



# Communique

**Meeting Held - Friday 18 November 2022**

## **Status Report**

- **State Bushfire Coordination Committee Membership**

The Committee noted that, following the resignation of Members representing the Local Government Association (LGA), the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT), and the SA Country Fire Service (SACFS), the positions of the Deputy to the Member for each agency had also fallen vacant. As such, observers for each of the LGA, DIT and SACFS were in attendance at the meeting. Progression of nominations to the Minister, Cabinet and the Governor for each agency will occur prior to the first meeting of the Committee in 2023.

- **Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) Update**

The Committee noted that the implementation of the new AFDRS had commenced from 1 September, and work was being undertaken on the transition to business as usual for the medium-term adjustments needed for the system, including changes to policy, by-laws and regulation across a number of sectors.

## **KI BMC Landscape Treatment Investigation Areas Pilot**

- The Committee supported a request from the Kangaroo Island Bushfire Management Committee (KI BMC) for a pilot review process of areas of high bushfire risk for potential inclusion in the Burning on Private Land (BoPL) programme on Kangaroo Island. The intent of the review process is that the BMC consider and agree on areas of greatest risk to target for prescribed burning under the BoPL programme, and landholders in those areas are then approached to participate. Once specific burn areas are confirmed, these will be included on the BMAP risk register.

## **State Bushfire Management Plan Implementation Update**

- **Interim BMAP Process – Annual Bushfire Risk Reduction Planning**

The Committee was advised that the first annual bushfire risk reduction plans were currently being finalised for endorsement by BMCs ahead of their submission to the SBCC for final review and endorsement followed by posting on the SBCC website under each BMC landing page. A draft plan was supplied to the Committee as a sample.

A summary status report on the process was provided to the Committee, noting that a total of 60 organisations have risk reduction actions against assets rated as Extreme or Very High in existing BMAPs, generating 60 agency level risk reduction plans. (The agency plans are combined for each of the nine Bushfire Management Committees).

Over three quarters of the agency plans had been endorsed at chief executive level at the time the Committee met. Just under 40% (or 22 agencies) had actively engaged in the planning process from the outset. However, the Committee noted that 11 organisations had not engaged in the planning process at all.



It was noted that key positive outcomes of the process are the development of the plans for the first time; the collaborative conversations that have occurred in the process; and the opportunity to report against the proposed actions as a concrete outcome for 2022-2023.

However, the Committee discussed at some length the preliminary lessons identified from the process and noted the significant limitations on what can be achieved in the bushfire management process in the absence of broader improvements across a number of key areas, including:

- Agencies accepting responsibility for bushfire management in their remit;
- Improved internal agency governance arrangements to support corporate level engagement in bushfire management, including an appropriate and effective level of representation on BMCs;
- BMAP software uplift and development of the next generation of BMAPs; and,
- Effective continuity in executive support for BMCs.

A detailed review of the process will be undertaken ahead of commencement of the planning for 2023-2024.

The Committee agreed to review the final plans and undertake an out of session vote to endorse the plans before the end of the year.

## • **BMAP 2.0 Update**

The Committee was advised that CFS is progressing resourcing discussions with government for the bushfire management planning and reporting system software uplift.

A report on the results of the end user requirements survey for the new software solution was provided to the committee, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and user-friendly system to support effective bushfire risk management.

## • **Pre-season Coordination Report Summary**

The Committee noted a summary of the outcomes of BMC pre-season coordination reporting. While the intent of the reporting process was to encourage agencies to discuss collaboration for the coming fire season, this had not been achieved, partly due to many agencies not reporting and delays in BMC meetings.

Among agencies who reported, key points of concern were noted as:

- the extent of grass growth in many areas of the state, meaning risk reduction works will continue well into the fire danger season;
- regulation of native vegetation and the management of green waste (the latter particularly following the recent extreme weather);
- confusion regarding responsibility for declared weed management;
- staff turnover in agencies;
- delays in training in use of the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) Fuel State Editor (which has replaced the manual grass curing assessment).

A leaflet submitted during the reporting process prepared by Wudinna District Council was also noted and applauded, as a simple and well targeted communication to residents regarding bushfire preparation.



- **Governance Review Update**

The Committee noted advice that a procurement process was being undertaken to support the review due to the need to include stakeholder consultation in the contracted work as SACFS does not have the capacity to support this as originally intended. Work on the review is expected to commence early in the new year.

## **SBCC Annual report 2021-2022**

The Committee noted that the annual report was tabled in the House of Assembly on 18 October 2022 and is available on the SBCC website.

## **Flinders Mid North Yorke and Outback Bushfire Management Areas – Boundary Amendment**

Following consideration by each of the FMNY and Outback BMCs of options for amendment of their mutual boundary, the SBCC recommended to the Minister that Port Augusta City Council, Flinders Ranges Council, District Council of Mount Remarkable, District Council of Peterborough and Orroroo Carrieton Council be included in the Outback Bushfire Management Area and be removed from the Flinders Mid North Yorke Bushfire Management Area.

The Committee also noted the request from both the Outback and Flinders Mid North Yorke BMCs to review their boundaries more generally and agreed that these requests will be considered through the SBCC and BMC review of governance, including the specific proposals provided by each BMC.

## **Bushfire Management Committee Membership**

The Committee endorsed mid-term membership nominations for several BMCs.

## **Agency Updates**

- **Spring Prescribed Burning Programme (DEW)**

Ms Fiona Gill advised the Committee that DEW has faced significant challenges in delivering the spring burning programme across DEW, Forestry SA and SA Water lands due to the extended wet weather and unsuitable conditions. She noted that the landscape risk profile does not increase exponentially as a result of burns not being completed, and they will be rolled over into the Autumn 2023 programme. The Committee acknowledged the difficulty of burning this year and congratulated DEW for achieving the burns that they completed to date.

**The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Friday 24 February 2023.**

*(Communique issued 12 December 2022)*