



Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting:	No. 101 Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC)
Location:	Koperberg Room and Via MS Teams
Date and time:	12 May 2022 – 1030
Members:	Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service (Chair) Cr Julie Griffiths, Local Government NSW Cr Giacomo Arnott, Local Government NSW Mr Robert Pallin, Nature Conservation Council of NSW Mr Graham Brown, NSW Farmers Association Mr Kim de Govrik, Public Service Association Mr George Schneider, NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – Crown Lands Mr Dominic Lane, Resilience NSW Dr Ross Dickson, Forestry Corporation of NSW Mr Robert Conroy, representing Minister for the Environment
Other Attendees:	A/Deputy Commissioner Roger Mentha, Fire & Rescue NSW (rep. DC Stiffler) Mr Scott Donohoe, Fire & Rescue NSW Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart APM, NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Stuart Midgley AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Rebel Talbert, Forestry Corporation of NSW Assistant Commissioner Ben Millington, NSW Rural Fire Service Chief Superintendent Heath Stimson, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Renee Armstrong, NSW Rural Fire Service Mr Charlie Jacobs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council Ms Naomi Stephens, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service Mr Cameron Chaffey, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Ms Melissa O'Halloran, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Kate Woods, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Lesley Smith, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Merylyn, Lomman Reporting Services
Guest Attendees:	Mr Jamie Carter, NSW Rural Fire Service
Apologies:	Deputy Commissioner Megan Stiffler, Fire & Rescue NSW Mr Yuseph Deen, NSW Aboriginal Land Council Dr Atticus Fleming AM, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Mr Greg Wardle, Rural Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Peter McKechnie, NSW Rural Fire Service Dr Leigh Pilkington, NSW Department of Primary Industries Mr Leighton Drury, Fire Brigade Employees' Union Mr Scott Campbell, NSW Rural Fire Service Association
Minutes by:	Ms Gillian Eshman, NSW Rural Fire Service

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to Meeting 101 and noted apologies from Mr Yuseph Deen (represented by Mr Charlie Jacobs), Dr Atticus Fleming, (represented by Ms Naomi Stephens), DC Megan Stiffler (represented by Mr Roger Mentha), DC Peter McKechnie, Dr Leigh Pilkington, Mr Scott Campbell, Mr Greg Wardle and Mr Leighton Drury.

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 100, held on 7 April 2022, were tabled. Members noted a last minute amendment to Decision 100.12 (1st Mr Graham Brown, 2nd Mr Charlie Jacobs).

Decision 101.1 The Committee resolved to endorse the minutes of Meeting 100, held on 7 April 2022, 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.

Decision 101.2 The Committee resolved to note the status of actions.

4.1 Update Cultural Burning Position Paper (Action Item 95.1)

The Position Paper was tabled and taken as read. The paper is a draft discussion paper to articulate the position of the BFCC on cultural burning in NSW, with consideration of the outcomes of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry (specifically, recommendations 25 and 26). The paper provides background to cultural burning, an overview of relevant legislation, the role of the Cultural Fire Management Cross Government Working Group and a draft BFCC position statement.

Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) staff who represent the Cultural Fire Management Cross Government Working Group and a number of Aboriginal staff within the National Parks and Wildlife Service have had input. Members discussed issues of liability and the role of other stakeholders, such as local councils and land services.

BFCC members are to review the position paper and provide comments to DC McKechnie.

Decision 101.3 Committee members resolved to review the paper and provide advice to DC McKechnie.

4.2 Bush Fire Management Committee Amalgamations (Action Item 98.4)

The Position Paper was tabled and taken as read. Action to be closed, pending any comments.

4.3 RFS Fire Trail Standards (Action Item 99.3)

The paper was tabled and taken as read. A draft revised set of RFS Fire Trail Standards has been developed and will be distributed to members of the Fire Trail Standards Reference Group ahead of its meeting on 20 May 2022. This will be followed by time for review and comment.

5 Correspondence

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

Decision 101.4 The Committee resolved to note the Correspondence Register.

6 Standing Items

6.1 The Status of Operations Co-ordination Plans

The report was tabled and taken as read. AC Midgley noted all operation co-ordination plans were on track to be completed.

Decision 101.5 The Committee resolved to note the report on the Status of Operations Coordination Plans.

6.2 The Status of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans

All BFMCs have approved risk managements plan in place. Two updated risk management drafts are pending the boundary reviews for Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and Mid Murray. These are being introduced to the new risk plan roll out as well.

Five BFMCs did not lodge an updated risk management plan within the previous submission period in accordance with section 52 and four BFMCs did not submit an updated risk management plan within the first year of establishing a new committee per the current legislative requirements. Three BFMCs have started development of the next generation risk management plan since the last report, which flows into Phase Three of the rollout.

Decision 101.6 The Committee resolved to note the report on the Status of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans.

6.3 Status of Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans

C/Supt Stimson advised there was a late update to the 16 approved plans noted in the paper, with 23 plans signed off by the BFCC since its last meeting.

All 56 BFMCs have completed their workshops, with 55 preparing their draft plans. Lord Howe Island remains outstanding, with a meeting to consider the plan scheduled for June.

Decision 101.7 The Committee resolved to note the report on the Status of Fire Access and Fire Trails Plans.

7 Standing Advisory Sub-committee Report

The paper (circulated the day before the BFCC meeting) was tabled and taken as read. DC Stewart advised that SAS had met the day before and identified the key issues raised during the meeting:

- Referred Item 1 – Review of the BFCC Policy 1/2008 Bush Fire Risk Management. BFMCs in Phase 3 of the roll out have started to schedule workshops. The Bush Fire Risk Management team is meeting with BFMCs to gather information on local risks to inform the planning process. The Chair advised that despite extensive work by the SAS member agencies, he was concerned that none of the new BFRMPs, including the pilot plans in the Lower Hunter and Hunter Valley, had progressed beyond workshops to be placed on public exhibition.

The IMZ Fact Sheet and BFRMP Policy Annex C Bush Fire Management Zones (describing IMZs in context of other zones) were circulated to the SAS to be considered as part of the review of the *Bush Fire Risk Management Policy (1/2008)*. Committee members raised a series of concerns in relation to IMZs, including suppression objectives; location and permissibility in wilderness areas, including ridgetops; burn intervals and the potential impact on vegetation characteristics; the process for amending IMZ plans; the practicality of implementing IMZs in areas without the capacity for containment lines; and the possibility of achieving the expected goals.

The meeting unanimously agreed to the Chair's proposal that SAS members meet urgently, out of session, within the next fortnight, to resolve remaining issues before finalising a report to the next BFCC meeting. RFS and NPWS will co-facilitate a workshop, on 25 May 2022, in a final attempt to resolve working group members' policy concerns. If the working group is unable to come to a consensus following the workshop, the matter will be escalated to the BFCC for a final decision.

The Chair noted that the RFS recognised it needed to develop new and improved operational methods and standards, beyond those in place during the 2019/20 season, and it was vital that

been damaged in the recent floods. Resilience expected to reach out to other agencies for support in relation to development issues. Mr Lane thanked the RFS and Crown Lands for their support.

11.3 Australian Fire Danger Rating Signage Update

DC Stewart shared the finalised artwork concepts for the new Australian Fire Danger Rating signage with members. The RFS will engage with stakeholders ahead of the September 1 introduction of the new AFDR system.

11.4 Far West community awareness of fuel load and ignitions dangers for 2022-23 fire season

Mr Schneider raised his concerns that extensive fuel loads would exist across the western division of NSW once the weather dried out, increasing the fire risk for many rural communities that had not experienced recent fires.

He pointed to a need to raise community awareness. Crown Lands has been working with the RFS in recent months to prepare for the coming fire season, looking to create strategic fire breaks around 40 to 50 small towns and villages across the west and at community education campaigns.

Decision 101.12 The Committee resolved to note the matters of general business raised by members.

Next Meeting

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

Date	Start time	Location
11 August 2022	1030	Cobar Fire Control Centre (TBC)

Decision 101.13 The Committee resolved to note the items of General Business raised.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1126.

Minutes approved by BFCC Chair, Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM on 10 August 2022.