

Bushfire Advisory Committee

Minutes | 15th April 2021

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SHIRE OF QUAIRADING Bushfire Advisory Committee

The Bushfire Advisory Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 15th April 2021 commencing at 5:00 pm.

ITEM 1 OPENING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the Meeting and declared the Meeting open at 5:04 pm.

"Before we start our Meeting I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Noongar Ballardong land and we pay respect to the original custodians...past, present and future and welcome you all here today for this meeting".

The Chairperson welcomed invited guests, Mr Brian Humfrey and Mr Gary Rowles to the meeting.

ITEM 2 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

2.1 Attendance

Mr N Gelmi	Chief Bush Fire Control Officer / Chairperson
Mr J Smart	Deputy Chief Fire Control Officer
Mr M Whyte	Fire Control Officer (departed 6:00pm)
Mr B Wilson	Fire Control Officer / Quairading North BFB Captain
Mr C Anderson	Fire Control Officer (arrived 5:06pm)
Mr L Johnston	Fire Control Officer (arrived 5:32pm)
Mr A Duncan	Fire Control Officer / Quairading Central BFB Captain
Mr G Richards	Fire Weather Monitor
Mr G Fardon	Chief Executive Officer/FCO
Mr S Bell	Community Emergency Services Manager

2.2 Observers / Visitors

Mr G Rowles	Department of Fire & Emergency Services, Bushfire Risk Management Officer
Mr B Humfrey	Bushfire Risk Planning Coordinator

2.3 Apologies

Mr J Corrigan	Department of Fire and Emergency Services
Mr P Groves	Fire Control Officer
Mr S Hadlow	Fire Control Officer
Mr M Davies	Fire Control Officer
Cr W Davies	Shire President
Cr P Smith	Shire Councillor
Ms T Patton	Quairading Volunteer Fire and Rescue Captain
Mr P Hay	Department of Fire and Emergency Services

ITEM 3 DEPUTATIONS / PRESENTATIONS / SUBMISSIONS

Bushfire Risk Planning Coordinator Project (BRPC), Mr Brian Humfrey provided an update on the Project to date.

Mr Humfrey is currently working on the Shire of Kellerberrin's Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BRMP), although when requesting/sourcing information for Kellerberrin, also sourcing the same information for Quairading and Tammin and compiling the data.

Plan is to commence work on the Quairading's BRMP in approximately September / October 2021 for completion around April / May 2022.

Mr Humfrey advised that following the completion of the BRMP, the Shire of Quairading will be eligible to apply for Mitigation Activity Funding (MAF) to assist with undertaking mitigation activities on Shire owned land or Shire managed reserves.

Mr Gary Rowles informed that the MAF Funding comes out in 2 Rounds per year. The funding is fully allocated for the mitigation works and there is no requirement for Local Government to commit any funds towards the mitigation activities.

The Funding is State Government funding from Royalties for Regions and the Emergency Services Levy.

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ITEM 4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND BUSINESS ARISING

4.1 Confirmation of Minutes – 9th September 2020

RESOLUTION: BFAC8– 20/21**MOVED Mr Anderson SECONDED Mr Richards**

That the Minutes of the Bushfire Advisory Committee Meeting held on 9th September 2020 be confirmed as a true and correct record of that Meeting.

CARRIED

4.2 Business Arising

Volunteer Fuel Cards

Fuel Cards for active volunteers have been received. CESM has been in contact with all brigade officers requesting active member lists that should be entitled to receive the benefit of the fuel card entitlement. Once all brigade lists have been received, the same formula that has been used in previous years will be utilised again.

Currently only waiting on Quairading North BFB and South Caroling BFB.

Mr Gelmi advised that one or two weeks prior to the expiry of the fuel cards, Brigade Captains will be contacted regarding funds not drawn by their volunteers so full amount can be used.

ITEM 5 CORRESPONDENCE

5.1 Inward

There was no Inward Correspondence.

5.2 Outward

There has been no Outgoing Correspondence.

ITEM 6 CBFCO / DCBFCO / FCO / CESM REPORTS

6.1 CBFCO Report

Mr Gelmi reported on the following: -

The bushfire season had been quiet, and he had attended the Wundowie incident.

Attended the District Operational Area Committee (DOAC) Meeting and reported on the following: -

Quairading is fortunate with current bush fire resourcing, some Shires such as Wongan Hills only have two appliances even though that Shire has a reasonably high bushfire risk.

Wongan Hills have also created a local policy that farmer trailer units are not to be utilised on the fire ground.

Mr Fardon advised that he understood that there is a proposal that slip-on units for farmers to utilise that will possibly be eligible under the LGGS. If approved under the LGGS, the units would remain as Shire assets and could be allocated out for the Fire Season.

6.2 DCBFCO Report

Mr Smart advised that there was not much to report due to it having been a quiet season.

He had assisted at a couple of fires on Goldfields Road in the Shire of Cunderdin.

6.3 FCO Reports

Mr Anderson informed that the South Caroling Brigade attended a fire in the Shire of Beverley. Communications at this incident were quite poor.

Mr Duncan informed that the Central Brigade only attended one local fire and multiple out of Shire/Regional incidents.

6.4 CESM Report

Mr Bell reported on the following: -

It has been a reasonably quiet local bushfire season with only a handful of turnouts in the Shire of Quairading.

- Balkuling / Doodenanning BFB – 4 turnout requests (all 4 out of Shire)
- Quairading Central BFB – 6 turnout requests (including 5 out of Shire)
- Quairading North BFB – 2 turnout requests (both out of Shire)
- South Caroling BFB – 1 turnout request (out of Shire)
- Wamenusking BFB – 1 turnout request (out of Shire)

The Out of Shire incidents included locations such as Beverley, York, Corrigin, Wundowie, Red Gully and Woorloo.

Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGS)

The LGGS Application was submitted on the 26th March 2021.

Other than the Standard operating grant received annually, extra funding was applied for: -

- New Facility for Balkuling / Doodenanning BFB
- New Facility for Quairading North BFB

The reasoning behind applying for the facilities is due to the Fire Appliances getting larger as the newer models are rolled out and the current facilities are not large enough to house them.

Failing the approval of the facility applications, Building Extension requests will be put through in the next funding round.

The installation of the CelFi-Go units (mobile reception boosters) on each Fire Appliance is expected to occur during May 2021.

Green Waste Pile at Quairading Waste Facility

The Green Waste pile was burnt in October 2020, it will be requiring to be burnt again in April / May 2021

Quairading Central and Quairading VFRS have had a lot of involvement in undertaking this task biannually. Due to a decrease in volunteer numbers both in the Central BFB and Quairading VFRS, it is becoming increasingly hard to find volunteers who are willing and able to assist with this task due to the requirement for volunteers to "babysit" the fire for a minimum of six (6) hours.

The possibility of undertaking rotations by outlying brigades was discussed and supported.

Mr Duncan suggested digging a hole at the Waste Facility that the green waste could be placed in, allowing the pile to be burnt more frequently.

The current pile will be burnt in late May / early June.

The CEO and CESM to liaise with the Executive Manager of Works and Services to decide on a solution for future burns.

Truck Servicing

All of the Bush Fire Appliances had two (2) services last calendar year, including a major service in June and a secondary service in September.

This will be taking place again this year, with the major service to be conducted in May and the secondary service in September.

Mr Allen Cowcill is the current service provider for these appliances.

WAERN Servicing

If maintenance or installations are required, please let Mr Bell know in order to organise the radio technicians for May / June. They will be organised in conjunction with the neighbouring Shires as well.

Mr Fardon asked about the end of life on the WAERN radios.

Mr Bell advised that this will still be some years before this happens. Currently there has been funding committed by DFES for the development of an Emergency Services Radio Network, but there has been very little information given out so far about the progress on this project.

Incident Report Books

All of the Bush Fire Appliances have now been given Incident report books. There are 3 different types of reports: -

- Structure / Mobile Property Fire Report
- Bushfire Report
- Attendance Report.

It is imperative that brigades begin to utilise these for any incidents that result in the appliance leaving the station. These records are required to be sent to DFES on an annual basis, for them to update the

system and log who turned out to an incident. If arriving in a personal vehicle, it is also important to ensure your name has been listed on the Attendance Report.

Should anyone develop severe illness that can be related to firefighting DFES will assist with covering costs for any treatments that may be required if it can be proven that the volunteer has been an active member and turning out to incidents through means of the DFES Incident Reporting System (IRS).

Vehicle Fault Report Books

Fault report Books have been placed in each of the Appliances, these are to be filled out and given to the CESM so that there is a formal written record of any maintenance that is required to be carried out on the appliance. They can also be used for when the works have been completed.

Acting CESM

Mr Bell also thanked Mr Duncan for filling in as Acting CESM during his secondment to Narrogin as an Area Officer for four weeks.

6.5 DFES Report

Mr Rowles reported on the following: -

It was a reasonably quiet season for bushfire incidents this year, with only a couple of large scale fires taking place at the West end of the region and very little action in the Eastern end of the Goldfields-Midlands Region (GM).

There were also some large scale incidents that were required to be attended by GM staff and volunteers such as the Red Gully Fire and the Wooroloo Fire, due to the size, nature and location of these fires as well as the ones within the Region (Wundowie and York) they took up a lot of time for GM Regional staff.

Northam received quite a high level of flooding with a lot of damage specifically to residents and businesses in the lower lying areas of the town. Kalgoorlie also experienced some flash flooding with rains that occurred in January / February.

Currently some staff and volunteers have been deployed to the Midwest-Gascoyne Region to assist with clean-up following the destruction of Tropical Cyclone Seroja.

6.6 Shire Councillor / Staff Report(s)

Mr Fardon reported on the following: -

Concurred that it had been a quiet season locally.

He was on LSL for most of the beginning of the Bush Fire season however Town Fire Hazard checks were conducted again by the VFRS, with some letters and follow-ups occurring upon his return to work. There were no reports received for rural firebreak breaches.

Mr Fardon briefly spoke about item 7.2 that had been discussed at a recent Council meeting and that Cr Davies requested the item be raised and discussed at the BFAC Meeting.

ITEM 7 DISCUSSION POINTS

7.1 Post Season Debrief

Mr Gelmi thanked Mr Duncan for attending many of the deployments that occurred this season and thought it was great to get the Shire's name out there due to having 6 appliances.

7.2 Restricted Burning Period/Prohibited Burning Period (RBT/PBT)

Mr Gelmi invited Mr Richards to commence discussion on the possible extension to the end of the Prohibited Burning Period, allowing permits to burn to be available from a later date than currently gazetted.

The Current Periods are as follows: -

Restricted Burning Period:

- 16th October 2021 – 31st October 2021

Prohibited Burning Period:

- 1st November 2021 – 14th February 2022

Restricted Burning Period:

- 15th February 2022 – 29th March 2022

In recent years the Shire of Quairading has extended the Prohibited Burning Period by a minimum of seven (7) days, extending from the 14th February to a minimum of the 21st February. Due to the change of seasonal conditions with hotter conditions in February, it has been noted by the Shire that the Prohibited Burning Period could be permanently extended by a minimum of seven (7) days and up the fourteen (14) days. This will mean that the Prohibited Burning Period would cease on the 21st February or the 28th annually.

Should these changes be supported, this will cause no changes to any of the other Periods. Should seasonal conditions warrant, there is always the possibility of modifying any of the dates by a maximum of fourteen (14) days.

The Meeting discussed the merits and disadvantages to changing the current end of Prohibited Burning Period date from the 14th February to a later date. There was broad consensus to seek the moving the Date out by 1 to 2 weeks, to the end of February and noting that there would be Burning Permits for all of March.

Mr Wilson expressed a concern that while he does not burn, some farmers with larger programs need the extra week or two of burning in order to complete their burn program prior to the commencement of Seeding.

RECOMMENDATION: BFAC9 – 20/21

MOVED Mr Greg Richards SECONDED Mr John Smart

That the Bushfire Advisory Committee Meeting recommend to Council: -

That Council seek Approval for the permanent amendment of the Prohibited Burning Period to reflect the following dates:

- 1st November to 28th February

In lieu of the current 1st November to 14th February.

CARRIED 7/1

Mr Ben Wilson requested that his name be recorded as having voted against the BFAC Motion.

7.3 Burning Prohibition – Pursuant to Section 46 of the Bush Fires Act 1954

7.3.1 Prohibited Burning before 12pm, 25th April – ANZAC Day

As per Recommendation BFAC2 – 20/21 in the Post Season Meeting held in July 2020, The BFAC Committee (and Council supported) had decided to prohibit the lighting of fires between the hours of 12am and 12pm (noon) on Sunday 25th April for ANZAC Day. Noted by the Meeting.

7.4 Bush Fire Exercise/Training

Rural Firefighting Awareness Course

A Pilot course titled "Rural Firefighting Awareness" was run in Quairading on Monday 29th March, with the majority of participants being CBFCO's or other senior ranking members of Bushfire Brigades from surrounding Local Governments. This course has been pushed for a matter of years now to encompass a target audience such as farmers and seasonal workers (including backpackers) to give an understanding and educate about fire line safety and awareness.

Unfortunately from many of the comments from those present on the day, it seems as though the course is still requiring some work due to going in to too much detail in some aspects such as suppression techniques, instead of focussing on basics such as safety.

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence (BCoE) is hoping to finalise this course by the end of April to be made available for delivery at a local level.

This course has the potential to assist the Local Governments in moving forward with some training for volunteers which in turn will satisfy the requirements of the new Occupational Health and Safety Legislation that is currently expected to come in to power later this year.

Mr Bell informed that once the course has been finalised by DFES all volunteers and farm responders will be encouraged to attend the course, it will be held locally and delivered by Mr Bell.

Fire Control Officer Course

A review has been conducted by the CESM on current competencies / past training of the Fire Control Officers (FCO's).

The Meeting considered the List of FCO's Training. Mr Bell advised that there had previous agreement or understanding that FCO's should participate in a Refresher Course every five (5) years, in order to upskill and learn about new legislative changes.

Mr Bell advised that he is now able to deliver this course along with one other trainer assessor, making the course easier to plan and schedule.

The Meeting resolved that a FCO's course should be run in early September 2021 with a date to be finalised at a later date.

The meeting noted that 9 FCO's were due to attend a Refresher Course.

Off-Season Training for Deployments

Mr Duncan commented that it has been noted by those that attended deployments over the 2020/21 bush fire season that some training should be conducted for those that are interested in attending future deployments, whether they be a single shift deployment or a multi-shift deployment.

This is due to the possibility of volunteers being placed on a truck that they may not be familiar with, more specifically the pump panels on the appliances.

It was suggested that those who are interested in attending future deployments attend some form of training session locally with the CESM and Mr Duncan who will organise some different appliances to be brought to Quairading so the difference between the appliances can be highlighted to those volunteers.

There was concern expressed at the meeting that volunteers who go away on deployment are not given an induction on a fire appliance they are unfamiliar with, before being dispatched on duty.

Mr Fardon suggested that Mr Gelmi raise this matter at the next DOAC meeting as a major Volunteer OHS Risk.

7.5 Shire Firebreak Order

Mr Fardon spoke to the proposed 2021/2022 Firebreak Order and sought any comments or changes to any Fire Control Officers so it could be printed and included in the Rate Notice envelopes.

Mr Fardon informed that Mr Hudson should be removed from the list of FCO's due to having not yet completed the FCO course.

It was also noted that should Council accept the new Prohibited burning dates from Recommendation: BFAC9 – 20/21 and the change is approved and gazetted, the Firebreak notice will be amended to reflect the amended dates.

All members present were happy with the content and images of the Firebreak Notice and offered no further changes to the Notice.

ITEM 8 URGENT MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

8.1 Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer Position

Due to currently having only one DCBFCO, there is a need to identify a second DCBFCO for the election of positions in the Pre-Season meeting to be held in September 2021.

The Shire of Quairading has in the past appointed two (2) Deputy Chiefs so there is a higher chance of one of the three (3) Deputies/Chief being in the Shire at any time. The main reasoning for the Dual Deputies is to have one incoming, that will then step up to Chief, and one outgoing, that has been Chief and stepping down to Deputy to assist the incoming Chief in their role.

Mr Smart also indicated that he would like to be stepping down as Deputy Chief FCO in the coming year, which will leave no Deputies for the District unless someone or several FCO's nominated for the DCFCO positions.

Mr Bell and Mr Fardon requested that if an FCO was interested in taking on a Deputy role to put their name forward to Mr Gelmi or themselves prior to the September BFAC meeting.

8.2 Personal Protective Clothing / Equipment

Mr Bell explained that many volunteers in surrounding Local Governments are now wanting to go away from the gold tunic and pants and move over to the blue cargo pants and lime green tunic for volunteers.

Helmets will slowly be ordered for FCO's and Brigade Captains as per DFES Directive 1.3 – Dress and Grooming, Standard Administration Procedure 1.3.D – Dress standards.

The meeting discussed Dress and decided that there should be no changes to the current PPE that is being used and to remain with the Gold.

Mr Bell informed that Fire Control Officers will begin to be given new helmets representative to their role, following Council's appointment of FCO's for the next Fire Season.

8.3 Bush Fire Brigade T-Shirts

Mr Bell informed Bushfire Brigade Volunteers are now eligible for T-Shirts under the LGGS there has been some questions raised as to who is eligible for these and when they will be ordered.

While all volunteers are eligible to receive these if they are listed as a brigade member, there has been some arguments regarding many listed volunteers have not been actively involved with the brigade for some time and should not be eligible for these shirts.

The Meeting to hold this matter over to a future meeting.

8.4 Foam Induction Systems

Mr Bell informed that there have been many issues with the Foam Systems on the Appliances.

Most of the unreliability issue results from volunteers not correctly flushing out the systems once they have completed using foam at incidents.

The CESM has been requesting brigade put a drum of water on the appliance that the spear can be put in following the conclusion of Foam operations in order to flush the whole system.

Unfortunately, this has not been well received and again there has been many complications around the Foam induction systems.

Mr Bell is to follow up again with brigades and specifically those that have continuous issues at their respective AGM's.

The CESM undertook to flush out the foam system on all trucks during the low threat period to ensure they will be working at the commencement of the 2021/22 high threat period.

8.5 Fire Appliance Swap

The Proposal is to swap the fire appliances between Quairading North and Quairading Central BFB's.

Mr Bell asked Mr Wilson as Captain of the Quairading North Brigade, if he would be willing to accept a 4.4B appliance from Quairading Central and return the 2.4B to Central.

Mr Bell advised that a new 3.4Urban appliance has been requested to replace the current 2.4, which will be of most benefit at the Central Brigade due to its structural capability and the Central Brigade being mobilised to most if not all incidents within the District.

It would also be of great value to have 4 x 4.4Broadacre units in the outlying brigades and have a 3.4 Urban (structural capabilities) and a 2.4 Broadacre (faster response and more useful for deployments) in the Central Brigade.

All members present at the Meeting agreed this was a good proposal and the CESM committed to undertake the relocation and arrange the modification of vehicle stickers for the two appliances being swapped.

8.6 Online Permits

Mr Duncan asked about the purpose and effectiveness of the online permit system as it is understood that only one person currently utilises the system and that there are difficulties with the Form depending on which Browser is used.

Mr Bell informed that this is a more utilised system for other local governments where only the Shire Administration issue permits.

The Meeting concurred that the existing manual Burning Permit System with the FCO's is effective and that the online Form be ceased due to its ineffectiveness.

Mr Bell to have the Form removed from the website.

ITEM 9 NEXT MEETING DATE

The next Bushfire Advisory Committee Meeting is scheduled to take place in September 2021 (date to be finalised), commencing at 5:00pm in the Shire Council Chambers.

ITEM 10 CLOSURE

There being no further business, the Chairperson closed the meeting at 6:24 pm.

I certify the Minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee of Council held on 15th April 2021 were confirmed on 14 October 2021 as recorded.

Confirmed.....*Nigel Gelwin*.....14/10/2021