



# Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee

## MEETING MINUTES

DOC21/104331

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>No. 99 Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC)</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Via MS Teams</b>
<b>Date and time:</b>	14 October 2021 – 1030
<b>Members:</b>	Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service (Chair) Deputy Commissioner Jim Hamilton AFSM, Fire & Rescue NSW Deputy Commissioner Gary Worboys APM, NSW Police Force Mr Robert Pallin, Nature Conservation Council of NSW Mr Graham Brown, NSW Farmers Association Cr Keith Rhoades AFSM, Local Government NSW Mr George Schneider, NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Crown Lands Mr Dominic Lane, Resilience NSW Dr Ross Dickson, Forestry Corporation of NSW Mr Greg Wardle, Rural Fire Service Association Mr Robert Conroy, representing Minister for the Environment Councillor Julie Griffiths, Local Government NSW Dr Leigh Pilkington, NSW Department of Primary Industries
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	Deputy Commissioner Peter McKechnie, NSW Rural Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart APM, NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Stuart Midgley AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Rebel Talbert, Director, Community Resilience Assistant Commissioner Ben Millington, Director, State Operations Ms Renee Armstrong, Director, Office of the Commissioner Mr Scott Donohoe, Fire & Rescue NSW Mr Charlie Jacobs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council Mr Keith Uebel, Forestry Corporation of NSW Ms Naomi Stephens, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (representing Mr Atticus Fleming) Mr Scott Campbell, NSW Rural Fire Service Association Mr Carl Hollis, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Mr Kim de Govrik, Public Service Association Ms Stefanie Cupac, NSW Rural Fire Service Vacant, NTS Corp Vacant, Fire Brigade Employees' Union of NSW Ms Merilyn Madden, Lomman Reporting Services
<b>Guest attendees:</b>	Nil
<b>Apologies:</b>	Mr Yuseph Deen, NSW Aboriginal Land Council Cr Julie Griffiths, Local Government NSW Mr Atticus Fleming AM, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (represented by Ms Naomi Stephens)

## **1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all to Meeting 99 of the BFCC and noted apologies for Mr Yuseph Deen represented by Mr Charlie Jacobs, Mr Atticus Fleming, represented by Ms Naomi Stephens, Cr Julie Griffiths and Ms Natalie Rotumah.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 1035.

## **2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **3 Acceptance of Minutes**

The minutes of BFCC meeting 98, held on 12 August 2021, were tabled.

Mr Conroy queried the following folios:

- Folio #7 – rename Warragal to Wangal
- Folio #9 – Action Item 98.6 remove wording “be provided”

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**Action 99.1** The Secretariat to re-circulate minutes for meeting 98, held 12 August 2021.

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**Decision 99.1** The Committee resolved to endorse the minutes of meeting 98 held on 12 August 2021 for signature by the Chair.

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## **4 Open Action Items**

The Action Items were tabled and all actions discussed. The Action Items have been updated in accordance with the discussions.

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**Decision 99.2** The Committee resolved to note the status of actions.

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## **5 Correspondence**

The Correspondence Register was tabled and noted. No other correspondence was tabled.

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**Decision 99.3** The Committee resolved to note the Correspondence Register.

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## **6 The Status of Operations Co-ordination Plans**

The Status of Operations Coordination Plans report dated 25 September 2021 was tabled and taken as read. Of note, all Section 52 plans were finalised ahead of the 2021/2022 fire season.

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**Decision 99.4** The Committee resolved to note the report on the Status of Operations Coordination Plans.

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### **6.2 The Status of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans**

The Status of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMPs) was tabled and taken as read. Of note, the trial of the new risk planning process by Hunter Valley and Lower Hunter BFMCs.

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**Decision 99.5** The Committee resolved to note the report on the Status of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans.

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### **6.3 Status of Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans**

Ms Talbert provided an update on the Status of Fire Access and Fire Trails (FAFT) Plans as tabled in the report dated 24 September 2021, noting eight plans had progressed for approval and the Darling Barwon plan had been endorsed by the Bush Fire Management Committee.

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**Decision 99.6** The Committee resolved to note the report on the Status of Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans.

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## 7 Standing Advisory Subcommittee Report

Mr McKechnie tabled the Standing Advisory Subcommittee (SAS) report, which was taken as read. The trial of the new risk plans for Hunter Valley and Lower Hunter BFMCs was under way, a review of the structure of the Operations Coordination plans would be tabled at a future BFCC meeting. It was also noted that the SAS members were reviewing National Parks and Wildlife Service feedback on the Prescribed Burn template.

Mr McKechnie added that the work on Make Safe with Resilience NSW would inform the review of the BFCC Policy 1/2007 Section 44 Payment and Reimbursement Criteria and Payment Procedures.

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**Decision 99.7** The Committee resolved to note the Standing Advisory Subcommittee Report.

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## 8 Hazard Reduction Report

Mr Midgley spoke to the tabled Hazard Reduction (HR) Report, noting that the annual report figures were available for members. A total of 167,499 hectares had been treated, protecting 129,376 properties.

Mr Midgley added the Guardian data extract was currently being finalised, noting the limitations of the BRIMS system had caused a lag in records being updated in Guardian.

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**Decision 99.8** The Committee resolved to note the update on hazard reduction and properties protected activities.

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## 9 NSW Bush Fire Inquiry Update

Mr McKechnie provided a verbal update on the 76 recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry. The Q3 July to September 2021 report would be circulated to members once approved. All recommendations were either under way or complete.

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**Decision 99.9** The Committee resolved to note the update on the NSW Bush Fire Inquiries.

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

Ms Talbert spoke to the tabled paper on BFCC Policy 1/2008 Bush Fire Risk Management, noting Phase One of the roll out of the new risk plans was under way, with Phase Two anticipated to roll out during November 2021.

Lower Hunter and Hunter BFMCs had endorsed their Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMPs) for Operational review. Committee members were encouraged to provide feedback on the BFRMP Communications Kit to Ms Talbert by 31 October 2021.

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**Decision 99.10** The Committee resolved to note the Review of BFCC Policy 1/2008 – Bush Fire Risk Management.

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## 11 NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards

Ms Talbert spoke to the tabled paper on NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards, which was taken as read. A final internal review of the draft standards was occurring before they were issued to the Fire Trail Standards Reference Group for review. The review was expected to be completed by June 2022.

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**Action 99.2** Secretariat to circulate the draft Fire Trail Standards to members.

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**Action 99.3** Ms Talbert to provide a presentation to the Committee on the draft Fire Trail Standards at Meeting 100, scheduled for 17 March 2022.

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**Decision 99.11** The Committee resolved to note the update on NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards.

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## 12 Fire Season Briefing 2021/2022

Assistant Commissioner Millington presented the 2021/22 Fire Season Outlook, noting grass lands were the focus for this season due to growth in grass and crops. Interface program work was preparing for risks associated with the seasonal outlook for above average rainfall and the likelihood of above median temperatures.

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**Action 99.4** Secretariat to circulate a copy of the Fire Season 2021/2022 presentation to members.

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**Decision 99.12** The Committee resolved to note the presentation on the 2021/2022 Fire Season Briefing

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## 13 Assets of Intergenerational Significance

The Committee noted that the NSW Bushfire Inquiry recognised the need to identify the most important natural and cultural assets in the National Park estate and special provisions were needed for their conservation.

Ms Stephens provided a presentation to the Committee on Assets of Intergenerational Significance (AIS), noting the *National Parks and Wildlife Service Amendment Regulation 2021* (the Regulation) was enacted 23 July 2021. An AIS is an area of exceptional value, either natural or cultural, warranting special protection, including dedicated management measures.

The Regulation allowed for preparation, exhibition and adoption of Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) to protect sites.

Next steps include working with fire agencies to ensure integration with Bush Fire Management Policy and Procedures in regards to risk management plans, research, fire management strategies and prescribed burning. Integration with Guardian and ICON were to be considered.

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**Action 99.5** Secretariat to circulate a copy of the Assets of Intergenerational Significance presentation to members.

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**Decision 99.13** The Committee resolved to note the presentation by NWPS on Assets of Intergenerational Significance.

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## 14 BFCC Delegations

The Committee noted the tabled paper on renewing BFCC delegations with respect to the authority to approve to Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, Operations Coordination Plans and Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans to the Commissioner of NSW Rural Fire Service on behalf of the BFCC, provided they are consistent with the relevant policies.

Given recent changes to the BFCC, including new membership and current policy upgrades for Operations and Bush Fire Risk Management, it was considered prudent to refresh the Commissioner's delegation across the Plan of Operations, Bush Fire Risk Management Plans and Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans.

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**Decision 99.14** The Committee resolved to endorse the BFCC delegations with respect to the authority to approve to Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, Operations Coordination Plans, and Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans to the Commissioner of NSW Rural Fire Service on behalf of the BFCC, provided they were consistent with the relevant policies.

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## 15 2022 Meeting dates

The proposed meeting dates were tabled and endorsed by the Committee:

- Thursday 17 March 2022
- Thursday 12 May 2022
- Thursday 11 August 2022

➤ Thursday 6 October 2022

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**Action 99.6** Secretariat to collect members' preferences for the location of one regional visit for the BFCC during 2022. Proposed options are: Dubbo, Orange, Shoalhaven, Hunter/ Lower Hunter.

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**Action 99.7** Secretariat to compile a list of BFCC regional visit conducted to date.

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**Decision 99.15** The Committee resolved to endorse the 2022 BFCC meeting dates

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## 16 General Business

### 16.1 Guardian

Mr DeGovrik queried the operational preparedness of Guardian and the capacity to resolve issues as they arose. The Committee agreed to include a presentation on Guardian at the next meeting, scheduled for 17 March 2022.

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**Action 99.8** Secretariat to add to the agenda a presentation on Guardian, for BFCC meeting 100, scheduled for 17 March 2022.

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### 16.2 BFMC meeting attendance

Mr Schneider raised the issue of poor attendance by representing agencies at Bush Fire Management Committee meetings.

The Committee agreed that all agencies were expected to ascertain agency representatives' attendance at BFMC meetings for 2020/2021 and 2019/2020 financial years and report back findings to the next meeting scheduled 17 March 2022.

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**Action 99.9** NSW RFS (Bfmc-support) to write to all BFMCs to request written confirmation of attendees at BFMC meetings for 2020/2021 and 2019/2020 financial years.

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### 16.3 Crown Lands Annual Update of Fire Trails

Mr Schneider advised NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Crown Lands recently conducted the annual update of Fire Trails throughout Region West and would provide a report to local BFMCs regarding the operational status of the fire trails.

### 16.4 Australian Fire Danger Rating System Project

The Committee noted that the Australian Fire Danger Rating System project is anticipated to go live during the 2022/2023 financial year.

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**Action 99.10** Secretariat to add to the agenda for meeting 100, scheduled for 17 March 2022, a presentation on the Australian Fire Danger Rating System project.

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**Action 99.11** Mr McCoy to provide a presentation to the Committee on the Australian Fire Danger Rating System project.

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### 16.5 Retirement of Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton, Fire & Rescue NSW

The Committee acknowledged this was Fire & Rescue NSW Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton's final meeting. On behalf of the RFS and the BFCC, Commissioner Rogers extended his appreciation and gratitude for the valuable contributions made by Assistant Commissioner Hamilton in aid of the interests and protection of the people of NSW and to the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee.

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**Action 99.12** The Secretariat to arrange a letter from the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee acknowledging Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton's retirement.

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### **16.6 Councillor Keith Rhoades, Local Government NSW**

The Committee acknowledged this was Councillor Keith Rhoades' final meeting as Local Government NSW representative. On behalf of the RFS and the BFCC, Commissioner Rogers extended his appreciation and gratitude for the valuable contributions made by Councillor Rhoades in aid of the interests and protection of the people of NSW and to the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee.

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**Action 99.13** The Secretariat to arrange a letter from the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee acknowledging Councillor Keith Rhoades' retirement.

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### **16.7 Next Meeting**

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Start time</b>	<b>Location</b>
17 March 2022	1030	Berrigan Meeting Room, NSW RFS Headquarters

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**Decision 99.16** The Committee resolved to note the items of General Business raised.

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The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1209.

Minutes approved by BFCC Chair, Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM on 11 April 2022.