



A Fortunate Place

Shire of Wickepin

# Minutes

## Bush Fire Control Officer's Meeting

Council Chambers, Wickepin

# 23 March 2021

**Minutes of a Bush Fire Control Officer's Meeting held in Council Chambers, Wickepin  
Tuesday 23 March, 2021 at 7.00pm**

The CBFCO declared the meeting open at 7.02pm.

**1. Attendance**

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer	Roger Butler
Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer	Trevor Leeson
Fire Control Officers	Tim Heffernan Phil Russell Daniel White Steve Rose Wes Astbury Trevor Leeson Luke Lansdell
Chief Executive Officer	Mark J Hook
Manager of Works	Gary Rasmussen
Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Grant Hansen

**Apologies**

Wickepin Police Sergeant	Phil Huggins
Fire Control Officer	Gordon Mc Dougall

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**2.1 Confirmation of Minutes – Meeting 28 July 2020.**

**Moved Daniel White / Seconded Trevor Leeson**

That the minutes of the Fire Control Officer's meeting held 28 July 2020 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

**Carried**

**3. Business Arising From Minutes**

Nil

**4. General Business**

CEO advised that Luke Lansdell has passed the FCO course.

Trevor Leeson raised the issue of the Total Fire Bans being put on the SMS text system.

Discussion was held on the requirements for the Kaolin Mine when a Harvest and Movement ban has been put in place.

Note - Grant Hansen from DFES to research the requirements for the Kaolin Mine under a harvest and vehicle movement ban.

Discussion was held regarding the placing of fire bans and had FCO's received any complaints over the year.

Trevor Leeson raised the issue under the current Council Fire Break order for the following as the minimum capacity should be 600 litres.

That from the 15<sup>th</sup> October all harvesting and baling (including cutting and raking) operations, there shall be an operational mobile engine powered firefighting unit with a minimum capacity of 400 litres of water located in or immediately adjacent to the paddock being harvested and/or baled. The responsibility to supply the firefighting unit is that of the landowner/occupier.

It was felt that the minimum firefighting capacity should be 1200 litres with a minimum 600 litres on a mobile unit

Note - Grant Hansen from DFES to advise of the correct wording for the change to the 2021/2022 Fire Break Order.

#### **4.1 Chief Bushfire Control Officer's Report**

Thanks to all the FCOs for another season of volunteering and fire and permit management.

Congratulations to Steve Rose on 40 years of dedicated service as an FCO. Steve has been diligent in this role and has rarely missed a call up in my time. I have appreciated his support and wisdom in fire management. Steve is cool in a crisis and a great communicator. Thank you, Steve.

#### **Noted Fires for the 2020/21 Season**

**Hassell Fire Cuballing Shire 28/11/2020** - A large fire in difficult, hilly country started by a header in lupin stubble. It was well represented by volunteers from the Wickepin shire. There was an issue with people leaving the fire ground as they were not deployed to jobs and seemed to regard themselves as finished. They were not. Aerial bombers were requested by attending FCOs but not deployed.

**Bayley Fire Tincurrin 29/11/2020** - Large fire approx 60Ha burnt mainly stubble. Started by a header. Issues noted: very heavy windrows, a 60 foot header front very difficult to extinguish. Wickepin shire water tanker requested but no staff available to be deployed due to weekend. Phillip Russell attended with shire water tanker. Phillip has subsequently been inducted and given permission to take the shire tanker as required. Fire entered bush which burnt for several days. The fire was attended by many personnel from both Wickepin and surrounding shires. Two backburns were conducted successfully. Two aerial bombers attended as a training run.

**Matthews/Fortini 8/12/2020** - Ignition point at small on farm disused rubbish tip in bush. Actual ignition unknown. Small backburn was conducted to contain fire. Fire was believed to be safe.

**Matthews/Fortini 10/12/2020** - Re ignition on a windy day with a strong southerly wind. This burnt approx 60Ha stubble, crop and bush. The fire was well attended by volunteers. A request for shire equipment was made for a front end loader and grader however due to the Merino Fours Bowls Day there were no personnel available to dispatch or operate the equipment. Tim Fleay provided his own FEL and Tim Heffernan and Peter Bird provided their graders. As Chief and FCO in charge I requested a Spot Weather Report from Paul Dennison DFES from the fire ground to assist in backburn placement. I was advised 30 minutes to be emailed to my phone and I'm still waiting for it to this day. Weather apps were used to gauge the predicted 180 degree wind change. A difficult backburn was placed on the southwest side of the fire using FEL and graders and copious amounts of water and fire appliances. This burn took approximately 2 hours to complete, commencing at around 6pm. This is by far the scariest backburn I have known with

30km/hr wind blowing directly towards very flammable material on a disused road only meters away from the fire. Back burn was conducted successfully which made the fire ground safe as the predicted wind change occurred. Good communication with the troops ensured there was adequate cover both during the fire and the mop up afterwards.

**10/2/2021 Williams Kondinin Rd Car Fire** - East Wickepin approx 5km from town. Town Brigade and shire attended. Fire extinguished promptly. Contained predominantly to the car and side of road.

#### **4.2 General Discussion**

Tim Heffernan raised the issue of the DCEO and Manager Works not be contactable during the Mathews/Fortini fire and being unable to mobilise council plant to the fire.

CEO advised it was unfortunate that they were uncontactable and every effort is made to be contactable during the fire season. The CEO advised the meeting that the CEO and Manager of Works were talking to an FCO on the day of the fire who advised everything was ok and they were not required. The Shire cannot always be relied on to supply plant or the personnel when required, but every endeavour is made to provide plant and personnel when requested by the CBFCO or an FCO.

The CEO advised that all fires need to be listed with DFES for an incident number to be raised so if in the event Council cannot supply the required plant DFES may authorise contract plant to be used. The CEO advised that if the CEO, DCEO or the Manager of Works is uncontactable the CBFCO may request local plant operators directly and advise the CEO or DCEO of the use of the equipment as soon as possible.

The CEO raised the issue of the Yealering Water Supply not having fire hydrants when the power goes off. The CEO has contacted the Water Corporation regarding this issue and their reply has been that they cannot guarantee a water supply during power outages or during bushfire events. They have also advised that they have no intention of rectifying this issue in the Yealering townsite. The CEO has spoken to Simon Vogel at DFES Narrogin to see if they are able progress this issue as a matter of urgency, as a constant water supply is required for fighting bushfires in regional areas. In relation to the supply of water for firefighting in Yealering there are three large water tanks at CBH that are available during a bush fire.

#### **5. Closure**

There being no further business CBFCO Roger Butler declared the meeting closed at 8.40 pm.