



# Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee

## MEETING MINUTES

DOC22/102192

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>No. 102 Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC)</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Berrigan Room and Via MS Teams</b>
<b>Date and time:</b>	10 August 2022 – 1030
<b>Members:</b>	Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service (Chair) Deputy Commissioner Megan Stiffler, Fire and Rescue NSW Cr Julie Griffiths, Local Government NSW Cr Giacomo Arnott, Local Government NSW Mr Robert Pallin, Nature Conservation Council of NSW 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 Greg Wardle, Rural Fire Service Dr Leigh Pilkington, NSW Department of Primary Industries Mr Rod Chetwynd, NSW Fire Brigade Employees Union Mr Scott Campbell, NSW Rural Fire Service Association Mr Robert Conroy, representing the Minister for the Environment
<b>Attendees:</b>	Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart APM, NSW Rural Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Peter McKechnie, NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Stuart Midgley AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Rebel Talbert, Forestry Corporation of NSW Assistant Commissioner/Deputy SEOCON Steve Hegarty, on behalf of Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell APM, NSW Police Force Mr Scott Donohoe, Fire & Rescue NSW Mr Charlie Jacobs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council Ms Kathy Rankin, NSW Farmers Ms Naomi Stephens, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service Mr Cameron Chaffey, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Assistant Commissioner Ben Millington, NSW Rural Fire Service Chief Superintendent Heath Stimson, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Renee Armstrong, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Melissa O'Halloran, NSW Rural Fire Service Mr Jamie Carter, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Kate Woods, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Gillian Eshman, NSW Rural Fire Service Ms Merylyn, Lomman Reporting Services
<b>Apologies:</b>	Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell APM, NSW Police Force Dr Atticus Fleming AM, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Mr Yuseph Deen, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
<b>Minutes by:</b>	Committees team, NSW Rural Fire Service

### 1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to Meeting 102 and noted apologies from Mr Yuseph Deen (represented by Mr Charlie Jacobs), Dr Atticus Fleming (represented by Ms Naomi Stephens) and DC Peter Thurtell (represented by Assistant Commissioner/Deputy SEOCON Steve Hegarty). 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 101, held on 12 May 2022, were tabled and accepted. (1<sup>st</sup> Mr Robert Conroy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Robert Pallin).

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**Decision 102.1** The Committee resolved to endorse the minutes of Meeting 101, held on 12 May 2022, 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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**Action 102.1** DC McKechnie to provide an update on the risk based audit plan at the next meeting.

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**Action 102.2** AC Midgley to provide an update on the BFMC module of Guardian at the next meeting.

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**Decision 102.2** The Committee resolved to note the status of actions.

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## 5 Correspondence

The Correspondence Register was tabled and noted.

The BFCC discussed correspondence received from MIA District BFMC Executive Officer Kevin Adams regarding unresolved matters resulting from council amalgamations. Deputy Commissioner McKechnie advised he would seek to progress this matter with council. Cr Griffiths offered to raise this matter at the next Board meeting of Local Government NSW.

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**Action 102.3** Secretariat to provide Mr Adams with an update on the BFCC discussions.

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**Action 102.4** Cr Griffiths to raise the matter at the next LGNSW Board meeting.

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**Action 102.5** DC McKechnie to progress discussions to resolve matters resulting from council amalgamations in the MIA District.

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**Decision 102.3** The Committee resolved to note the Correspondence Register.

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## 6 Standing Items

### 6.1 Operations Co-ordination Plans update

The paper was tabled and taken as read. (1<sup>st</sup> Ms Naomi Stephens, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Bob Conroy).

All BFMC Operations Co-ordination Plans were current for the 2021-22 fire season and there are no plans for review ahead of the 2022-23 season. The new plan template needed to be adapted to incorporate the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System, with the updated template to come to the BFCC for review and endorsement.

Ms Stephens noted NPWS had yet to receive the template and Mr Stimson advised it would be made available as soon as it was signed off.

Mr Stimson advised BFMC pre-season checklists, which were required to ensure preparedness actions had been taken, were due on 16 August.

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**Decision 102.4** The Committee resolved to note the status of the Operations Coordination Plans.

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## 6.2 Bush Fire Risk Management Plans

The paper was tabled and taken as read. (1<sup>st</sup> Cr Julie Griffiths, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Bob Conroy).

Since the last BFCC meeting, six BFMCs have started developing their next generation Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, with the Lower Hunter plan open for exhibition and the Hunter Valley plan awaiting BFCC endorsement to proceed to public exhibition. Five other Sydney-based plans are currently being prepared for public exhibition.

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**Decision 102.5** The Committee resolved to note the Bush Fire Risk Management Plans report.

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

The paper was tabled and taken as read. (1<sup>st</sup> Ms Stephens, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Bob Conroy).

All 56 BFMCs have completed their initial FAFT Plan workshop. Of these, 55 have prepared and endorsed and submitted a FAFT plan for BFCC approval. The only outstanding plan is for Lord Howe Island. To date, 46 FAFT plans have been assessed by the RFS and approved by the BFCC. A further five plans are expected to be forwarded to the BFCC in the near future.

Mr Stimson advised a workshop was planned on 19 September to understand NPWS concerns around the review process. Ms Stephens noted a consistent process was needed across the State for correcting errors in the plans, particularly in the case of underpinning spatial data that had been reported for updating but not captured. Mr Conroy and Mr Schneider also raised issues with data capture.

Mr Conroy identified that certified or registered trails were required to be publicly listed but only a small number were visible on the RFS website.

The Chair referred this matter to SAS to develop a report to the next BFCC meeting.

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**Action 102.6** Item referred to SAS to provide a report to the next BFCC meeting on a consistent approach to FAFT Plans and progress on listing FAFT plans on the website.

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**Decision 102.6** The Committee resolved to note the FAFT Plans Report.

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## 7 Standing Advisory Sub-Committee (SAS) Progress Report

The paper was tabled and taken as read. (1<sup>st</sup> Cr Julie Griffiths, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Bob Conroy).

### > Review of the BFCC Policy 1/2008 Bush Fire Risk Management.

The Phase 3 roll out of Next Generation Bush Fire Risk Management Plans is continuing to be workshopped, with planning for Phase 4 under way. The first of the new plans, for the Hunter, is on public exhibition until 31 August 2022. The schedule of implementation for the next generation Bush Fire Risk Management Plan was endorsed by the BFCC at its 96th meeting.

### > Review of the BFCC Policy 2/2006.

BFMC feedback on the draft template of the Operations Coordination Plan has been collated and the new template is being reviewed to ensure consistency with the implementation of the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System. The final draft will be put to both SAS and the BFCC for endorsement.

### > Make Safe provisions.

The RFS and NPWS have carried out significant work on Make Safe provisions following the 2019-20 fire season. Meetings have been held with Resilience NSW to enhance processes and improve clarity of agency responsibilities, particularly identifying thresholds for the transition from Make Safe works to recovery related tasking as part of overarching MOU arrangements.

➤ **Hazardous and hollow bearing trees.**

Work is continuing with a view to finalising a joint agency policy to ensure that agencies have the same guidelines around dangerous trees. Mr Pallin asked for NCC to be provided the policy due to its interest in hollow-bearing trees.

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**Action 102.7** AC Millington to forward the joint agency policy on hazardous and hollow bearing trees to Mr Pallin.

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**Decision 102.7** The Committee resolved to note the Standing Advisory Sub-committee Report.

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## **8 Hazard Reduction Report**

AC Midgley tabled the Hazard Reduction Report, noting little activity had been possible due to prolonged wet weather, which had prevented burning activities and impeded mechanical work.

The Chair agreed the weather conditions had caused significant difficulties, however, pointed out that the goat grazing trial had successfully continued. The committee discussed the trial, with Forestry NSW reporting good results on its land and DC McKechnie encouraging members to nominate potential grazing sites.

Mr Stephens noted wet weather had washed away some fire trails. In response to a query from Cr Griffiths, the Chair noted agencies could apply for funding under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements for repair works.

Mr Schneider queried the process for accessing reports from Guardian.

Mr Conroy enquired whether it would be better to employ the Prescribed Burn Index rather than the number of rain days as the monitor of appropriate conditions for burning. The Chair agreed and asked Mr Midgley to investigate and give an update at the next meeting.

(1<sup>st</sup> Cr Julie Griffiths, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Bob Conroy).

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**Action 102.8** Mr Schneider to contact AC Midgley in relation to accessing reports from Guardian.

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**Action 102.9** Mr Midgley to report to the next meeting on the use of the Prescribed Burn Index and spatial base information to monitor appropriate conditions for burning.

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**Decision 102.8** The Committee resolved to note the Hazard Reduction Report.

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

C/Supt Stimson advised the Lower Hunter Bush Fire Risk Management Plan was the first of the new model to be placed on public exhibition and acknowledged all those who had endorsed the out-of-session paper on 15 July 2022 for the *interim BFRMP policy – Annex C – Bush Fire Management Zones*.

The roll out of the Next Generation Bush Fire Risk Management Plans was continuing. Phase 1 and 2 were progressing and Phase 3 workshops had started. Some delays had occurred due to ongoing support for flood operations and the biosecurity response to Varroa mite but the overall commitment to complete Bush Fire Risk Management Plans using the new model by 2024 was still on track.

Mr Conroy referred to the BFMC handbook and enquired whether the committees were complying with the statutory requirement to supply an annual report to the BFCC. The Chair advised an update on this requirement would be provided to the next BFCC meeting.

(1<sup>st</sup> Mr Jacobs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Robert Pallin).

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**Action 102.10** C/Supt Stimson to provide an update on BFCC Policy 1/2008- Bush Fire Risk Management and BFMC annual reporting at the next meeting.

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**Decision 102.9** The Committee resolved to note the update on the Review of BFCC Policy 1/2008 – Bush Fire Risk Management.

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## 10 BFMC Handbook Review

Mr Stimson noted he was seeking BFCC endorsement to undertake a review of the BFMC handbook and refer this item to the SAS. This update would support recommendations 8 and 19 of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry. Minor amendments were also required to update BFMCs following amalgamations and name changes to some committees and member organisations.

(1<sup>st</sup> Cr Julie Griffiths, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Robert Pallin).

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**Action 102.11** The BFMC Handbook Review is to be referred to the SAS.

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**Decision 102.10** The Committee resolved to endorse the BFMC Handbook review and refer this item to SAS.

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## 11 NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards

Mr Stimson noted the fire trail standards had been redrafted and thanked NPWS and Crown Lands for providing significant feedback. Further work was being undertaken on the Fire Trails Assurance System, which was being developed by the Australian Road Research Board.

(1<sup>st</sup> Mr Bob Conroy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Schneider)

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**Decision 102.11** The Committee resolved to note the RFS Fire Trail Standards report.

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## 12 General Business

### 12.1 Off-site location for 6 October 2022 meeting

The Chair suggested possible locations for an off-site meeting included the RFS Training Academy at Dubbo, Griffith, Orange or Bathurst. It was agreed it would be either Dubbo or Griffith.

The Chair asked for any members to provide any concerns or suggestions but feedback suggested most were happy with either location.

**Action 102.12** Secretariat to advise the Committee of the location for the next meeting.

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### 12.2 Status update on the Bush Fire Protection Existing Development (BPED) Tool

Mr Schneider enquired whether the BPED tool guide had been finalised and endorsed by the RFS.

DC Stewart advised the guidelines were under review by the Field Operations and Preparedness and Capability Directorates and it was hoped that provisional drafts, at least, could be provided at the next meeting.

Dr Pilkington thanked the RFS for its support on preparations for a potential Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak.

Mr McKechnie will organise a meeting with the Cultural Fire Management Group and other relevant parties in relation to the cultural burning paper referred to at the previous meeting.

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**Action 102.13** Mr McKechnie to organise a meeting with the Cultural Fire Management Group and other relevant parties in relation to the cultural burning paper.

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### 12.3 Graham Brown, NSW Farmers Association

Mr Schneider queried whether upon Mr Graham Brown's retirement, a form of recognition was possible for his contribution over many years. The Chair confirmed this would be organised.

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**Action 102.14** The Secretariat to arrange a letter from the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee acknowledging Mr Graham Brown retirement.

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**Decision 102.12** The Committee resolved to note the matters of general business raised by members.

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### 12.4 Next Meeting

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

Date	Start time	Location
6 October 2022	1030	(TBC)

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**Decision 102.12** The Committee resolved to note the items of General Business raised.

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The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1139.

#### Out of session paper:

#### **BFCC Policy – Bush Fire Risk Management – Annex C Bush Fire Management Zones to support the implementation of Ignition Management Zones**

On July 1 an out of session paper was circulated to Committee members seeking endorsement of BFCC Policy – Bush Fire Risk Management – Annex C Bush Fire Management Zones as an interim policy for BFMC use and the endorsement, where appropriate, of actions proposed at a multi-agency workshop on 25 May 2022 to support the implementation of IMZs.

The item was endorsed by a quorum of Committee members, with both Mr Pallin and Mr Conroy noting further discussion was required.

The out of session paper is attached to these minutes from the subsequent full meeting of the BFCC.

Minutes approved by BFCC Chair, Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM on 3 January 2023.