

# **Minutes**

# **Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting Monday 5 August 2024**

Nannup SES, Sexton Way, Nannup

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# **Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda Monday 5 August 2024**

# 1. DECLARATION OF OPENING/ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS/ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY:

The Presiding Member Cheryle Brown declared the Meeting open at 7.12pm

Welcome to country acknowledged by presiding member:

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Wardandi and Bibbulmun people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and their contribution they make to the life of this region.

# 2. ATTENDANCE/APOLOGIES:

#### 2.1 Attendance

Councillors	Staff		
Cr Cheryle Brown (Presiding Member)	David Taylor – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)		
Cr Patricia Fraser (Deputy to Presiding	Nathan Manning – Community Emergency		
Member)	Services Manager (CESM)		
	Lisa Atkinson –Executive Support Officer		

# Robin Mellema left the meeting as he has stood down as Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Members (Full Voting rights)		
Mark Scott – Balingup Road FCO/Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer		
Mike Vasey, North Nannup FCO/Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer		
Peter Hastie, Carlotta FCO		
Gerald Brown – Cundinup FCO		
Victor Lorkiewicz – East Nannup FCO		
Nathan Manning - Nannup Townsite CESM		
Leigh Fletcher– Nannup Brook FCO		
John Jonker - Peerabeelup Coastal		
Andre McNab – Scott River/Lake Jasper FCO		

Other Attendees (Non-Voting rights)		
Bryce Edwards – Forest Products Commission (FPC)		
Greg Hodgson – Forest Products Commission (FPC)		
Steve Wood – Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)		

# 2.2 Apologies

#### Members (Full Voting rights)

John Patman – Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and Darradup FCO (CBFCO)

Brett Fowler – Peerabeelup FCO

Carey Curtis, Nannup Brook FCO

#### Other Attendees (Non-Voting rights)

Peter Thomas – District Officer - Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)

Helen Holzheuer - Parks and Wildlife, Blackwood District (DBCA)

#### 3. PETITIONS/DEPUTATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:

Nil

#### 4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:

#### 4.1 Bush Fire Advisory Committee meeting – 6 May 2024

That the Minutes from the Bush Fire Advisory Committee held 6 May 2024 be confirmed as a true and correct record (Attachment 4.1).

MOVED Gerald Brown	SECONDED Nathan Manning	
		CARRIED

# 5. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST:

Nil

#### 6. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES:

11.1 Mark Scott (Balingup Road FCO) stated that there is an expectation in the community that the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DBCA will cross all tenures. Mark Scott believes the BFAC committee needs to bring this up with the two organisations. He expanded that the Blackwood Valley Zone Response normally finishes on the 1 April so if DBCA are not going to turn out to private property, but it is in FPC pines, he believes there will be reluctance from volunteers to turn out and help put the fire out.

Cr Cheryle Brown (Presiding Member) asked Dale Putland (Acting CEO) what the best way forward is for BFAC to bring this issue up with FPC and DBCA.

Dale Putland responded that it is a commercial agreement between FPC and DBCA. Now FPC are going into private property and planting their own plantations, it has extended into a commercial operation, the same as any other plantation owner. The agreement with DBCA is stated in FPC's Plantation Applications along with stating where their appliances are.

The Shire of Nannup can write to the Minister and both heads of departments and question whether FPC is a private landowner, supplying their own equipment, or a government agency with a firm agreement to expand the DBCA fleet and personnel.

Mark Scott (Balingup Road FCO) added that there have been quite a few applications for planning permissions in the last eighteen months in Nannup for pines and he cannot remember if they stated they would have equipment. Mark Scott believes it was a mistake not to stipulate those organisations require their own equipment. Dale Putland added that they do say they have appliances, but they are located in other areas.

Cr Cheryle Brown (Presiding Member) and Dale Putland (Acting CEO) clarified that for BFAC to action this through the Shire a motion is required to clarify exactly what FPC supplies and whether the agreement with DBCA means that DBCA will turn up to any fire on FPC property.

Helen Holzheuer (DBCA) added that in the interim there is the Blackwood Valley Zone Response with most incidents occurring during the peak period the agreement is in. DBCA will respond with everyone else. Peter Thomas (District Officer, DFES) asked if much of the plantation land is outside the Blackwood Valley Zone Response. Mark Scott responded that not much is.

Peter Thomas indicated that meant a response was covered by the Blackwood Valley Zone. Response with initial response from all Departments

Victor Lorkiewicz (East Nannup FCO) questioned whether the motion included plantations outside the Blackwood Valley Zone Response. Mark Scott clarified that it was asking about everything.

ACTION: CEO to write to the Minister for Forestry Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC to confirm fire response arrangements in Forest Products Commission's Pine Plantations. (Attachment 6.1). This was also raised at the Southwest Country Zone meeting in June 2024 (Attachment 6.2)

RESPONSE: Nathan Manning (CESM) advised the Minister has replied to the letter and it's attached to the agenda at item 6.1. It confirms the fire response arrangements in Forest Products Commissions (FPC) Pine Plantations. Nathan added that the CEO David Taylor, has also taken this to the Southwest Country Zone meeting and that's been sent to Western Australia Local Government Association for further comment.

Business arising from previous minutes taken as read.

#### 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

#### 7.1 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Nil

#### 7.2 Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Mark Scott (DCBFCO) raised concerns regarding the transfer of safety laws to incident controllers, specifically in relation to illegal fires. Emphasis was placed on the need for

a more responsive Police service to mitigate delays in emergency situations. It was proposed that the Council lobby the Government to establish a full-time Police service available for immediate response. The need for clear rules and protocols regarding team management, especially in scenarios where crew availability is an issue. Concerns were raised about managing fire response teams and having a fallback plan if crews are unavailable on short notice, particularly during off-hours.

It was further added the recent fire at Brockman Plantation, highlighted the issue of inadequate crew support despite available equipment and recommended that the Shire conduct an audit of pine plantations. The audit should include verification of equipment and personnel readiness, particularly before the fire season. Appreciation was expressed to all individuals who participated in the incidents over the past year.

Cr Cheryle Brown (Presiding Chair) inquired with David Taylor (CEO) if a Motion was needed. David Taylor (CEO) responded, the first two items do not require formal motions and can be added as action items. The second item involves lobbying, which is straight forward, the third item is more complex and will involve auditing.

Cr Cheryle Brown (Presiding Chair) confirmed that that BFAC will handle the first two items as actions.

David Taylor (CEO) commented there are concerns regarding the location of equipment, which could complicate auditing due to its potential dispersion. Fire breaks and water tanks are easily verifiable if they are on site.

Mark Scott (DCBFCO) spoke of concern that some plantations may not have had their fire breaks inspected. Additionally, about 30% of trees in some plantations are dead, increasing the fire risk.

David Taylor (CEO) confirmed that the Bush Fire Act and Fire Break Act is managed by CESM, Ranger, or a combination of both. The equipment within development applications falls under the Town Planning legislation.

Vic Lorkiewicz (East Nannup FCO) reported that a plantation located in East Nannup is owned by an individual/company based in Queensland. David Taylor (CEO) inquired who the managing agency is for the plantation, most plantations will have a management agency locally. Greg Hodgson advised most likely a local company will manage the plantation with Peter Bolston identified as the probable Manager.

ACTION: That Council lobby the State Government for a full time Police

response within 30 minutes at all times to ensure crew safety when

attending illegal fire incidents.

ACTION: That the Shire provides a Management Plan for safety issues.

ACTION: The shire to conduct's an audit of plantations, equipment and

readiness prior to the bush fire season.

# 7.3 Bush Fire Control Officers (FCO'S)

Nil

#### 7.3.1 Balingup Road Bush Fire Control Officer (Attachment 7.3.1)

Report is attached nothing further to add.

#### 7.3.2 Carlotta Bush Fire Control Officer

Peter Hastie (Carlotta FCO) advised it's been quiet with only one call-out this season. The truck is currently out of service and asked when it will be returned. Nathan Manning (CESM) responded it should return to the shed in about 2-3 weeks.

#### 7.3.3 Cundinup Bush Fire Control Officer

Gerald Brown (Cundinup FCO) reported on a recent call out incident and noted that the crew spent an extended period of time there assessing the situation. He further highlighted that some of the work performed during this call out should have been managed by workers on the plantation itself rather than relying solely on the Fire Control Officers.

#### 7.3.4 Darradup Bush Fire Control Officer

Nil

#### 7.3.5 East Nannup Bush Fire Control Officer

Victor Lorkiewicz (FCO) raised a concern about the management of call outs during winter when multiple burn offs may occur on different roads. He inquired whether there is feedback from 000 operators on these calls and whether there is a way to make them aware of the winter conditions.

Nathan Manning (CESM) explained that 000 operators have a legal obligation to forward calls to the relevant agencies, such as Local Government, DBCA, or DFES. He acknowledged the issue and suggested that contacting CommCen might provide additional information and allow for further clarification with the caller. This could help determine if assistance is needed.

Victor Lorkiewicz (FCO) proposed an alternative approach where an individual could assess the incident firsthand, report findings to the Chief Fire Officer and determine if crew deployment is necessary. He further noted that this approach could prevent unnecessary work if it is determined that no crew is needed.

Nathan Manning (CESM) responded this has been discussed previously at BFAC regarding the safety of sending individuals to incidents. He noted that if the 000 caller cannot be contacted, the incident requires investigation. It's recommended that two FCOs respond to the incident due to potential risks, including false alarms or prescribed burns.

Victor Lorkiewicz (East Nannup FCO) noted that 000 calls often occur late in the evening, frequently due to public reports of winter burning. Additionally, during the current winter season, with nearly two weeks of rain, such reports might be more prevalent.

David Taylor (CEO) suggested that for structure fires, investigation is crucial to determine the nature of the incident. For bushfires, consideration of a roster system was proposed to manage responses effectively.

Mark Scott (DCBFCO) commented previously, only one person was assigned to investigate incidents. He expressed discomfort with this approach, stating that having only one investigator may be insufficient. It was further noted, based on recent observations that 99% of calls in May, June, and July were related to burning off. However, there is a risk that failing to investigate these calls might result in missing critical situations where someone might genuinely need urgent assistance.

Victor Lorkiewicz (East Nannup FCO) inquired about the possibility of obtaining more information from the 000 service regarding incidents. Nathan Manning (CESM) responded If an incident is assigned to you, you should contact the CommCen and inform them you're the Fire Control Officer (FCO) for the area and attending the incident. You can request the 000 caller's contact information; CommCen is generally willing to provide these details to facilitate further contact if needed.

David Taylor (CEO) asked "What about a campaign to get people when burning off to notify CommCen. That could be something to include in the bushfire notice.

**ACTION:** 

Add to the Shire's Bush Fire Notice that for winter burn callouts, CommCen should be notified of the light up before burning. This also to be included in social media and campaign in the lead up to fire season.

#### 7.3.6 Nannup Brook Bush Fire Control Officer

Nil

#### 7.3.7 North Nannup Bush Fire Control Officer

Mike Vasey announced that the North Nannup Annual General Meeting (AGM) is scheduled for Sunday, 11 August 2024. It was noted that it's not expected to be many changes.

# 7.3.8 Peerabeelup Fire Control Officer

Nil

#### 7.3.9 Peerabeelup Coastal Fire Control Officer

Nil

#### 7.3.10 Scott River/Lake Jasper Bush Fire Control Officer

Nil

#### 8. REPORTS OF OFFICERS:

# 8.1 Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM)

Spoke to report as attached in Attachment 8.1

Training need assessments will be conducted across the brigades to identify training needs especially for the new volunteers some brigades have. Depending on trainer availability and number of volunteers that require training it is anticipated that a Bush Fire awareness and safety skills course will be organised prior to the bush fire season.

There is a new online hybrid course for bushfire awareness and safety skills, requiring minimal in-person practical training. This course aims to accommodate volunteers who cannot attend traditional training sessions.

The MAFF program will begin mitigation efforts along Balingup Road, with work scheduled to start between August and September 2024. Additional projects include clearing road verges along Barragup Road and conducting chemical treatments and controlled burns at the Shire of Nannup tip.

The Shire has received feedback on the Local Law, prompting updates to better align with our needs, along with revisions to standard operating procedures for brigade equipment. As the fire season approaches, brigades are advised to inspect and order necessary equipment and PPE as soon as possible to avoid delays.

David Taylor, CEO, inquired if Nathan Manning (CESM) could provide a checklist for brigades. Nathan Manning (CESM) confirmed that a checklist will be made available.

Louise Stokes has left the Shire and is no longer the recovery coordinator. Lorraine Learmond has been appointed as the Recovery Coordinator.

ACTION: Assess training needs for new volunteers in each brigade based on trainer availability and the number of volunteers requiring training, organise bush fire awareness and safety skills.

ACTION: Provide a checklist to Brigades for equipment needs.

#### 9. REPORTS OF OTHER ATTENDEES:

#### **9.1 Department of Fire and Emergency Services** – Peter Thomas

Nathan Manning (CESM) Spoke to report at Attachment 9.1

To summarise the report Local Government's will act as the primary point of contact during incidents.

They will facilitate community meetings to ensure effective communication. Preparatory testing of local equipment is scheduled to be completed before the bushfire season begins. Water shortages may present additional challenges for the upcoming fire season.

A new Australia Fire Warning System has been introduced to standardise protocols nationwide. There are new objective statements: "It's too late to leave" and "Prepare to leave." There are also new objective statements: "It's too late to leave" and "Prepare to leave, changes to warning levels "Watch and Act" will be updated to "It's safe to return" and removal of the "All Clear" status from the warning system. Printed copies of the new warning procedures were provided at the meeting.

### **9.2 Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)** Steve Wood

Steve Wood (DBCA) spoke to a presentation to the committee. Background was provided on heading out of summer leading into spring 2024. It was a bad summer drought, February through to May 2024 was one of the longest Soil Drying Index (SDI) maximum experienced in recent history. There are some areas in the forest that have completely collapsed, blue gums when they don't get water suck the ground dry. There has been Blue gum deaths along the coast heading to Walpole. There will be an accumulation of leaf litter, in some areas that will be higher where the tree deaths have occurred. Generally coming out of spring there has been a lot of yellow leaves fallen across the forest and fire breaks. Usually there is about a tonne per hectare of fuel accumulation per year, this year alone we have in the vicinity of 3 tonnes. We would usually head into summer with leaf coverage of a five year old burn, this summer it will be a seven to eight year old burn. DBCA has mapped a lot of these areas out, a report will be produced to see the overall effect in terms of forest collapse.

The Soil Drying Index (SDI) in Bridgetown did not start dropping until May 2024, Bridgetown did not receive as much rain as Nannup. The SDI in now standard again for this time of year, the bottom soil is saturated and back to a normal situation with regards to moisture in the forest. Looking ahead in August more rain is forecast, if this trend continues it will be normal spring patterns.

For the autumn burning season DBCA only completed 3 broadscale burns that started late in the season and conservative with the soil being so dry. There was a lot of scorch and it didn't meet the objectives. In terms of spring 2024 there was a large carryover so not much occurred in Spring or Autumn due to the weather situation.

There are 17 priority burns across the district and about 5 to look at in the Shire of Nannup. Fork hill is the number one priority burn. Barragup the 3 cells will be finished, the main cell is between the middle and the southern cell which was completed last Spring. Millyeanup is part of DBCA's soft cell mosaic methodology for converting larger areas. It could potentially put some sections at risk; what will burn will burn, and what won't, won't, it should get a nice pattern of mosaics. That's part of the plan to address the vegetation that's 8 years old. Quite large burns could be expected, but it will probably just be a matter of managing how the burns progress. What could stop this depends on how wet it gets in those areas. The edge of Ellis Creek, is another area to consider. It's on the edge of Bridgetown, so that would be another good area to get done and broken up.

The Government provided 31 million dollars and an extra 19 conservation employees and 6 officers across the Forestry regions. DBCA has advertised for conservation employees, machine operators, and crew leaders. That process is underway now and DBCA hope to get 6 people for the Nannup area. This will bring Nannup up to full operational capacity.

#### **9.3** Forest Products Commission (FPC) Greg Hodgson

Spoke to report in Attachment 9.3

Greg Hodgson (FPC) is actively preparing for the upcoming year. The AGIS system has been utilised to extract detailed data on plantation areas across the Shire. The current figures indicate around 18 plantations totalling just over 5,000 hectares. A specific plantation, located just outside of town, is being used for additional data collection. This data will not be officially recorded until the process is complete. For the Shires involved, the data collection for Nannup Shire is nearly complete. The data is 95% finalised, with a few remaining details to be inputted. Once complete, it will be shared with Nathan Manning (CESM) and John Patman (CBFCO) for broader visibility. Additionally, a management plan will be shared with DFES, focusing on estate management and mitigation strategies.

Delta Forestry, is a new plantation operator and is not yet a member of FPC resourcesharing network. This network has proven beneficial in the past, especially during fire events, by pooling resources and equipment. Delta may consider joining in the future.

With Bryce Edwards (FPC) joining the team, progress has been made on maintenance projects. Notably, a review of old tanks in Balingup is underway. Funding has been secured to restore and repair these tanks. Bryce will focus on fixing infrastructure that has deteriorated over the past few years, particularly on existing land. In response to water shortages, large water tanks are being installed at entry points of new plantations. These tanks will be equipped to meet various obligations and will be checked and topped up before summer. Some other companies are doing the same when setting up and completing the mitigation works.

Thirty-two out of the 45 fire operational staff have completed a one-day DFES Plantation Fire Fighting training course. This course covered plantation setup, mitigation techniques, and emergency response protocols. It provided valuable knowledge for new staff and allowed DFES personnel to gain insights as well. Bryce will assist with further DFES training, particularly focusing on the northern regions like Collie. FPC aims to establish 40-45 operational staff across five work centres. Attention will be focused on DBCA land between the Perth Hills and Manjimup. There are 7-8 Light units stationed in the Blackwood Valley area to support these operations. Given that many staff are based in Nannup and live in Bridgetown, the reallocation of plantations away from DBCA land will help free up space in other shires, aligning with our industry obligations for the start of summer.

DBCA's trial of shipping containers for water storage in Nannup is being expanded. Instead of transporting empty containers to fire sites, 15,000 litre containers will be placed strategically to improve fire response times.

FPC has successfully provided five community fire grants for Local Governments. The grants will support the purchase of radios, fast fill units and hoses. With eight Local Governments and 34 applications, not all requests may be fulfilled. A 600-litre fire unit will be allocated to Cundinup, addressing local needs directly rather than auctioning the equipment.

Tanks and fire equipment will be accessible to first responders, regardless of whether FPC or DBCA is involved in the fire. Concerns about the availability of heavy machinery, such as dozers, were discussed. DBCA provides this equipment and FPC collaborates with contractors to ensure availability of suitable machinery. There were concerns about delays caused by the unavailability of heavy machinery during fires. DBCA is funding additional equipment, including front loaders, with at least one dozer always stationed in Nannup. Equipment allocation is adjusted based on risk assessments and operational needs.

#### **10. STANDING ITEMS:**

# 10.1 Emergency Services Levy (ESL)

Nathan Manning (CESM) reported that he will be conducting acquittal's this month. It was reported that the Shire's funding application was successful for this financial year and the Shire will receive \$172,000. A significant portion of this funding will be allocated for vehicle servicing and repairs. He advised he plans to schedule a service for Victor Lorkiewicz's vehicle before the high threat period begins. Attendees were advised that there may be times when the vehicle is offline and to note that a replacement vehicle is unlikely to be provided by the Shire. He requested that all personnel submit their PPE equipment needs. This will help in planning and allocating funds effectively for the remainder of the financial year.

#### **11. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

11.1 Mike Vasey (DCBFCO) raised concerns regarding the golf course dam pump. It was reported that the units are currently unable to drive through and connect to the pump for filling purposes. This issue may impact operational efficiency. Nathan Manning (CESM) responded that there are water tanks located at the recreation centre that could be used as an alternative. He has discussed this with Doug Learmond from the Shire, who confirmed that these tanks are available for use and will encourage their utilization.

David Taylor (CEO) highlighted that drawing water from the standpipe causes a reduction in water pressure within the town.

David Taylor (CEO) advised that Water Corp can fill the tank on Dunnet Road to a higher level, especially during high threat seasons. Currently, the tank is filled only halfway. Nathan Manning (CESM) further reported that the mill has agreed to allow the use of their dam for fire fighting purposes. Although the water might be dirty, its available for emergency use.

ACTION: The Shire to investigate the issues with the Golf Course Pump.

11.2 Mark Scott (DCBFCO) moved a note of thanks to Robin Mellema for his services as Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and proposed sending formal letters of thanks to Robin Mellema and Carey Curtis, for her time as Fire Control Officer at Nannup Brook.

ACTION: Formal letters of thanks on behalf of the BFAC committee to Robin Mellema and Carey Curtis.

- 11.3 Mark Scott (DCBFCO) noted that DFES have updated all their two-way handheld radios. He suggests exploring the possibility of acquiring some of the old radios for use by the Shire. Nathan Manning (CESM) reported ongoing efforts to obtain the radio's from across the State, it is expected to send some to regional areas that could then be allocated to local Governments.
- 11.4 Greg Hodgson (FPC) offered assistance to Nathan Manning (CESM) regarding the Plantation Fire Fighting course for DFES staff. David Taylor (CEO) inquired of the possibility of hosting a course locally, he asked Nathan Manning (CSEM) to check availability and interest. Greg Hodgson (FPC) advised the ideal number of participants is around 10-12, with a maximum of 16. He further advised Nathan Manning (CESM) to coordinate this with Donna at FCO who manages the arrangements and works with industry experts for presentations.

ACTION: Nathan to organise Plantation Fire Fighting Course in Nannup for FPC and DFES staff, prior to fire season.

#### 12. PROPOSED DATE FOR NEXT MEETING:

Monday 4 November 2024 starting at 7pm at Nannup SES.

#### 13. CLOSURE OF MEETING:

Meeting closed at 8.20pm.

# **Attachments**

Attachments	Title
4.1	Minutes from the Bush Fire Advisory Committee held 6 February 2024
6.1	Letter from Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC, Minister for Forestry-
6.2	DBCA & FPC Bushfire Response Arrangements
7.3.2	Ballingup Road FCO Report
8.1	CESM Nannup Report