



MINUTES

Meeting 6/11
13 October 2023
09:00 – 12:00hrs
SA Power Networks
1 Anzac Highway
KESWICK

Attendance	Mr Brett Loughlin AFSM Dr Malinda Steenkamp	Chair (<i>ex officio</i>) Executive Officer
	Ms Tessa Roberts Mr Andrew Cadd (<i>Teams</i>) Ms Fiona Gill Ms Justine Drew Ms Monique Blason (<i>Teams</i>) Mr Michael Garrod Cr Paul Yeomans Ms Jan Ferguson OAM (<i>Teams</i>) Mr Peter White ACO Cameron Devey ACFO Peter Button AC Stuart McLean Ms Ali Walsh Mr James Crocker	Deputy, Conservation Council of Australia (CCSA) Member, Country Fire Service Volunteer Association (CFSVA) Member, Department of Environment and Water (DEW) Member, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) Member, ForestrySA (FSA) Member, Landscape SA (LSA) Member, Local Government Association of SA (LGASA) Member, Outback Communities Authority (OCA) Member, Primary Producers SA (PPSA) Member, SA Country Fire Service (SACFS) Member, SA Metropolitan Fire Service (SAMFS) Member, SA Police (SAPOL) Member, SA Power Networks (SAPN) Member, SA Water
Apologies	Ms Kylie Egan Mr Mark Ashley Mr Troy Fountain	Member, Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) Member, Conservation Council of South Australia (CCSA) Member, Planning and Land Use Services, Department for Trade and Investment (PLUS-DTI)
Observers and Guests	Ms Alexia Kohlmorgen Ms Jacqui Williams	Observer, Department for Environment and Water (DIT) Administrative Support, SBCC Secretariat

1. Welcome

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair (Brett Loughlin) welcomed attendees and opened the meeting at 9:02am and gave an Acknowledgement of Country.

1.2 Apologies

The Chair noted observers, attendees online and apologies received.

1.3 Safety Briefing

The Chair requested SA Power Networks Member Ali Walsh provide the Safety Briefing. Ms Walsh outlined evacuation procedures for the building and the location of exit and meeting points.

1.4 Recording of Meeting

Dr Malinda Steenkamp (Executive Officer) reminded the Members the Meeting was to be recorded via Teams.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest/Probity Matters

The Chair asked for a declaration of any Conflicts of Interest or Probity Matters, and asked that any conflicts be raised, or if they arose throughout the course of the meeting be declared and managed at that point in time.

None were raised at the outset.

3. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The draft minutes of the State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) meeting of 5 May were considered for confirmation.

Minor grammatical errors reported, for correction and redistribution.

SBCC resolved as follows:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2023 are confirmed as amended as a true and correct record.

Moved: Peter Button SAMFS

Seconded: Paul Yeomans LGA

Carried

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

Chair noted that this would be covered in the Agenda Items.

5. Correspondence

SBCC noted:

The correspondence provided to 13 October 2023.

6. Business Items

6.1 BMAP 2.0 Update

Cameron Devey CFS

Discussion on Briefing Paper provided:

Cameron informed the Committee that \$1.8 million funding has been received to ensure movement forward with BMAP 2.0. CFS is working through the process and is committed to pushing forward on the project. There is consciousness that there is a significant amount of conversation across government, around the common operating procedure or system.

With the funding, we can now consider a potential replacement for the operating system, known as CRIIMSON. There are plans to have a Program Manager over both projects, to facilitate the interaction between them.

Previously the proposed governance structure for the investigation of BMAP 2.0 was set and it was identified with names and positions, as opposed to just the positions. Time has moved on since the governance structure was established and now there is an opportunity to review who might be the most appropriate members to represent each of the agencies.

Although we do not currently have a Program Manager, the Risk and Resilience Directorate have been working hard in the background to keep things going, while industrial mechanisms are in place in appointing a Program Manager.

The key question for everyone is: What can your agency contribute to the Program and what level of reach do you see as acceptable for SACFS in terms of supporting the Program going forward? As the Program evolves, SACFS will reach out to all of the SBCC Members when re-establishing the governance program.

Ali Walsh (SAPN) asked whether there has been any consideration for additional guest attendees who may be able to support that – that there may be a guest who is not an SBCC Member, but who may be able to contribute appropriately to the governance and support of the Program.

Cameron Devey (SACFS) agreed that this may be appropriate and worthy of discussion via out of session correspondence. Cameron requested that it be noted that this is not a given, but that this work may be one hold as we keep the work on BMAP 2.0 on point.

The Chair commented that this is a great suggestion, and that once we have some key people on board, in particular a Project Manager, they would be regular attendees, providing the SBCC with comprehensive communication.

Fiona referred to a diagram in the Briefing Note which mentioned the “Ops System” and requested clarification on what this meant. Cameron explained that the operating system is currently CRIIMSON. Fiona asked whether the work on the operating system is happening in parallel with the work being done on BMAP 2.0.

Cameron explained that there is synergy between the two and that SACFS is aware that BMAP 2.0 has a broad scope, moving to a live moving beast which captures the management of all work, from crops

being harvested to the rates of curing. Cameron explained that there is a lot of work to be done in this space and stressed that we need to ensure that there are no unintended impacts on other's business.

Fiona asked about the Steering Committee (page 5 of the Briefing Note), and when Members may be asked to confirm Membership to this, when the Steering Committee may start and when would SACFS require answers about this.

Cameron replied that this is subject to industrial action which SACFS needs to follow in order to establish a project plan, in time for the next meeting.

The Chair explained that the Commonwealth had the ability to provide the \$1.8 million as a standalone, without any requirement for administration in the background. This did not occur, and the approach therefore needed to change. This change caused delays in the process. The Chair stated that ideally the process was to have started on 1 July 2023, but it has been flagged that this did not occur due to the delays.

The Chair noted that the co-contribution needs only to be from the South Australian Government, not only SACFS and that each of the government agencies can contribute time and energy to the Program. There will be an ask from SACFS on behalf of the SBCC to record that time to assist in demonstrating to the Commonwealth Government, and that this is something we must do.

In addition, the Chair noted that under the previous Steering Committee, there was a request for information via a thoroughly shortlisted process and once of those components has since moved out of the industry. They are no longer doing bushfire management software. There is now an opportunity to look within the Committee and agency for development of a systematic approach to incorporate how they are working with risk management, vegetation management and that once key roles are recruited, conversations will need to occur as the Program progresses.

The Chair mentioned that software development is one part of the process, but another part is the Handbook/Instruction Manual about how BMAP interacts with environmental approvals. In the old system there had been difficulties associated with bushfire treatments in a management plan with a rapid approvals process for some native vegetation. This was seen to be problematic for the Native Vegetation Council. There may now be an opportunity to ensure that the environmental process is more thoroughly examined than in the past. This would involve significant work, but we are optimistic, and we will work through it together as a committee.

Regarding the \$1.8 million co-contribution, the Chair stated that when there is a State government budget process which runs in conjunction with the Commonwealth process, you do not know whether you will get the State funding until the same time that you receive the Commonwealth funding. We received one half, but not the other so renegotiation was required.

Mr Cameron Devey (SACFS) commented that despite resourcing limitations faced by all SBCC Members, SACFS will always welcome support, through processes and mechanisms, to move forward.

6.2 Flinders Mid North York and Outback BMAs – Boundary Amendment Update (verbal)

The Chair stated that we have approval from the Minister to progress this through a Cabinet Submission. The Cabinet Submission will be completed as soon as possible, and the Committee will be kept informed regarding the progress. The Committee acknowledges the risks associated with Bush Fire Management Committees being unable to form quorum.

Some SBCC Members were unfamiliar with the issues regarding the boundary amendment and the Chair provided an explanation. It was also suggested that the paper regarding this could be recirculated to ensure awareness.

6.3 SBCC 2022-2023 Annual Report

The Chair reported to the Meeting that the 2022-2023 Annual Report has been submitted to the Minister and acknowledged the time and effort of the SBCC Member organisations with regard to their contributions to the Annual Reporting process. The Chair also acknowledged with gratitude, the extension that was provided to us by the Minister for the completion of the Annual Report.

Changes to the reporting aspect was discussed, particularly the replacement of the current process with an automated reporting system, as part of the BMAP 2.0 updates. There may be a requirement, however, to continue with the manual reporting process for the Annual Report for the next two years.

A paper may be circulated ahead of the next meeting to cover how we may manage this process to ensure administrative burdens are eased as much as possible for the Members. The Chair raised the possibility of gaining an exemption from the Government for one to two years for this process and mentioned that this may be included in the paper to be circulated.

Ms Fiona Gill (DEW) commented that in the previous report, prescribed burning was seen as more important than other mitigation activities. She commented that there needs to be a shift in the conversations with communities, that the full spectrum of mitigation activities is important.

Ms Gill also mentioned the repetition contained within the 2022-2023 SBCC Annual Report, and it would be beneficial to everyone to reduce that repetition.

Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) commented that the possibility of an exemption from completing the Annual Report for the next two years may be a missed opportunity to ensure visibility for the work of the SBCC.

The Chair then requested that we circulate the 2022-2023 SBCC Annual Report with these Meeting Minutes.

6.4 SBCC End of Term Nominations (verbal)

Dr Malinda Steenkamp (Executive Officer) thanked all of the SBCC Member organisations for sending through their nominations in such a timely manner, with short notice. The Cabinet Submission will be forwarded to the Minister's Office by 20 October 2023.

Dr Steenkamp stated that she will be sending emails to the Members to clarify names, as the Gazettal process requires accuracy.

The Chair also thanked those Members who have resigned or who will not be returning as an SBCC Member during the next term, for their service. The Chair commented that the Committee has made significant progress over time on a path to professionalism having achieved some great achievements.

6.5 Bushfire Management Committee Nominations

The Chair noted that many Bushfire Management Committee nominations had been endorsed via an out of session process. He then directed the Members to the recommendations for new endorsements within their Meeting documentation. The recommendations supported the requested appointments provided by agencies prescribed by the SBCC in the composition of the Bushfire Management Committees, that the SBCC appoint those persons listed to the relevant Bushfire Management Committee for the remainder of the current terms.

Moved: Ms Justine Drew (PIRSA)

Seconded: Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN)

Carried

6.6 State Bushfire Management Plan Mid Term Review

The Chair spoke to a presentation on screen from the State Bushfire Management Plan 2021-2025: Objectives and SBCC Actions, to reflect on the status of these items.

- 1.1 During the life of this Plan, best available data and information on key existential risks to South Australia associated with bushfire will be consolidated and analysed to provide a state-level bushfire risk assessment.

The Chair stated that this is work that has not been commenced.

- 2.1 Early in the life of this Plan, the SBCC will undertake a review of governance procedures and practices for the SBCC and BMCs.

The Chair reported that the governance review was costed at \$80,000 but the SACFS has been unable to fund as an agency. No work has been completed on this point.

Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) mentioned that she thought that there was a plan underway for work in that space.

The Chair stated that terms of reference was created, quotes were put together but funding was then unable to be brought to fruition in order to deliver. Everything is ready, only money is needed to commence the review.

- 2.2 During the life of this Plan, the SBCC will undertake a review of the structure and composition of the SBCC and BMCs including, but not limited to, consideration of Indigenous Australian and forestry industry representation; and the relationship with the Fire Prevention Strategic Alliance (FPSA) and the Heads of Agencies group (currently comprised of SACFS, DEW, SAW and FSA).

The Chair stated, subject to funding, we would undertake a review of the structure and composition of Committees, considering First Nations People, Forest Industry representation and the relationship

with the Fire Prevention Strategic Alliance. Work is underway in this space. We have just added a representative from the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Group from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), which was long overdue. There have also been discussions with the BMC in the Lower Southeast in having members from the Forest Industry joining that committee.

- 2.3 During the life of this Plan, an assurance and reporting framework for the SBCC and BMCs will be developed to ensure that legislative requirements are being met.

The Chair stated that based on our earlier discussions in this Meeting, we can agree that the work on annual reporting is underway.

- 2.4 Early the life of this Plan, explore the relationship between the SBCC and State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), and between the SBMP and the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP). This will include addressing the appropriate location of the Rural Fire Hazard Leader Plan.

The Chair stated that we have written a rural fire hazard plan to meet the SEMP requirements, and this work is now closed.

- 2.5 During the life of this Plan, the SBCC will identify data gaps and support improved data utilisation to inform State and BMC-level bushfire risk assessments.

The Chair suggested that this work is also well underway. There have been many data gaps, and support for improved data utilisation to inform our risk assessment process.

- 3.1 During the life of this Plan, the SBCC will clearly identify environmental approvals processes - including regulation, policy and impact assessment - for hazard reduction activities on all tenures, as part of a wider review of SBCC and BMC governance arrangements, and review of the BMAP Handbook.

The Chair stated that this will be part of the key work for BMAP 2.0. The work is in its infancy but underway.

Ms Fiona Gill (DEW) stated that DEW has a 30 year agreement that allows DEW to self-approve when they trigger matters of national environmental significance. This is an agreement between the Minister and the Commonwealth Minister and requires annual internal audits and five yearly external audits.

It is a big piece of work that needs to be done with BMAP 2.0, with questions about how it is capturing environmental information, and how are mitigation activities going to be taking account of that.

Another issue relating to this at state level is the Native Vegetation Act. The Native Vegetation Council may provide some commentary when their Member is appointed, with regard to treatment activities and how to meet the Native Vegetation Act requirements.

Ms Gill asked whether it is a requirement for all hazard leaders to have completed a state level risk assessment.

The Chair responded by explaining that there is a hazard plan at state level risk which identifies some high level “bushfire is bad” high level strategies. He further explained that this could be better quantified via requests for information , through BMC level programs or plans which could be aggregated into a state level piece. There also may be a technological solution to help inform that.

The Chair then referred to point 1.1 above regarding the identification of key existential risks to South Australia associated with bushfire, and mentioned that we can engage researchers to do that, it will inform the project at state level. It would be good to create a much more strategic overview which could assist with determining the most vulnerable industries to a fire season, such as the tourism industry, and how we might mitigate that.

Ms Gill commented that some commentary at state level about bushfires would be useful, in the context of land management, considering that not all fire is bad, and that fire can contribute to mitigation. A state level assessment, being able to capture that information as a position statement would be helpful in the context of BMAP 2.0.

The Chair agreed and commented that it would be useful to use the software to do some economic analysis of certain situations such as the economic impact of fires on the forest industry, including the value of the industry and the impacts on employment. We might be able to identify the number of commercial facilities that are at extreme risk, and this would be powerful data which we do not have currently.

At the moment, the hazard plan is more about key risks, such as loss of communications. The question is, how would we use this data to address preparedness? It is around our community engagement program, at quite a high level, just without the supporting data.

Mr Cameron Devey (CFS) stated that it is also about quantifying the economic impact for volunteers responding for protracted periods of time, and being able to measure that.

Dr Malinda Steenkamp (Executive Officer) mentioned that SAFECOM has put forward the next round of Disaster Reduction Funding.

The Chair commented that we may be able to consider submitting that via the governance review, which is already costed.

- 4.1 During the life of this Plan, the BMAP Handbook will be reviewed and redeveloped, including review of the risk management process to ensure consistency with ISO 31000 Risk Management (2018), and inclusion of processes for consolidating other agency and organisation plans into BMAPs where they meet this risk management standard. This review will include identification of processes to determine levels of risk acceptance and tolerance, and application of risk treatments.

The Chair commented that a new version of BMAP is required, and it needs to align with ISO 31,000. It requires risk management principles, which are covered by the dot points which we could agree are all well underway as part of BMAP 2.0.

Ms Justine Drew (PIRSA) asked about fire tracks and where that sits in the strategic priorities for the SBCC.

Mr Cameron Devey (CFS) said he would provide more information on that at the next SBCC Meeting.

- 5.1 Maintenance and periodic review of the SACFS state-wide community disaster resilience engagement programme to promote public awareness of and preparedness for the threat of bushfire, together with promotion of bushfire awareness and risk management by SBCC Member agencies and organisations within their area of activity and operation.

The Chair commented that the first component of that review is nearly complete. We will have a report able to be circulated which is important as we have not reviewed community engagement as an agency since 2009. These positions have since matured and have been better funded by the Government. We currently have around 13 people working in this space, and it will be interesting to hear what the report says about the most effective and efficient way to utilise these resources. We need to know whether the program is having the required effect.

Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) asked for the timeline of completion for this work?

Mr Cameron Devey (CFS) explained that it will take some time now that we are entering Fire Danger Season. Many people who live in high risk areas do not believe that they live in a high risk area, and many look to agencies to tell them how to respond as opposed to taking the time to prepare bushfire plans or preparations for themselves. Our objective is to measure that sentiment and ensuring that community engagement is not cyclic or robotic, but that the outcomes are meaningful. There is a lot of work being done in this space as the landscape continues to change.

Ms Monique Blason (ForestrySA) raised an issue about the promotion of bushfire awareness and risk management by member agencies and organisations. She asked if this review is just utilising the information that the members have provided through the annual reporting process, or whether there will be a separate process for that, given that it is the information that is provided every year for the Annual Report.

The Chair responded and stated that the first part is about the CFS looking at its internal processes around those issues. The second part will enable us to review the efficacy of the mitigation works that we are reporting on. This will be tied to BMAP 2.0, where one of the key requirements is the automated system to deliver that methodology to apply treatments to assets, and then receive a corresponding risk reduction, then report on that. It is not yet commenced but it is work that is understood and is probably underway utilising existing data at this time.

Ms Blason asked for further information about bushfire awareness, as that is not a part of BMAP. Member agencies and organisations are promoting bushfire awareness on their own.

Mr Cameron Devey (CFS)

And taking that on in terms of the communication aspect sits in my portfolio at CFS and one of the agreements we've made with a number of agencies, particularly the Fire Prevention Strategic Alliance membership is that we have the pathway where CFS will provide all of the linkages, the information as the leader and the messages that we're providing and what the challenge now is, is how do we best link in. Health is not a member of that alliance. And so there's probably opportunity for us to better engage more broadly as to how we can inject our messages in, for instance, LGA



have a networking and communication program that goes out. I think I think it's monthly. If I'm right and it goes out, so we've got the opportunity to provide information too and then it's disseminated more broadly as well. And then also the opportunity to provide feedback and that 360 degree learning as well. So we'll take that on board as part of that review, but it's about current capacity and in terms of broadly speaking and having those conversations, we could do it informally, but in terms of capacity at the moment, we wouldn't be able to open that tab and I'm generating impact that we would definitely want out of that. So happy to support that in process, but it will form part of the review and recommendations.

Mr Paul Yeomans (LGA):

Can you say one of the observations? One of the government's is identified as the impact of COVID and working from home and the tree change they that as they turn it, they've sort of got where you have traditional people residing in environments that would be aware of the bushfire dangers. They become complacent. If you combine that risk with people who have moved into those areas that are completely naive to the risk, and they've sort of taken that up through their education.

The Chair replied that national research is showing low awareness around bushfire risk, and the low completion levels of bushfire action plans, particularly in fire danger areas. It is a national challenge as well as a State challenge. Community engagement is a treatment that is covered in BMAP.

However, understanding the efficacy of that will need to be a part of BMAP 2.0, as we need to determine whether community engagement has a measurable effect to the treatment of an asset. This is not clearly understood at this point.

The Chair then referred to page 24 of the SBMP: Coordination Actions – Prevention. We may put that on the list for discussion at our next meeting for awareness. We might seek an update on the contents of this table for the Committee, particularly around the PDI Act reforms that are underway. The Committee had received briefings from the AGD some time ago, but it has not been realised at this stage.

We might create a reportable table which can be circulated to the Committee, to then ask the lead agency or support agencies to provide an update for discussion at the next meeting. By then, much of our state will be well into the fire danger season.

6.7 Regulation Changes Regarding Prescribed Equipment and Permits

Mr Cameron Devey (CFS) commented that Phil McDonough has been working in this space to ensure that we are updated primarily focused on hot works and for prescribed tools and activities, and ensuring that the work is lawful. The authorised officer training packages will be updated, and information will be made available on all our pages. The issue with hot works is particularly important considering necessary work that is required to be completed on infrastructure. SA Power Networks are involved in that, as they need to be able to restore power infrastructure.

The Chair:

The key summary here is that the revised permit pads will be issued, and the AO training will be updated. The previous permits were based around a very literal interpretation around “light or maintain a fire” with the issue of whether hot work and spark producing equipment actually met the definition of “lighting or maintaining a fire”. This is where the clarity was required.

We have resolved the issue, and as we discussed in the last Meeting, we knew that it was an issue last season, but having no permits available would have been disastrous compared to using the ones we had. We did not on those permits, that they were issued for those purposes, with some extra conditions to ensure that there was enhanced awareness in that coverage. It is good to know that those technical amendments have been made.

Mr Peter White (PPSA):

Mr White raised a further question about permits – where they apply for only one day. This requires to you apply for a permit for each day you need to burn. Some areas will give you a permit for a whole fire season, but you are required to ring in on each day that you intend to burn. This is all confusion and needs to be addressed.

Mr Cameron Devey (CFS):

The short answer is No, but it is a good point, and something to raise for the next fire danger season.

The Chair:

The manual system is used in SA, and it is not the most contemporary or best practice system, and we are aware of better systems that are available which would provide that level of standardization. Unfortunately, the cost is significant, and it is one of those “subject to funding” pieces. The Local Government Association has sent in some correspondence about that, but we need to work with government to secure the funding in order to deliver an online permit module. Having a system which automates the process and provides for standardization is the solution. We can see that work to great effect has occurred in Victoria with the system that we have been exploring.

Mr Peter White (PPSA):

Another issue with permits is that the authorised officer is supposed to investigate the area that is going to be burned. Local government just do not have the capability to go out and have a look every time someone wants to burn.

The Chair discussed some of the challenges in managing permits with the current system and suggested that Phill McDonough might prepare a presentation on the difference between the Victorian system and our system, as an alternative. The Chair also commented that it would be worth considering whether Committee has some capacity to seek broader support from local government, in particular that local government may provide some leadership in that space.

Mr Paul Yeomans (LGA) agreed.

The Chair further commented that if another large body joined the SACFS in making representations for funding, or lead the charge, on behalf of the Committee, it may have more impact, which is something important that the Committee should consider.



Andrew Cadd (CFSVA) provided a comment on the permit issuing process at the Yorke Peninsula Council regarding the online process, which works well. Mr Cadd outlined this process.

Ms Fiona Gill (DEW) provided her support for a presentation to be provided in this process at the next SBCC Meeting and also mentioned the Australian smoke dispersion system. There was further comment regarding the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and their work in this space which may connect to the capture of data about who is burning, and putting smoke into the landscape. Ms Gill indicated that input from BoM at the next Meeting may answer these questions.

Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) sought clarity on whether the “light and maintain fire” wording has been changed.

The Chair confirmed that the definition of hot works and equipment has changed, and that permit books will be reprinted to reflect those changes.

6.8 2024 Meeting Dates

Dr Malinda Steenkamp (Executive Officer) provided the following dates for the Members to consider:

- Meeting 1: 9 or 16 February 2024
- Meeting 2: 3 or 10 May 2024
- Meeting 3: 9 or 16 August 2024
- Meeting 4: 15 or 22 November 2023 *Note this may change to 6 December 2024 to align with usual Meeting 4 scheduling.

Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) sought clarification for the date of the next SBCC Meeting, scheduled for 17 November 2023 but noted that the Minutes from the previous SBCC Meeting suggest the next meeting would be held on 4 December 2023.

It was agreed by the Chair, and the Committee that the next SBCC Meeting would be held on 4 December.

[note: the date of the Meeting is now 1 December 2023]

6.9 Agency Matters

6.9.1 Seasonal Outlook

Mr Cameron Devey (SACFS) provided a presentation via PowerPoint and commented, that as a summary, we will be heading into warmer conditions over October, November and December. There will be above average temperatures and lower rainfall, which will in turn increase the risk of high impact bushfires.

Due to the rapid switch to below average rainfall, the soil dryness has increased rapidly across the state. There are increase fuel loads which require greater efforts in reducing hazards. We are concerned at how large a window of opportunity to undertake hazard reduction will be.

In the context of CFS preparation, CFS has been very busy over the winter period with road crash and other urban work, as well as supplying personnel to both Canada and the Northern Territory.

While each of these has provided the agency with an opportunity for growth and learning, it has impacted on the ability of CFS to prepare for fire danger season.

We are undertaking pre-season training for operational staff, with a new approach. The agency is maturing and uplifting its response capability, particularly with regard to additional investments in our aviation fleet.

There has been development in the warning systems space, with significant investment into these systems, including an increase in server capacity and resolving some background technical issues. We are conscious of the need for accuracy in the dissemination of warnings, understanding the complacency which can result from over warning the community.

We are also focusing on the Bushfire Ready campaign which will consider rural communities, and those travelling within high risk locations. This is in conjunction with the preparation of 13,500 volunteers by way of skills maintenance drills and tactical briefings.

Mr Devey continued to discuss the enhanced aviation fleet, which has been funded an increase of \$26.7 million. This results in an increase of fleet numbers from 26 to 31. Mr Devey provided further detail about the enhanced fleet.

As previously discussed, the Grain Harvesting Code of Conduct dialogue will continue to grow and provide more data to inform better decision making, and this is exciting in terms of the current fire danger season and further into the future.

Mr Devey commented that it is important to note that many SACFS staff are undergoing significant learning in emergency management. Many staff will become operational during the coming fire danger season which will be a challenge for many, along with other challenges that our staff face.

With regard to weather, the state has had the second warmest winter on record, along with below average rainfall early in the growing season. El Niño and the positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) events are currently occurring, and these are climate drivers which strengthen the likelihood of warmer and drier conditions for the remainder of spring and summer. The current 3 month BoM outlook is consistent with the trend seen in 2015 which was the last time that El Niño and the positive IOD interacted.

On a positive note, the state has experienced some wetter periods over the last 3 years as a result of consecutive La Nina events. The soil moisture has therefore been increasingly available to deep rooted vegetation. However, this is drying.

From here, we look towards the 2023/2025 season which looks to be concerning. We are focusing the Bushfire Ready campaign, post campaign analysis and the understanding that the community suffers from a degree of complacency with regard to bushfire. This is particularly evident in the peri-urban areas.

We need to consider how much we spend on response, versus how much we spend on prevention, preparedness and resilience. The key message, therefore, is to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of bushfire plans within communities.

6.9.2 Grain Harvest Code of Practice

Mr Cameron Devey (SACFS) commented that, via the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice Working Group, there have been some good conversations, and a decision has been made that the Code of Practice will remain unchanged.

There is understanding that measuring the wind speed at 10 metres is difficult, and that measuring this incorrectly could lead to serious consequences where harvesting may potentially be occurring in fire ban conditions.

It was mentioned that the industry has been predominantly doing the right thing, but the narrative has demonstrated that confusion around GFDI and scientific measurements have created a problematic scenario.

It would appear that we are not ready to transition to the FBI system, but we are working towards that for the future. We will continue to discuss the issues over time and continue with the review of the economic impact after the next fire danger season. We look forward to improved collaboration and better outcomes in ensuring relevance at a national level.

Ms Justine Drew (PIRSA) sought clarification that we were hoping to move to FBI, but we have now reverted to FDI but in the future we may return to FBI, and this was confirmed by Mr Devey.

Ms Drew discussed the negative commentary in the media around the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS), and that it is important for the Committee to understand that despite the community loss of confidence in the system, we remain committed to the AFDRS, improving it and ensuring it is fit for purpose.

The Chair explained that the AFDRS brings together such a broad range of new science which is such a significant change on the previous 60 year old system. It has been concerning that the AFDRS has suffered a loss of confidence nationally, as the change has been confronting for the community and some agencies.

It is important to recognise that such transitions take time, and that the final outcome will be that the FBI will be our single tool. We will be using it with BoM for forecasting, but the forest fire danger index and the grass fire danger index will still be available in the background for useful comparisons and measures.

The Chair acknowledged Mr Andrew Cadd (CFSVA) for his passionate support of discussions that have taken place, and the value that he has provided as both a senior CFS volunteer, with his role on this Committee in addition to his role as a well-established growing producer.

Mr Cadd informed the Committee that in his area, harvest would be starting within the week, and that he will be monitoring closely using the FBI, particularly the 10 metre v 2 metre wind issue. We will be monitoring how using the FBI in practice in the field works in the long run, particularly how it affects the CFS volunteer fire response across the state.

The Chair thanked Mr Cadd and commented that such briefings to the Committee in the future may provide important data for updates.

6.9.3 Members' Call

Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) recalled a memo that SAPN had provided about the impact on AFDRS on SAPN operations. SAPN have identified risks associated with this impact. One of those risks is where the secondary FBI does not reflect true conditions. SAPN has put some science around this, where they ignore these FBIs.

In some areas, SAPN use both GFDI and FBI and in others they use only the FBI. This demonstrates an opportunity to use a more granular approach to fire danger operations on the network. Another example is at Mt Crawford where the tertiary pine is actually as common in the area as the primary and secondary vegetation. Nothing is being done in this space presently, but it does present challenges.

The challenge for SAPN is that operational procedures are strict as they provide SAPN with legal protection. As one of the key inputs into this system is SACFS, this will result in more communication and clarification with SACFS.

In addition, SAPN staff are not allowed to work from home when they reside in a high risk area in the event of extreme or catastrophic condition. This became relevant when Ms Walsh realised that some of her staff were not aware of the fire danger district they lived in. This may be connected with how AFDRS operates within the media.

SAPN have been focusing on reconnection procedures as part of their annual fire danger season exercise. Risk assessments need to be appropriate for such large scale reconnections. The same applies for a fire danger disconnection. SAPN has recently changed their procedures, where a total fire ban declaration is now no longer required in order to respond operationally to conditions that are equivalent to a total fire ban. This was put into place recently, which resulted in a disconnected in September, which is something that has not occurred previously.

SAPN now takes into account certain conditions when considering a disconnection, one of which is whether or not the area has been harvested. Therefore, any comments provided to us regarding harvesting information in BMAP would be very useful operationally. SAPN is currently exploring ways to gather that information and use it. It does not change on a day to day basis, but perhaps on a weekly basis and the ability to extract that kind of live data would be useful.

The Chair commented that there has not been much commentary about which models we pay particular attention to and which ones we discount. We have not historically taken the high level of awareness with them, which does suggest a probability that there are elevated levels of fire behaviour compared to conditions. This is something that is being tweaked. Ongoing conversations will be required.

The Chair acknowledged Mr Peter White (PPSA), and that this is his final meeting. The Chair conveyed gratitude to Peter for the many years of service and benefit that he has brought to the Committee and that he will be missed.

Ms Fiona Gill (DEW) provided a report regarding prescribed burning. DEW has 56 burns planned for the month and 45% of that program is complete. However, the seasonal outlook may close

the window of opportunity to complete this. For that reason, the burn program started a month earlier than usual. In 2022, burns were being completed up to Christmas, but Ms Gill indicated that they will not be burning up until Christmas this year. In a changing climate, there are changes to the weather windows required for prescribed burning, and this will become more problematic over time.

Ms Gill also provided discussion regarding Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL). AVL has been rolled to all of the state emergency service vehicles except for DEW. DEW has 156 fire appliances and there is a need to ensure they are operationally compatible with CFS at events. DEW are working with SAFECOM as the project managers on this.

Ms Gill then reminded the Committee that they are aiming to develop the second set of guidelines under the CFS smoke management policy. This first set of guidelines related to broadacre burning and the second is about hazard reduction – burning either on public lands or in native vegetation and possibly forestry. DEW is working with PIRSA as they have industry connections with the wine and grape sector. DEW is working with ForestrySA, SA Water as the major public land managers, but also with BoM and the EPA.

We need to land on a state position to say that we require both of these things. We require hazard reduction burning but we also require a strong and healthy wine and grape sector. The stubble broadacre burning guidelines gave confidence to both sides with better communication and a risk based approach, and hazard reduction guidelines will need to take the same approach.

Ms Gill stated that it is challenging starting position where some groups within the sector believe that there should be no burning at all in autumn, but this does not help achieve bushfire reduction risk for the state.

We would aim to have those guidelines in place for the next fire danger season.

Mr Stuart McLean (SAPOL) provided the Committee with an overview of Operation Nomad, which is SAPOL's proactive policing response to the threat of fire and arson. Operation Nomad is to continue with the same fundamental principles as in previous years.

Mr McLean reminded the Committee that Nomad is about fire prevention as opposed to response. It includes strategies around the monitoring of the behaviour of some people of interest to us and it has various trigger points for the proactive deployment of police patrols which the ratings reach certain levels. This includes the activation of the Police Operation Centre.

SAPOL intended the launch of Nomad on 1 December to coincide with the start of the fire danger season for Mount Lofty Ranges. We are looking to time in light of that date likely to change.

The Chair requested that it be noted that the Committee thanks SAPOL for their diligence and prosecuting and securing the conviction of the arsonist responsible for the Cherry Gardens fire. A significant amount of work was completed by a dedicated team of detectives and prosecutors, secured a great outcome.

Mr McLean responded with thanks for the feedback and stated he will pass that back to the Commanders and the officers.

Ms Monique Blason (FSA) expressed her gratitude to SAPOL, for Operation Nomad and reiterated how important it is, particularly in the Mount Lofty Ranges, knowing that the operation is always around and ongoing to prevent fires across out state.

Mr Paul Yeomans (LGA) stated that he is looking forward to attending future meetings in the new SBCC Term. Mr Yeomans stated that he may catch up with Mr Cameron Devey regarding fire tracks and the issue of permits. The LGA may be able to gain some momentum in relation to these issues

Mr Michael Garrod (LSA) gave a rundown on the harvest situation within the state. Harvest has been going for around a fortnight already, and it is gradually moving through Crystal Brook and further down to the West Coast. Harvest has begun on the top of the West Coast, and it is gradually moving down as the weather warms up. In the Mid North, they are actively cutting hay. Canola will be harvested soon, in around a fortnight.

Mr Garrod stated that the Southeast is similar to the above and the general consensus in the area is that they are all around a fortnight ahead of last year, depending on frost damage.

The Chair spoke on behalf of the Committee and stated that we all hope for a safe and productive harvest across the state, as it is such an important driver for our state, as well as being a significant fuel reduction piece.

Mr Peter White (PPSA) stated that, to finish off, if El Niño persists as predicted, the next year's primary producers' incomes will fall by about 50%.

7. Meeting Close

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, thanked Ms Ali Walsh (SAPN) for hosting the Meeting and declared the meeting closed at 11:26am.

Next meeting: Friday 1 December 2023.

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



Georgie Cornish
A/Chair, State Bushfire Coordination Committee