



A Fortunate Place

Shire of Wickepin

Agenda

Bush Fire Control Officer's Meeting
Council Chambers, Wickepin

13 September 2022

**Agenda of a Bush Fire Control Officer's Meeting held in Council Chambers, Wickepin
Tuesday 13 September 2022, at 7.00pm**

The CBFCO declared the meeting open at pm.

1. Attendance

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer	Trevor Leeson
Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer	Luke Lansdell
Fire Control Officers	Tim Heffernan Phil Russell Daniel White Gordon McDougall Wes Astbury Jim Hamilton Nathan Astbury Trevor Leeson Dave Stacey Roger Butler Luke Lansdell Ken Martin
Acting Chief Executive Officer	Noel Mason
Manager of Works	Graeme Hedditch
Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Grant Hansen
Wickepin Police	Darryl Gault Mark Langford

Apologies

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes – 22 March 2022.

Moved / Seconded

That the minutes of the Fire Control Officer's meeting held 22 March 2022 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Carried /

3. Business Arising From Minutes

3.1 Bush Fire Radios – WAERN radios for CBFCO and DCBFCO - Item 5.1 22 March Minutes

Still processing request. Information has been forwarded to DFES on requirements. Bit of pushback on radios already allocated to Wickepin, so detail of who has what at this point may help in pressing our case.

Grant Hansen may be able to update at meeting.

3.2 CBFCO Report Items - 5.1 Chief Bushfire Control Officer Report – 22 March 2022

3.2.1 **Very cautious approach with setting harvest bans** – Complaints about onerous Harvest Bans Shire has a complaints policy and FCO's are able to remind those making complaint to them to have them lodge their complaint to the Shire. FCO's need to communicate this to the complainant and it helps to cc in the CBFCO so understanding of the issue is passed on to all. Shire process has rigidity around obnoxious complainants – so happy to deal with them, should not be left to FCO's.

3.2.2 **Header Fires** – Hazard reports for Volunteers in Attendance – ROAC reminder that reports on header/tractor fires etc. should include the names of volunteers who attended fires when hazardous materials exposure was likely to occur. Health and Safety issue for insurance.

3.2.3 **Stock Losses – East Narrogin Fire**

A number of processes have been reviewed following this fire relating to animal welfare. DPIRD have release guidelines on – Animal Welfare in Emergencies and Heatwaves (Attachment 1&2)

Narrogin Shire advised that the delay in attending to animal welfare issues was because the appropriate "declaration" had not been made within the system to trigger a State response. It seems processes require the on ground fire controller to declare that animal welfare issues require State attendance, before anything is triggered. DFES cannot do.

Narrogin has also taken steps to see if DPIRD can allow "stock agents" to undertake welfare work in rural settings, thereby removing the difficulties of finding sufficient vets to do the work. This is being considered by DPIRD.

3.2.4 **CBFCO Lessons Learnt and CEO Shire response in italics - East Narrogin Fire**

- The initial response was reactive and we were chasing the fire and not making significant headway.
- The wind was whipping up embers and lighting random fires so knowing where the edge of the fire was unclear and the risk was that you could be caught inside the fire.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, DFES demonstrated considerable data can be obtained once air observation is in place, until then satellite and communications systems are the only available data sets. The earliest link into DFES systems at the start of the fire is becoming a critical part of the FCO process.
- Bushfire radios worked well late Sunday afternoon and onward once fire somewhat contained.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, considerable comment on the operations of Channel 5. In the East Narrogin Fire, over 50 users were on Channel 5 at the same time. A number of sectors then split off onto other channels – but this information wasn't passed to people arriving at the fire sectors and this created even more fragmented issues in both communications and the fire response. People in the same sector were on the alternate channel and Channel five unknowingly, in sight of each other but not able to communicate. Better use of alternate channels as soon as you hit the fire ground was a big issue.
- Aerial support was invaluable particularly saving infrastructure.

CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, DFES have a Power Point presentation showing the work by the jet at Wickepin. Grant Hansen will be bringing for viewing at meeting.

- Use of speed tillers more effective and faster than graders and don't leave a mess.
CEO Comment – valuable insight, may need research – can forward comment to DFES.
- Mobile phones were unreliable with signal and battery fails.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, considerable DFES response on this issue. Also links into work the Telstra are doing on a battery/generator project across towers in WA. The other appreciation is that at times of high demand in an emergency, mobile use by volunteers and others floods the system. Obviously, when comms are down in a radio sense, this add to the complications. Establishing comms processes as a first step in attendance becomes even more critical. Has been raised at State level.
- Chief Bushfire Officer requires a second person in the mobile command unit to assist with communications.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, fully supported by DFES. Command personnel is a critical first step in attendance at fire.
- Sourcing your own equipment proved more reliable than waiting on govt agencies.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, DFES have established 3rd Party Agreements for use of WAERN radios – this could be an avenue for more comms power.
- Traffic management needs to be improved.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, this process was discussed at ROAC in light of East Narrogin fire. A lot of opinions, some not helpful, but it becomes critical in a larger fire scenario. Command FCO needs to be thinking of more than the fire response. Comms to on ground teams and back to DFES, resources required, weather updates, fire data and the sources, use of sectors, signing/acknowledging people in to fire, calling in air support, road closures, animal welfare, hazardous material – all in the space of minutes – suggests the training required is significant and should be regularly rehearsed.
- Availability of maps for a large fire early would be welcomed.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, not surprisingly DFES has loads of data including infrared snapshots of fire movement. The question is how the FCO can get the data in a timely manner. Establishing comms to DFES as soon as possible must be part of the process – they can read it and relay over comms.
- Meeting point and times are vital to coordinate
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, again comms and having a support person alongside command FCO is essential
- Whatsapp groups very useful when tower working. Be mindful not to junk them up.
CEO Comment – At ROAC meeting 22 August 2022, have seen What's App groups – but again won't work if Telstra systems overloaded.
- Equipment to be in working order and fitted prior to the fire season
Noted

3.2.5 Photo of Ernie White

CEO Comment – Have been advised that the family have a suitable photo and this will be forwarded to Shire. Some comment has been received about a suitable location for the photo – suggesting that if FCO group has an opinion – this best be passed on to Shire.

4. General Business

- 4.1 Chief Bushfire Control Officer Report - To be tabled.
- 4.2 ROAC Agenda and Minutes (Attachment 3 & 4)

CEO Notes from ROAC Meeting 22 August 2022 – CBFCO unable to attend so CEO attended and provides summary notes of what occurred.

Action Sheet – outstanding items

- 1. Semi-trailer (or similar) for bulk water - Effectively, each Shire can come up with their own arrangements. Does Wickepin need to do anything? In the case of bigger fires, something the FCO has to consider early, where the additional water resources are coming from.*
- 2. Light drive Starter motors for auxiliary motors – early advice of the starter motor problem is essential. DFES Fleet reporting some spares for trucks are out to 6 months delivery time for replacement. Note: seems to apply to most spares from DFES.*
- 3. Arson or cause of fire notification – Command are required to report “cause of fire” ASAP if obvious and known. Still waiting for procedures to be documented.*
- 4. Chainsaws now claimable as part of the ESL – Grant Hansen to provide updated Shire ESL Guidelines.*
- 5. Limp Mode Isuzu Trucks – Procedures to DBF burns are essential, either on returning truck to shed at end of fire or as part of the maintenance. Takes approx. 20-30mins of idle time and occurs every 20-30hours of drive time. Was suggested drivers should “drive it like its stolen” to keep the limp mode from coming on whilst on fire duties.*
- 6. Great support for Rural Fire Awareness Courses across the region. DFES prepared to run more – if we have the numbers. Question is, should Wickepin be doing more now? Do we need a course for seasonal workers?*
- 7. Pole Top Fires – number of issues with data on how many have occurred. Seems to be significant resistance inside Western Power to release data. Suggested DFES send out a previous photo ID sheet for insulators, so ground crews can observe how many of the problematic insulators are on poles in each district. Grant Hansen may have more information. Matter has been reported via LEMC and SEMC.*
- 8. Cross Boundary Meetings – Shires commented on need to hold regional meetings with CBFCO's and Deputies with focus on operations. East Narrogin Fire highlighted a distinct lack of knowledge of who was on fire ground and what equipment they had, once a Shire boundary or DFES region came into play. DFES can facilitate meetings.*
- 9. Communications on other than Channel 5 – was suggested that procedures at brigade level (when combined with farmer volunteers) should have a plan B as to what channel to use as alternate comms channel. Is this happening in this Shire?*
- 10. Incident Contact Numbers for road closures – MRWA – (Attached 5) Obviously, Shire contacts for local roads.*

Bushfire Operations Committee – Communique – FYI (Attachment 6)

CEO - Additional ROAC Notes

- 11. WAFES – Opportunity exists to send local FCO's to the WAFES conference in Perth – Interested parties should speak to Grant Hansen ASAP.*
- 12. Presentation by AFDRS – Air fleet was excellent – Grant Hansen trying to get Powerpoint to present on night. Take away – ground controller of air support essential. Training is an essential pre-requisite. Does Wickepin need to send someone for this training? Vision of DFES laying down retardant at Wickepin is available and will be a great training source for many years to come.*
- 13. Danger Fire Rating System – Live 1 Sept – Grant Hansen to give presentation. Replacement signs – when?*
- 14. Calculating Fire Danger rating. Does Wickepin need to advertise rating system in Watershed? More people who understand how ratings are calculated the better, particularly now this system is on-line and in app.*

15. Fire Weather Officer/s – Is there a need (now that there is so much data available online and via Met Bureau etc.) to have Fire Weather officer supporting CBFCO?

4.3 General Discussion

The next Bush Fire Control Committee Meeting will be held on _____.

5. Closure

There being no further general business CBFCO declared the meeting closed at _____ pm.