



Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC)

MINUTES

Meeting:	No. 110 Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC)
Location:	Berrigan Meeting Room, NSW RFS, 4 Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127 and via Teams
Date and time:	Thursday, 25 July 2024 – 1030 - 1230
Members:	<p>Dr Ross Dickson, Forestry Corporation of NSW (A/Chair)</p> <p>Deputy Commissioner Megan Stiffler, Fire and Rescue NSW</p> <p>Dr Atticus Fleming AM, NSW National Parks, and Wildlife Service</p> <p>Mr George Schneider, Crown Lands Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure (DPHI)</p> <p>Dr Leigh Pilkington, NSW Department of Primary Industries</p> <p>Mr Greg Mullins AO AFSM, representing the Minister for the Environment</p> <p>Mr Robert Conroy, Nature Conservation Council of NSW</p> <p>Cr Julie Griffiths, Local Government NSW</p> <p>Cr Giacomo Arnott, Local Government NSW</p> <p>Superintendent Liz Ferris AFSM, NSW Rural Fire Service Association</p> <p>Mr Scott Campbell, NSW Rural Fire Service Association</p> <p>Mr Leighton Drury, Fire Brigade Employees Union</p> <p>Ms Natalie Rotumah, Native Title Services (NTS) Corp</p>
Other Attendees:	<p>Deputy Commissioner Peter McKechnie AFSM, RFS</p> <p>Assistant Commissioner Viki Campbell, Director State Operations, RFS</p> <p>Ms Renee Armstrong, Director, Office of the Commissioner, RFS</p> <p>Dr Simon Heemstra, Director Community Risk, RFS</p> <p>Ms Cheryl Cook, A/Director Operations Support (<i>Representing AC Stuart Midgley</i>)</p> <p>Ms Melissa O'Halloran, Manager Bush Fire Risk Planning</p> <p>Inspector Hassan El-khansa, NSW Police Force (<i>Representing DC Peter Thurtell</i>)</p> <p>Mr Russell Turner, Fire & Rescue NSW (<i>Representing Superintendent Scott Donohoe</i>)</p> <p>Ms Sarah Stone, NSW Aboriginal Land Council (<i>Representing Mr Yuseph Deen</i>)</p> <p>Mr Jamie Carter, Forestry Corporation of NSW</p>
Observers:	<p>Ms Rebel Talbert, Forestry Corporation of NSW</p> <p>Mr Cameron Chaffey, NSW National Parks, and Wildlife Service</p> <p>Ms Naomi Stephens, NSW National Parks, and Wildlife Service</p> <p>Mr Shaun McBride, Local Government NSW</p> <p>Mr Matt Wright, Transport for NSW (<i>Representing Ms Karen McCarthy</i>)</p>
Secretariat	<p>Ms Kate Woods, Manager Committees and Ministerial Services, RFS</p> <p>Ms Teresa Stambe, Committees, RFS</p>
Apologies:	<p>Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM</p> <p>Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell APM, NSW Police Force</p> <p>Mr Kim de Govrik, NSW Public Service Association</p>

	Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart APM, RFS
	Assistant Commissioner Stuart Midgley AFSM, RFS
	Superintendent Scott Donohoe, Fire & Rescue NSW
	Mr Garry Grant, NSW Farmers
	Ms Karen McCarthy, Transport for NSW
	Cr Diane Randall
Minutes by:	Committees, RFS

1 Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and Apologies

The Executive Officer of the BFCC, Ms Armstrong, conveyed the apologies of the Chair and requested a member to act as the Chair for BFCC Meeting 110. Dr Ross Dickson agreed to assume this responsibility with no other members nominated.

The Chair welcomed all to Meeting , noting apologies from Commissioner Rogers, DC Thurtell, Mr Govrik, DC Stewart, AC Midgley, Superintendent Donohoe and Mr Grant. Attending observers Ms McCarthy and Cr Randall were noted as apologies.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 10.30.

2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3 Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of BFCC Meeting 109, held on 16 May 2024, were tabled, and accepted.

Decision 110.1	The Committee resolved to endorse the minutes of Meeting 109, held on 16 May 2024, for signature by the A/Chair.
-----------------------	--

4 Open Action Items

The Action Items were tabled and discussed. The Action Items have been updated in accordance with the discussions (refer to Table 1).

Action Item 95.3 – Dr Fleming noted that NPWS did not appear to have received a response to its feedback on the audit plan. DCFO undertook to distribute to agencies feedback on their suggestions.

Action Item 105.1 – Ms Cook noted the hazard reduction figures were provisional and would be finalised in August. Dr Fleming sought clarification on what the “other” category in the table included. DCFO advised previous advice provided on this query would be provided to NPWS.

Action Items 109.3 – DCFO noted the progress toward improving certification processes. Mr Schneider noted there was a lack of clarity concerning which trails were scheduled for certification next. DCFO advised he would discuss this further with Mr Best and raise this at the next SAS meeting, as part of a broader program focus on trial certification.

Action Item 109.4 – the University of Wollongong Blackburn pilot study report had been cleared for release to the BFCC. The report offered an initial look at aspects of backburning examined through a select group of fires. Further research was anticipated with a broader range of fires through the Natural Hazards Research Centre in NSW. The committee noted it was an introductory study and recognised the importance of continued and expanded research on the topic. Dr Heemstra to share link to Terms of Reference for the Natural Hazards Research Centre. Cr Arnott stressed the importance of local government involvement in land management and hazard reduction, suggesting the report be shared with councils. Ms Armstrong advised the document was for BFCC information only and should remain in confidence. Options would be explored for advice that could be provided to councils.

Action Item 109.8 – the Interagency Data Reference Group will meet on 14 August to discuss data sharing issues and the visibility of information on fire trails. This item was closed but the Reference Group will report back to the BFCC on the outcome of discussions at the August meeting.

Action 110.1 DCFO to distribute feedback to agencies that made comment on audit plan.

Action 110.2 DCFO to raise fire trail certification program at the upcoming SAS meeting as part of a broader program focus on trail certification.

Action 110.3 Dr Heemstra to share link to Terms of Reference for the Natural Hazards Research Centre.

Action 110.4 Interagency Data Reference Group to provide report back to the BFCC on the outcome of discussions about data sharing issues and visibility of information around fire trails.

Action 110.5 Dr Heemstra to explore options on advice about backburning that could be provided to local government.

Decision 110.2 The Committee resolved to note the Open Action Items.

5 Correspondence

The Correspondence Register was tabled and noted.

Decision 110.3 The Committee resolved to note the Correspondence Register.

6 Presentations

6.1 Camera Detection

Mr Jamie Carter, Project Manager Fire Infrastructure at Forestry Corporation NSW, provided a presentation on the Fire Detection Camera Trial Interim Report. The presentation is attached to the minutes.

Mr Schneider asked about the potential advantages of using the technology in vulnerable and isolated communities. Mr Carter commented that increasing detection accuracy in high-risk areas was possible by strategically deploying technology. Satellite-based monitoring would become highly valuable over the next few years for early detection, although it currently lacked sufficient capability due to too few satellites. As satellite presence was enhanced, it could be possible to get notifications about remote fires within 10 to 15 minutes but this would require significant investment. In the short term, the potential to apply this technology in key at-risk communities was promising.

Mr Conroy queried if there was any analysis to compare the effectiveness of satellites versus cameras in detecting fires. Mr Carter advised that satellites had been ruled out due to the lengthy intervals between flyovers of an area.

Decision 110.4 The Committee resolved to note the Fire Detection Camera Trial Interim Report

7 Operations Co-ordination Plans update

The report on Operations Co-ordination Plans was tabled and taken as read.

Decision 110.5 The Committee resolved to note the Operations Co-ordination Plans report.

8 Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMPs)

The report on Bush Fire Risk Management Plans was tabled and taken as read.

Decision 110.6 The Committee resolved to note the status of the Bush Fire Risk Management Plans report.

9 Status of Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plans

The Status of Fire Access and Fire Trail Plans report was tabled and taken as read.

Decision 110.7 The Committee resolved to note the FAFT Plans Report.

10 Standing Advisory Sub-Committee (SAS) Progress Report

The Standing Advisory Sub-Committee Progress Report was tabled and taken as read. DC McKechnie noted the next major task was the review of the minimum impact suppression guidelines.

Decision 110.8 The Committee resolved to note the Standing Advisory Sub-Committee Progress Report.

11 Hazard Reduction Report

The Hazard Reduction Report was tabled and taken as read.

DCFO reported the target area for 2024/25 was likely to be about 350,000 hectares. Even with unforeseen challenges such as a wet season and an early fire season, nearly 140,000 hectares had been managed in 2023/24, aligning closely with objectives. Protecting assets was a primary focus and 75% of properties targeted had been successfully shielded. DCFO acknowledged the commendable efforts by the agencies and BFMCs to achieve these results.

Decision 110.9 The Committee resolved to note the Hazard Reduction Report.

12 General Business

Mr Schneider informed the Committee that Crown Lands would begin its annual aerial inspections of fire trails in September. The inspections would extend across other tenures such as Forestry and NPWS. DCFO requested the State Air Desk be updated on the inspection schedule to enable staff to answer public queries about low flying helicopters. Mr Schneider acknowledged the request and indicated media announcements were planned to inform the public about the inspections.

Decision 110.10 The Committee resolved to note the matters of general business raised by members.

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

Date	Time	Location
Thursday, 10 October 2024	1030 - 1230	Berrigan Room L3, RFS HQ and via MS Teams

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.00.