



Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee

MEETING MINUTES

DOC23/37501

Meeting:	No. 104 Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC)
Location:	Via MS Teams and Berrigan Meeting Room, NSW RFS, 4 Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127
Date and time:	16 March 2023 – 1030
Members:	Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service (Chair)
	Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell APM, NSW Police Force
	Dr Atticus Fleming AM, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
	Mr George Schneider, NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Crown Lands
	Dr Ross Dickson, Forestry Corporation of NSW
	Dr Leigh Pilkington, NSW Department of Primary Industries
	Mr Robert Conroy, Nature Conservation Council of NSW
	Mr Garry Grant, NSW Farmers Association
	Cr Giacomo Arnott, Local Government NSW
	Superintendent Liz Ferris, NSW Rural Fire Service Association
	Ms Tanya Koeneman, Cultural Burning representative
	Mr Kim de Govrik, Public Service Association
	Mr Leighton Drury, Fire Brigade Employees Union
	Mr Scott Campbell, NSW Rural Fire Service Association
Attendees:	Deputy Commissioner Peter McKechnie AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart APM, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Assistant Commissioner Ben Millington, NSW Rural Service
	Assistant Commissioner Stuart Midgley AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Mr Laurence McCoy, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Ms Renee Armstrong, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Ms Rebel Talbert, Forestry Corporation of NSW
	Chief Superintendent Jeremy Stubbs, Fire and Rescue NSW (representing Deputy Commissioner Megan Stiffler)
	Ms Naomi Stephens, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
	Mr Scott Donohoe, Fire and Rescue NSW
	Ms Sharon Stanley, NSW Rural Fire Service
Apologies:	Deputy Commissioner Megan Stiffler, Fire and Rescue NSW
	Cr Julie Griffiths, Local Government NSW
	Mr Dominic Lane, NSW Reconstruction Authority (formerly Resilience NSW)
	Mr Charlie Jacobs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
	Mr Yuseph Deen, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
	Mr Cameron Chaffey, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
	Ms Kate Woods, NSW Rural Fire Service
Minutes by:	Committees, NSW Rural Fire Service

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to Meeting 104 and noted apologies received.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 1030.

2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3 Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of BFCC Meeting 102, held on 10 August 2022, were tabled and accepted. (1st Mr Robert Conroy, 2nd Commissioner Rogers).

The minutes of BFCC Meeting 103, held on 6 October 2022 were tabled. Mr Grant noted that as he was not a member of the BFCC in October 2022, he should not be included in the apologies received.

Decision 104.1 The Committee resolved to endorse the minutes of Meeting 102, held on 10 August 2022, and of Meeting 103, held on 6 October 2022 once amended, for signature by the Chair.

4 Open Action Items

The Action Items were tabled and all actions discussed. The Action Items have been updated in accordance with the discussions (refer to Table 1).

Decision 104.2 The Committee resolved to note the status of actions.

5 Correspondence

The Correspondence Register was tabled and noted.

Ms Stephens requested a copy of approved Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plans to understand plans across the state.

Cr Arnott requested to be provided with all correspondence to ensure nothing needed to be discussed at the meeting. The Chair advised due to the file size of certain correspondence it could not be included in agenda papers. Ms Armstrong advised the next phase of Guardian would provide visibility on approved plans, however, would investigate interim options to share correspondence.

Decision 104.3 The Committee resolved to note the Correspondence Register.

6 Standing Items

6.1 Operations Co-ordination Plans update

AC Millington provided a verbal update. All Section 52 plans are current for 2022/23 bush fire season. The template for the new Operations Co-ordination Plans has been revised to reflect changes in the Australian Fire Danger Rating System.

The draft template will be circulated to the BFCC Standing Advisory Sub-Committee (SAS) at the end of the March for out of session endorsement prior to submission for BFCC approval.

Decision 104.4 The Committee resolved to note the status of the Operations Co-ordination Plans.

6.2 Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMPs)

The updated MIA and Mid Murray draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMP) remain on hold, awaiting resolution of the local government area boundary issue.

Eight BFMCs did not lodge an updated draft BFRMP within the previous submission period in accordance with legislative requirements, however, existing BFRMPs still apply in these areas. All of these BFMCs have started the development of their next-generation Bush Fire Risk Management Plan.

Mr McCoy noted a large number of plans were nearing the approval stage and commended National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and RFS personnel for their efforts in collaborating with BFMCs to submit plans.

Decision 104.5 The Committee resolved to note the status of the Bush Fire Risk Management Plans.

6.3 Status of Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plans

The FAFT plans of 53 BFMCs have been approved, with two Committees' plans outstanding. The Lord Howe Island BFMC will meet at the end of March and the Federation BFMC's draft FAFT plan is currently under review.

Decision 104.6 The Committee resolved to note the FAFT Plans Report.

7 Standing Advisory Sub-Committee (SAS) Progress Report

The paper was tabled and taken as read.

Discussions have resumed with the NSW Reconstruction Authority on recovery processes and a finalised policy will be provided to the BFCC shortly. The RFS is clarifying Treasury Policy on Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements in order to align this with Make Safe provisions.

Decision 104.7 The Committee resolved to note the Standing Advisory Sub-committee Report.

8 Hazard Reduction Report

AC Midgley tabled the Hazard Reduction report, noting little activity had been possible given the recent dry conditions. It was hoped the weather would improve by autumn when 55% of hazard reduction work is typically completed.

Cr Arnott queried why the report did not show any fire permits had been issued by RFS or FRNSW to BFMCs within Sydney. C/Supt Stubbs advised the data feed had been disrupted and was not available for the report. The Chair requested that data issues be stated in future reports for clarity.

Decision 104.8 The Committee resolved to note the Hazard Reduction Report.

9 Crown Lands Aerial Fire Trail Inspections Program

Mr Schneider presented a summary of the Crown Lands Aerial Fire Trail Inspections Program.

Mr Conroy queried if there was a scope for an interagency approach, particularly for trails across other government agency boundaries. Mr Schneider advised there was scope for this, however, other agencies already had systems and processes in place.

In response to a query from the Chair, Mr Schneider advised data collected from inspections was used for a variety of purposes, including assessment and maintenance of trail conditions and to provide visibility on the point-in-time operational status of trails.

The Chair noted the need for a repository of real-time information on the status of fire trails state wide, providing visibility to all emergency response services. Mr Schneider advised a Crown Lands dashboard developed for use during aerial inspections to provide this visibility had been shared with RFS.

DC McKechnie noted the RFS was working in partnership with the Australian Road Research Board on a fire trail assurance system to provide real time visibility on the status of fire trails state-wide.

The Chair thanked Mr Schneider for his informative presentation.

Decision 104.9 The Committee resolved to note the presentation on the Crown Lands Aerial Fire Trail Inspections Program.

10 NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards

A Fire Trail Policy support officer has been recruited to consolidate feedback from consultation with land management agencies and support the development of an assurance system.

Ms Stephens requested NPWS be involved in the development of the assurance system given the significant implications for its operations. DCPC undertook that all relevant agencies would be involved in the development process.

Decision 104.10 The Committee resolved to note the update on Fire Trail Standards

11 Review of BFCC Policy 1/2008 – Bush Fire Risk Management

DCPC spoke to the tabled draft Bush Fire Risk Management Policy (BFRMP) and Annexures A-E, seeking endorsement from the Committee. At the recent SAS meeting, members had requested Annexure C be circulated for further consultation. Due to the need to incorporate the subsequent feedback, it had only been possible to circulate the draft policy and annexures three days before the BFCC meeting.

DCPC highlighted changes in terminology to *Annexure B – Guidelines for Preparation of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans* around community engagement treatment to align with community preparedness outcomes.

Annexure D – Communications had been updated to reflect current practices, with the changes relatively minor in nature.

Annexure E-Submission & Assessment Guidelines is a process document for BFMCs to refer their plans to the BFCC.

Annexure F: Reporting, Monitoring & Auditing, is currently being developed and will be provided to the next SAS meeting and subsequently to the BFCC for endorsement at the July meeting.

C/Supt Stubbs requested a brief be provided summarising the changes to the policy and annexures. DCPC advised in the interest of endorsing the documents as soon as possible to allow implementation ahead of the 23/24 fire season, members could contact Ms O'Halloran with any queries.

Mr Conroy advised the Nature Conservation Council was currently unable to endorse the policy and annexures as it had been unable to review the papers in the time provided, requesting a week to review the papers. Ms Stephens also requested an extension to provide feedback for out-of-session endorsement. The Chair requested members provide any comments to the Secretariat by 23 March. If no comments were received, this would be taken as the agency's endorsement.

Decision 104.11 The Committee resolved to note the update on the Review of BFCC Policy 1/2008 – Bush Fire Risk Management. Pending no objections being received within a week, the Policy will be endorsed.

12 General Business

12.1 Alpha Road Fire

Mr De Govrik requested an update on the Alpha Road Fire. The Chair advised the fire had been contained within 18,000 hectares. DCFO provided an update on the local impact of the fire and commended all agencies involved for their work in challenging conditions.

Mr De Govrik queried if RAFT resources had been considered to provide access to the fire. DCFO advised this option had been considered but the anticipated weather conditions had raised safety concerns.

12.2 Robert Palin, Nature Conservation Council

Mr Conroy enquired whether, upon Mr Palin's retirement, a letter of recognition could be provided for his contribution to the BFCC. The Chair noted Mr Palin's valuable contributions to the BFCC during his tenure and confirmed a letter would be provided.

12.3 NCC Conference: *Managing Bushfires Together: Applying Science, Skills and Stories*

Mr Conroy noted tickets were available for the biennial Nature Conservation Council conference.

12.4 Crown Lands Aerial Fire Trail Inspections

Mr Schneider provided an update on the aerial imagery project, with Crown Lands continuing to work with the RFS to identify Asset Protection Zones and strategic fire breaks around towns and villages in the State's Far West. Mr Schneider thanked the RFS for its assistance in delivering the project.

12.5 Fuel mapping project

Mr McCoy advised the RFS had started a project to understand the state of fuel recovery from the 2019/20 fires. A multi-agency pilot survey had been completed with representatives from RFS, NPWS, Forestry and Fire and Rescue.

Decision 104.12 The Committee resolved to note the matters of general business raised by members.

12.6 Next Meeting

The next meeting of the BFCC is to be held as follows:

Date	Start time	Location
18 May 2023	1030	RFS Headquarters

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1143.

Minutes approved by BFCC Chair, Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM on 18 May 2023