not at risk from bushfire when we previously indicated that 59.8% live within a distance of grass or bushland which could place them at risk? Bushfire risk continues to be a confusing and unknown aspect of bushfire threat for our community, as such it needs simplification and future focus.*

* *More alarming are* the 3 in 10 people who say they do not know what to do to prepare a BSP and the 11.2% of this 77.7% indicated that they are too busy to prepare one.
* *Whilst we will never reach everyone with our messages, everyone should at least know what a BSP is and where to get one should they actually want to prepare one. We need to look at simplification of the package to help limit the time commitment, or to improve how we “sell it” to the community so they are not turned off/overwhelmed from the start. We also need better penetration with “where to get it” if nothing else.*
* 29.8% said they would prepare a BSP if they moved to a bushfire risk area. *Or perhaps also if they understood that they were actually already in one.* 27.2% said they would prepare one if fires were imminent, a further 13.3% if their block was declared to be in a bushfire prone area and a further 10.4% if they were better informed about what to do.

*So there is a potential 80.7% community members that we could be encouraged to prepare a BSP if they knew/understood they were at risk and/or were better informed about BSP’s. This is an achievable education/awareness target for ESA if it were to be a focus and commitment of capacity/resources to working on the risk component and improving the communication of this within our community.*

1 in 8 have indicated that nothing would motivate them to do a BSP.

*This is not a surprising figure and is an accepted outcome of any awareness / educational / behavioural change program. If you set out to reach everyone you are doomed to fail. Just need to be aware of this stat.*

1. **Bushfire Awareness Program Communication**

* 1 in 4 people (26.4%) say they have taken part in or received bushfire awareness, education, engagement over the past 12 months. Mainly through letter box drops (7.9%) or information in the mail (6.2%), *7.3*% say they have seen advertisements, radio (6.2%) and a further 3.3% say they have seen facts sheets, booklets or checklists.

*The ESA has not undertaken any ‘strategic’ bushfire letter box drops in the past few years, must be due to some isolated brigades and CFU’s or perhaps the interviewees are confused about the intensive letter box drop ESA did 3 years ago? The TV would have been NSWRFS advertisements and the figure of 7.9% is much lower than expected, might have been too early to monitor their success as the adds had only just been launched. Also surprised about the low number associated with radio which was the main focus of our bushfire awareness week this year – as such are we getting the results we think we are/want through radio??? RFS have not actively pushed fact sheets etc. due to poor design but are currently working to rectify this before 2013-14 season.*

* 3 in 4 people (72.8%) say they would like to receive or take part in some kind of awareness program, education, engagement mainly through fact sheets, booklets or checklists (31.3%), letter box drops with info (26.6%) and mail (25%), radio adds/programs (14.4%), TV ads or programs (12.5%), email (9.8%) and bushfire help line (9.8%).

*We are currently developing new and professional fact sheets and booklets as well as new FFW documents for the 2013-14 season; we can also align these new documents with a letter box drop program run in high risk areas. We will also develop a better suite of scripts for Canberra Connect and provide in-house training sessions for them. When this is developed we can really push Canberra Connect as “our bushfire help line”. Perhaps raise with Canberra Connect the idea of providing a service whereby a few specialist callers are trained up intensively to provide this specialist advice rather than training all with basic info????? Low key, minimal resource requirements and little budget impact but should meet the need if these stats are correct.*

* Whilst there was no real difference in who received or took part in awareness, education, engagement programs between the genders, more women (85.1%) than men (58.9%) would like to take part in them. *This confirms/justifies my current and intended program to engage and improve bushfire awareness amongst the horse community, which is largely female dominated; as well as my desire to bring the CFS Fiery Women Program into the rural areas of the ACT.*

1. **Seeking information**

* 71.6% said they would seek information during a bushfire through the radio, 42.4% through the internet, 25.2% TV, 11.8% through emergency services *(although I am confident this may have improved following the 2013 January bushfires)*, and 11.7% would access the ACT Government.
* Older people, 60+ years favoured the radio (88.8%) as opposed to 49.7% among 18-39 year olds. As expected amongst the younger age group (18-39 years) 66.1% favoured the internet and 37.6% television.
* 1 in 4 people (23.1%) have visited the ESA website, which is an increase from 2011 survey results of 16.1%. *Again I believe this would have increased dramatically post the January 2013 bushfires in Namadgi, combined with the 10 year anniversary of 2003*. 11.9% say they have been to the NSWRFS *site (more coming to ours than to NSWRFS).*
* 1 in 4 people (23.2%) say they would use social media to enquire about an emergency.

*I believe that this will have increased dramatically post 2013 January bushfires because results from the period of 8to to 14th January we had:*

* + - *318,288 hits on our ESA website home page, 44,401 on the ACTRFS and 15,516 ACT F&R homepage. Of these 121,849 were unique/new visitors;*
    - *From 1,800 facebook followers to 7,975 (6,175 new followers)*
    - *From 4,200 to 5,281 Twitter followers;*

Of the 23.2% mentioned above, 95.3% of them nominate Face book as the preference

*This confirms/justifies our commitment to the system, the need for more work in this area and better support and capacity in social media.*

**Section B**

**Issue with the draft that will require alteration/re-working:**

1. There are so many questions relating to risk, the report lacks the ability to bring all risk associated questions together to not only make some sense of it all, but to ensure there is no contradictions. For example,

* Table 2.5 identified that of those that had not taken any preparatory action for bushfire, 50% believed they were not at risk;
* Table 2.6 identifies that 59.6% are within 300 metres or 3-4 streets of grassland or bushland area and therefore potentially at risk;
* Table 2.8 then indicates that 72.3% of people are in fact at risk due to some form or recreational/work interaction with bushfire prone areas;
* Table 2.12 states that 63% of the respondents do not consider themselves at risk; and
* Table 2.18 says that of the people who had not prepared a plan 76.3% did not feel they lived in an area at risk from bushfire.

So what does this all mean?

1. Major concern over the Farm FireWise section. The information above table 2.6 indicates that, *“Only 8 people claim to live on a farm or rural property”,* and of those, *“only 7 claim to have participated in FFW”*. Whilst this sounds reasonable, the next section goes on to say that, *“Of the 8 people living on rural properties, 3 say they have participated in FFW program”.* This needs to be further investigated.

Not sure what this all means, is it 7 of the 8 participated or 3 of the 8 participated?? Then they report that actually 4 were not really “rural” because they, *“live in streets adjacent to the Canberra Nature Park in Kambah”,* and as such the interviewees had made an incorrect claim/have incorrect knowledge that they were rural??? Need to re-analyse and re-write.

1. Concern over analysis of the bushfire awareness plan section. I think we can only assume someone has a BSP if they have downloaded /accessed the ESA version and completed it, with backup plan. I am not convinced that the community’s definition of a bushfire survival plan would actually meet our definition. As such, is implementing a small number of preparatory things better than none at all? For instance, if you sweep your deck and clear your gutters is it going to help if you have a tonne of shredded mulch on you heavily vegetated gardens which are all up against the house and below the timber deck? Perhaps we need to re-phrase the question - Have you completed an ESA BSP? If so, do you review it/practice it before each fire season? If not, do you have your own plan? Is it written down or in your head? Have you thought about a backup plan?
2. Of the 22% claiming to have a BSP, 75.9% claim to have discussed their plan with family and neighbours, which is slightly higher than previous survey at 69.5%. Not sure what “talking to your family and neighbours” means to the general community? If it is just to tell your kids that, “we’re leaving rather than staying to defend”, without sitting down with them and talking through what each family member thinks/wants to do, or what they would do if they get stuck at home and can’t leave, then can they really classify it as having been “discussed”? Not sure that there is a way you can ask this question without some form of doubt so perhaps leave this question out of future surveys?
3. In table 2.20, what is the difference between letter box drops and information in the mail?

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| RFS LOGO.png act BUSHFIRE COUNCIL  implementation of ACTION ITEMS |

**~Principles~**

* The register will include all action items that have yet to be implemented or where implementation is in progress. The status of implementation should be reviewed at each Bushfire Council meeting.
* The status update information is the only information that will be regularly updated in the relevant column. The only exception to this is if a revised completion date is suggested, the status must clearly detail rationale for this change.
* Status of implementation will continue to be regularly updated until action item is fully implemented.
* Action items will only be indicated as “Complete” after due consideration by the Bushfire Council.

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| **Action Item / Issue1** | **Originating Meeting date** | **Responsibility** | **Proposed/Revised completion date** | **General Comment** | **Status Update** |
| 1. Discuss the Councils budget allocation in relation to Council members   **6 Mar update**: A letter to be sent to the ESA Commissioner detailing concerns about the $15K Council budget not being enough. | 5/9/12 | Kevin Jeffery & Cathy Parsons | **April 2013** | Under PT holders and public office agreement payments for each meeting are determined by the Chair.  KJs suggestion to the Commissioner was that 2 – 3hours meetings will be paid at the 3 hour rate to help compensate the travel time. The Chair at the time will make a determination on the rate for meetings under 2 hours. Time put in by members to prepare various reports and attend field visits etc will be submitted in the budget request. | Complete |
| 1. A Financial year Business plan will be prepared by Council as part of the budget | 6/4/13 | Members | **May 2013** | Commissioner requires input and advice from the CO’s on the budget. Ensure that Council is also supporting TAMS and the other Land management agencies. |  |
| 1. Chase up a response to the BFC Annual report and the 10 year report from the Minister | 6/4/13 | Andrew Stark | **May 2013** | Updated Action item |  |
| 1. Discuss with the Commissioner what material will be placed on the website and advise members.   **April update:** Further Note: Include this information in the TOR which is now being developed. | 6/2/13 | Andrew Stark  ESA Commissioner | **March 2013** |  | Ongoing |
| 1. Email itinerary for the Mt Ginnini Field trip to members. | 6/2/13 | Neil Cooper | **20/2/2013** | POSTPONED AGAIN DUE TO WEATHER. | Monitoring |
| 1. Members to read the ***‘Redefinition of Bushfire Prone Area of the ACT’*** *as tabled by the CO ACTF&R* and send any comments to Paul Swain ASAP | 6/2/13 | Members | **15/2/13** | The brief was provided to the Minister which and accepted their recommendations for further developments. A proposal for the change of Legislation will take place.  PS reiterated that the support from Council for the proposal was extremely helpful. | Complete |
| 1. Read the “Boards and Committees” handbook in detail and determine what needs to be remunerated so AS can carry it forward | 6/3/13 | Members | **April 2013** | The Chair needs to resolve that the Council needs to include the extra activities (special reports and field trips etc which the Chair has the authority to legitimise) into the BP in order to formalise. Attendance to Conferences etc are beyond the Chairs endorsement but should still be included in the BP. | Complete (Included in Action item 1) |
| 1. The Commissioner has been provided the ‘resolutions’ from today’s meeting for further action   **April Updated Action item: The TOR on the Councils roles is to be prepared** | 6/3/13 | Commissioner,  Secretariat  3 Council members.  3 ESA/RFS staff. | **April 2013** | To ensure the Councils role is clearly understood and documented it was agreed to prepare a TOR. The ESA Commissioner will organise a secretariat and KJ will arrange 3 Council members and 3 RFS/ ESA staff. |  |
| 1. Council will look to consider the NSWRFS proto type Category 6 Grasslands truck for future purchase. | 6/3/13 | Members | **No specific date** | The vehicle is presently touring NSW and when it comes to Canberra AS will arrange for Council to inspect | Monitoring |
| 1. Discuss the Communication strategies with Council members. | 6/4/13 | Darren Cutrupi / TAMS Media | **May / June** | The ESA Commissioner will organise a meeting with DC and TAMS in regard to the Communication Strategy discussions and then arrange for one or both to discuss with Council |  |