



MINUTES

Meeting 6/6

18 March 2022

Emergency Services Headquarters 'Kumatpi Trruku', 37 Richmond Rd Keswick

09:00 – 12:00hrs

Attendance	<p>Ms Georgie Cornish Ms Anthea Howard Mr Troy Fountain (<i>online</i>)</p> <p>Mr Andrew Cadd Ms Fiona Gill (<i>online</i>) Mr Graeme Brown (<i>online</i>) Ms Justine Drew Mr Michael Garrod Ms Heidi Greaves Ms Sarah Reachill (<i>online</i>) ACO Brett Loughlin ACFO Peter Button C/Supt. John Venditto Mr James Crocker (<i>online</i>)</p>	<p>Chair (<i>ex officio</i>) Executive Officer Member, Attorney-General's Department - Planning and Land Use Services (AGD-PLUS) Member, Country Fire Service Volunteers Association (CFS VA) Member, Department for Environment and Water (DEW) Member, Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) Member, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) Member, Landscape SA Deputy, SA Local Government Association (LGA SA) Member, Native Vegetation Council (NVC) Member, SA Country Fire Service (SACFS) Member, SA Metropolitan Fire Service (SAMFS) Deputy, South Australia Police (SAPOL) Member, SA Water</p>
Apologies	<p>Mr Mark Jones QFSM Ms Kylie Egan Mr Mark Ashley (<i>online</i>) Ms Monique Blason Mr Peter Merry Mr John Moyle Mr Bill McIntosh Mr Mark Sutton Mr Peter White Mr Don Gilbertson AC Noel Bamford Ms Ali Walsh Mr Luke Brooks</p>	<p>Chair (<i>ex officio</i>) Member, Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) Member, Conservation Council of South Australia (CCSA) Member, ForestrySA Deputy, ForestrySA Member, LGA SA Member, Outback Communities Authority (OCA) Deputy, OCA Member, Primary Producers SA (PPSA) Deputy, PPSA Member, SAPOL Member, SAPN Deputy, SAPN</p>
Observers and Guests	<p>Mrs Rhiannon Hardy (<i>online</i>) Mr Troy Horn Mr Sam Oosterholt (<i>online</i>) Ms Danielle Drever (<i>online</i>) Ms Paula Slutzkin</p>	<p>Observer, AGD-PLUS Observer, ForestrySA Observer, SAPN Observer, SACFS Administrative Support, SACFS</p>

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed attendees, gave an Acknowledgement of Country, and opened the meeting at 09:04hrs. She then noted observers and remote attendees.

2. Apologies

The Chair noted the apologies received.

3. Safety Briefing

The Executive Officer outlined the evacuation procedures for the building and the location of exit and meeting points.

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest/Probity Matters

The Chair asked for a declaration of any Conflicts of Interest or Probity Matters. None were raised at the outset of the meeting.

5. Confirmation of Previous Minutes of Meeting

The draft minutes of the State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) meeting of Friday 11 November 2021 were considered for confirmation.

Nil amendments were raised.

The Committee resolved as follows:

That the draft minutes of the previous SBCC meeting held on Friday 11 November 2021 be taken as read and confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Moved: Ms Justine Drew

Seconded: ACO Brett Loughlin

Carried.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes**6.1 Status report**

The Chair referred to the briefing note and asked that any commentary regarding item 6.1.3 be held until the Smoke Management Policy is covered again at item 8.6.2.

6.1.1 SBCC Membership**6.1.2 Australian Fire Danger Rating System Update****6.1.3 Smoke Management Policy**

No comments or questions were raised regarding the status report.



The Committee resolved as follows:

That the State Bushfire Coordination Committee note the status report provided on matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held 11 November 2021.

Moved: Ms Heidi Greaves

Seconded: Mr James Crocker

Carried.

7. Correspondence

The correspondence register was tabled (correspondence received and sent by the SBCC between 3 November 2021 and 3 March 2022) and considered by the Committee. The Executive Officer noted that the bulk of the correspondence received was from member agencies/organisations regarding the smoke management policy.

The Executive Officer noted the correspondence from the Upper Eyre Peninsula Bushfire Management Committee (UEP BMC), which was a request regarding the membership of a few organisations. Feedback has been sought from the agencies who were the subject of the committee's resolution – the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, and the Conservation Council of South Australia (CCSA). The Landscape Board have subsequently provided nominations to the committee; and no response has been received from CCSA as yet. The Executive Officer will continue to seek a response and will provide correspondence back to the UEP BMC that the resolution was not supported by the agencies concerned. She noted that it was necessary to consult with the agencies concerned, to ensure right of reply, prior to bring the resolution to the SBCC for consideration.

No questions or comments were raised in relation to correspondence.

The Committee noted the Correspondence List.

8. Business items

8.1 State Bushfire Management Plan 2021-2025 – Implementation Update

8.1.1 BMAP 2.0 Update

The Committee noted the BMAP 2.0 Update.

8.1.2 BMC Meeting Framework 2022

The Committee noted the BMC Meeting Framework 2022.

8.1.3 Governance Review Update

The Executive Officer informed the Committee that the governance review has not been significantly advanced, due to resourcing issues within the SBCC Secretariat since the last SBCC meeting. She noted that this is being looked into, to determine how this can be moved forward with the resources available. She highlighted that much work has been done over this time on the redevelopment of the Bushfire Management Planning and Reporting System, with good progress being made on this, with commencement of the project steering committee process and significant steps made working towards procurement. She noted a need for exploration regarding



engagement of SAPOL in the scoping exercise in relation to critical infrastructure data, and the provision of an opportunity for end-users to test the system once in its initial pilot stage. The significant high-level support provided by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and DEW for the project was noted. She acknowledged the importance of this project in terms of the review of the Bushfire Management Area Plans.

The Executive Officer noted that the Bushfire Management Planning team have been working hard to get the new BMC meeting structure up and running, which has included meeting with BMC Executive Officers and briefing them on the Autumn Meeting (the Post Season Review workshop). It is expected that at the next SBCC meeting a summary report of the outcomes of the will be brought to the Committee.

She also noted work was about to commence work on Annual Report, and the mid-year risk reduction workshop. There have been setbacks with staffing and resourcing, with the big piece of work not progressed being the governance review, and options will need to be worked through to resource this.

No comments or questions were raised, and the Committee noted the update.

8.2 SBCC 2021-2022 Annual Report

The Chair referred to the briefing note circulated and invited the Executive Officer to comment.

The Executive Officer noted that as there is not yet an automated reporting system, the same manual system will need to be used as was used for last year's report. As such, the process is starting early, and the SACFS Bushfire Management Planning Unit (BMPU) will be guiding the agencies through this process again.

There are areas of reporting that need to be improved. The first annual report last year was challenging to pull together in the manual data context, and there was a lot of interest in this report. This year, the Committee will need to report on the progress of the implementation of the State Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) as well as the implementation of the BMAPs.

At the next meeting, an overview of the reporting framework will be brought to the Committee. In relation to the BMAP reporting, it is proposed that this year the report will name agencies who don't submit any report. Last year, were around 30% of activities in the 'unknown' category, due to some agencies not reporting at all.

Agencies will also be asked, where possible, to report a level of numerics such as: costs associated with works delivery, kilometres of track treated, area burnt, etc. However, the manual reporting process may make this difficult for some agencies. Many councils already keep detailed records of this information, which is not currently in the public domain, and this is an opportunity to highlight the good work that is currently being done. The intention is that data provided will be aggregated and included in the annual report, in an attempt to go beyond the 'complete, incomplete, and unknown' of the previous report. Following the previous annual report there was political and public demand for this information to be expanded upon.

However, the intention is to make the reporting of this information manageable in the context of the current system operating environment to manage this transitional period. More sophisticated data will be available once a more automated system is in place.

The Chair suggested that it would be easy to assume that asking for further information is a burden, but it is a good opportunity to articulate where things are being done well and to emphasise areas where further support or resourcing is required.

A query was raised regarding the need for detail about the cost of works to be included in the quantitative data, as there is a potential for this to have an adverse impact. It was noted that government agencies already have extensive reporting arrangements of this. Further, a concern was raised that different agencies deliver on-ground works in different ways and record different metrics. This may mean that data could be hard to summarise meaningfully, as it will be comparing things that are not alike. This could also lead to increased scrutiny.

The Chair suggested that the usefulness of this data will come from the aggregation and the ability to highlight the average costs associated with different activities. The subtleties of the measurement and collation of this data – if available - may allow an opportunity to provide a useful narrative.

It was further pointed out by the SACFS Member that during the progression of a private member's bill following the last annual report there was a significant level of interest and concern about what was reported, with a desire for increased transparency. As such, it is important that the Committee note this need to improve reporting. In response to a request for clarification, he noted a particular focus from a private member (subsequently picked up by both major parties) on prescribed burning and other approaches and the need to provide an improved understanding of what is planned compared with what is actually implemented, and the reasons behind anything not implemented. It was demonstrated to these parties that at this point in time this would be a considerable administrative burden on all relevant agencies to provide this information in the absence of a coordinated and automated reporting system. However, the feedback demonstrated that there is a desire for people to be able to better understand the preventative works being undertaken by agencies to mitigate risk in the community.

The Chair agreed, noting that politically there is great focus on resilience, preparedness, and prevention – and that it is important to be able to articulate what this looks like to combat the deficit of understanding of mitigation work. This also helps to increase transparency.

A series of questions and comments from the ForestrySA Member who was unable to attend were shared with the Committee, regarding the collection and aggregation of quantitative data. These concerns were noted by the Chair, who suggested that any specific concerns could be shared out of session.

The Executive Officer noted that during the extended discussions referred to by the SACFS Member, there was no acceptance of the absence of agency specific reporting in the previous annual report, even when it was argued that there was already separate reporting by individual agencies on what they deliver in this space. As such, there is the need for the overarching report centralising information in one place as suggested. If aggregating the data differences between agency reporting metrics will need to be considered and information presented in a way that acknowledges the different ways of approaching the delivery of activities.



The Chair pointed out that while this reporting is currently difficult due to the manual reporting process, it is needed to begin to match what is provided in other states, and as such the Committee cannot afford to not provide additional information on agency activities.

The Executive Officer noted the intention of getting the base data to agencies in late April, and this will need to be completed by late June. Conversations have already begun at a staff level between SACFS Bushfire Management Planning Unit (BMPU) and DEW Fire Management staff, and several agencies including SA Water and DIT have completed a significant amount of work internally on reporting. BMPU will liaise with state agencies regarding how they report their data and will work directly with councils and through the LGA.

The Committee resolved as follows:

That the State Bushfire Coordination Committee note the briefing on the preparation of the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

Moved: Mr Michael Garrod

Seconded: Ms Heidi Greaves

Carried.

8.3 SBCC Website

The Chair referred to the briefing note circulated and invited the Executive Officer to comment.

The Executive Officer noted that there have been technical challenges in transitioning the website build into the operational framework, but it is hoped that within the next few weeks it will be made live so that the Committee can review it and provide feedback.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to make it only accessible to the Committee in a test environment. It will be live but not promoted while it is circulated to the Committee for review.

No questions or comments were raised.

The Chair suggested that the website will ideally be made available to the SBCC prior to the next SBCC meeting, with feedback to be provided out-of-session.

The Committee noted the update on the SBCC website.

8.4 Emergency Management Data Strategy

The Chair referred to the briefing note circulated and invited the Executive Officer to comment.

The Executive Officer noted that the main purpose of this item is to bring this Strategy to the Committee's attention. Data and information, and the intelligence that can be created from this to support work in planning and response capability is important moving forward. This was a major theme from the *Independent Review into the 2019/20 Bushfire Season* ('Keelty Review') and the Royal Commission. As such it has been a focus of attention at all levels of government, relatively well resourced in terms of Royal Commission outcomes.

C/Supt. John Venditto left the room at 09:41hrs.



It is significant step forward in South Australia to be driving a more collaborative approach to data sharing in emergency management and will underpin the way that business is done. In the development of the Bushfire Management Planning and Reporting System SACFS is working to ensure that there is an integrated approach to the way that solution is developed, to support base data sharing, and integrate across existing systems. For this reason, DPC have been keen to be heavily involved in the development of the new system.

The Chair noted that South Australia is one of the few states that has a very clear legislative framework in relation to data sharing, in addition to the National reforms in this regard. Many other jurisdictions are envious of South Australia's ability to compel agencies to share data. The Chair remarked that she recently attended the inaugural meeting of the Environment and Emergency Management Data Asset Committee (EEMDAC), which reports directly to the Chief Executives under the Environment and Emergency Management 'pillar' (of the three pillars under DPC: social, economic, and environment and emergency management). This committee has the aim of ensuring that emergency management and environmental data is shared and entirely transparent. This will also support collection of data in a way that is technology agnostic and able to be used across platforms, and easily shareable.

In response to a question regarding whether the implementation of the data sharing strategy will resolve the current challenges of annual reporting, the Chair suggested that this is the broad intent. However, while there is the appetite for data sharing to occur, it will be up to the SBCC to shape and drive the process, with strong support from central government. The Executive Officer noted that there is an intent to integrate the base data, and that the analytics that can be derived from this large set of base data can support annual reporting.

The Chair further clarified that the Emergency Management Data Strategy will impact reporting rather than implementation and operations at this stage.

No further questions were raised, and the Committee noted the briefing.

8.5 Bushfire Management Committee Nominations

The Chair tabled the amended briefing, noting that several late nominations were received.

No questions or conflicts of interest were raised.

The Committee resolved as follows:

That the SBCC confirm the requested appointments as being from agencies prescribed by the SBCC in the composition of the BMCs, and appoints the persons listed to the relevant BMC for the remainder of the current three-year term of BMCs.

Moved: ACO Brett Loughlin

Seconded: ACFO Peter Button

Carried.

8.6 Agency Matters

The Chair handed over to Ms Justine Drew (PIRSA) to speak to items 8.6.1 and 8.6.2.



8.6.1 PIRSA - Dog Fence – Major BMAP Amendment

C/Supt. John Venditto returned to the room at 09:52hrs.

Ms Drew noted that discussions are underway to include the Dog Fence as a significant asset through the Bushfire Management Area Plan (BMAP) major amendment process, given the \$25 million going in to the rebuild currently, along with the additional flood repair work currently being undertaken following January's floods. Ms Drew highlighted the importance of the significant investment being made to get the fence back up to standard, and noting the economic outcomes that the fence protects, including the \$1.8 billion sheep industry. Fortunately flood damage to the fence was not too significant. Including the bushfire risk management of the fence in BMAPs supports for security of maintenance going forward to protect the investment.

The Executive Officer noted that late last year the Dog Fence Board had contacted SACFS via a DEW contact on the west coast who had had preliminary conversations regarding local works. SACFS BMPU will be a single point of contact to work with all of the owners along the fence and will review in some detail what risk reduction activities may be required along the full length of the fence. This will be supported in the first instance by the work done by PIRSA imaging the entire length of the fence. Some initial desktop work will be done using this imagery as a guide. Work will then occur with the fence owners to identify key areas for on-ground reconnaissance and identification of manageable activities. This is long-term maintenance work that needs to be practical and effective in remote locations. This work will be combined into a set of proposed amendments to both the Outback BMAP and a small section of the Upper Eyre Peninsula BMAP.

Much consultation will need to occur with owners and the relevant members of the BMCs throughout this process. BMPU is seeking to coordinate this as a major amendment, which will need to go through the relevant BMCs for their endorsement and come to the SBCC prior to going out for public consultation. As such, this is a large piece of work.

As part of the BMAP Handbook Review, there is the intention to address this type of economic infrastructure and have clearer criteria around assessment. However, this current process will ensure transparency and can occur in the interim ahead of the major BMAP reviews, in order to ensure that there is appropriate mitigation in place to protect this asset.

8.6.2 PIRSA – Smoke Management Guideline Update

Ms Drew reminded the Committee that at the previous meeting a few options were considered regarding the structure and ownership of the smoke management policy and its components. Further consultation was done (the outcome of which was included in this meeting's papers), which also included PIRSA engaging again with the grain industry and wine grape industry stakeholders. Significant work had previously been put into coming to an agreement on the language of the original proposal. Ultimately, the stakeholders were hoping for a way to have this be a mandatory policy with someone enforcing it. However, it has become clear that there is no feasible mechanism

by which this can be done, and the most workable solution is to separate this into a policy and accompanying guidelines.

In order for PIRSA to go back to the industry groups to finalise this, it is important to have clarity on who is responsible for the policy and guideline elements of this, in order to present them with a picture of where the information they have already provided has ended up. She suggested that the Committee try to agree upon the policy intent, and once this is confirmed the guidelines can be finalised with the industry stakeholders.

The Chair thanked PIRSA for undertaking the significant engagement with stakeholders, noting how important this has been.

The Executive Officer clarified that the policy has had relevant feedback incorporated and is relatively settled. Some feedback provided during the last consultation was directed at a level of detail that more appropriately sits at guideline level. This feedback has been set aside to be incorporated into potential guidelines.

The issue is that the intention was to bring the policy back to the Committee with the draft Guidelines accompanying it, as the feedback from the majority of members was that the SBCC needs to have some level of assurance regarding the guidelines that sit under it. However, the industry groups want certainty about the status of the policy before they are prepared to take on the responsibility for the self-regulatory guidelines. Given that there is no legislative framework to provide a compliance 'authority' in this matter, regardless of whether the policy sits with the SBCC or with the Rural Fire Hazard Leader (SACFS), it is a self-regulation piece that sits underneath a policy intent. As such, this has reached a bit of an impasse.

The Executive Officer noted that the tenor of the discussion at the last meeting indicated a degree of reservation regarding this policy sitting with the Committee.

In response to a question, ACO Brett Loughlin (SACFS) noted that from an SACFS perspective the intention is for a multi-agency collegiate approach through the SBCC. However, discussion of the issue has been ongoing for some time now, and industry is keen to understand what best practice might look like. He suggested that we cannot expect or encourage best practice from industry unless they are given something to work towards. He proposed that if the SBCC cannot reach a resolution on this matter in the current meeting, he would take to the SACFS Chief Officer a proposal that this is issued as a guideline under the Rural Fire Hazard Leader framework, in order to bring the matter to resolution.

The Chair suggested that if the Committee agrees, it would be appropriate for SACFS as Rural Fire Hazard Leader to take ownership of this and consult back with the Committee. She opened to the floor for discussion.

ACFO Peter Button (SAMFS) suggested that if the Committee cannot come to a resolution, then that would be an appropriate solution. However, he expressed a preference that it be an SBCC



piece, as it is relevant to many of the SBCC member agencies and organisations and may hold more weight coming from the Committee.

In response to a question regarding whether different burnt products contribute differently to smoke taint, and whether some industries are being targeting unfairly given this, the Executive Officer suggested that ultimately it is a matter for the relevant industry sectors to consider this issue to manage how they co-exist within the landscape. She suggested that the intent of the policy is much broader (to consider public health matters, traffic management, etc). ACO Loughlin noted a body of research in an Australian context from some South Australian universities and the University of Melbourne, that suggests that smoke taint seems to boil down to the temperatures involved, and as such some larger scale fires or bigger prescribed burns pose the greatest risk due to them reaching the temperatures where the smoke composition can change.

Ms Fiona Gill (DEW) expressed that she holds no strong opinion regarding whether SACFS or SBCC owns the policy but suggested that if it helps expedite the process for SACFS to become the owner then that is an important consideration. However, she suggested that it would be useful for the SBCC to still have some regular overview or oversight, alongside a number of SACFS policies that the SBCC doesn't own but does have an interest in. She also noted that it is important to remember that prescribed burning happens for a number of reasons, not just for bushfire risk reduction – and this complexity is not fixed by passing ownership of the policy to SACFS.

The Chair noted that this is an important point, to ensure that the breadth of the policy and intent remains.

ACO Loughlin suggested that the policy that has been circulated in draft is a good summation of the issue and is similar in context and composition to what exists in New South Wales and Victoria; and this alignment with some national standard may be what industry is seeking and would provide some certainty in this space.

The Executive Officer noted the intention that an update will be provided at the May SBCC meeting as a point for noting.

The Committee resolved as follows:

To endorse the transition of ownership of the Smoke Management piece to the SACFS with the provision that the broader policy intent is maintained; to ensure it forms part of an annual/biennial review by the SBCC.

Moved: ACFO Peter Button **Seconded:** Ms Justine Drew

Carried.



8.6.3 DIT – Roadside Management Project

The Chair handed over to Mr Graeme Brown (DIT) to give an update on the Roadside Vegetation Clearance Project. An overview of this update is provided as an attachment to the minutes.

In response to a question asked about how native vegetation and fire behaviour experts are informing the work being done, Mr Brown noted that DIT are working with SACFS and SAPOL in the first instance to determine the areas that require the mitigation activities for a targeted response. The approach is to establish the minimum required to mitigate the risk as far as is reasonably practicable. DIT will also engage with DEW regarding native vegetation, to ensure that this is taken into consideration.

It was noted that from an SACFS volunteer perspective, when dealing with roadside fires where the fire is nearly out, they go through a process of handing back management to the landowner where possible. There have been issues in the past establishing who is the correct landowner, and ideally there would be more clarity about this coming through the SACFS system and down to volunteers.

Mr Brown suggested that as the GIS database is developed, it will be able to be overlayed, and will clearly identify DIT's road area (from their perspective) and what then merges into local government or homeowners. Noting the broader emergency management data project, this information will be available to anyone from an emergency management perspective.

The Committee noted the update.

8.6.4 AGD-PLUS – Bushfire Hazards Code Amendment Overlay

The Chair handed over to Ms Rhiannon Hardy (AGD-PLUS) to give a confidential update on the Bushfire Hazards Code Amendment Overlay ('Code Amendment Overlay'). An overview of this update is provided as an attachment to the minutes (*not for public distribution*).

The Committee noted the update.

8.6.5 Member's Call

The Chair opened to the Committee to present any other agency items.

ACO Loughlin (SACFS) informed the Committee that the most recent seasonal outlook identified some above average fire potential in the Lower South East for the remainder of the season, with Mount Gambier having some of the driest Soil Dryness Indices in the state, which is atypical. As such, an element of risk remains despite the relatively mild season. On behalf of SACFS he thanked the Committee's member agencies and organisations for their support during the Coles fire and following the tragic loss of firefighter Louise Hincks.

He further noted the AFDRS update included in the meeting papers and encouraged all agencies to ensure that this is read, and the implications of the changes considered. The national committee has determined the new fire danger rating levels, which includes the creation of a 'no risk' category



(fire behaviour indices of 0-11). There will be a significant body of work for all agencies once it is ready for implementation, to ensure that internal policy across the state is updated to reflect the new categories and calls to action.

Ms Heidi Greaves noted that LGA SA will be holding a strategic session with senior managers in early May regarding the AFDRS, to help ensure that local government agencies are prepared and have the time to implement any changes that are needed. The Chair noted that the SACFS AFDRS team are available to support this and any other endeavours if needed; noting that there will also be a significant national campaign.

The Committee noted the items raised.

9. Other Business

No other business was raised.

10. Meeting Close

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 10:57am.

Next Meeting – Friday 20th May 2022, 09:00hrs.

Endorsed by the State Bushfire Coordination Committee as a true and correct record of the meeting.

Georgie Cornish
A/Chair, State Bushfire Coordination Committee

on behalf of

Mark Jones QFSM
Chair, State Bushfire Coordination Committee