

# Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee Annual General Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, 20 March 2025 at 4.00pm  
Shire of Merredin Council Chambers**

## 1.0 Official Opening

The Chair opened the Meeting at 4.10 pm noting that a quorum was present and welcomed all in attendance.

## 2.0 Attendance and Apologies

Delegates

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>
Michael Caughey	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade	Chief Bushfire Control Officer Chair
Glenn Crees	Collgar Brigade	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer
Nigel Edgecombe	Burracoppin South Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Brendan Crees	Burracoppin South Brigade	Volunteer Firefighter
David Last	Collgar Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Kael Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Glenn Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Stephen Crook	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cam Gethin	Hines Hill Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Luke Growden	Hines Hill Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Sam Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
John Flockart	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Paul Wanless	Muntadgin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Cr Phil Van Der Merwe	Shire of Merredin	Shire of Merredin Council delegate

Officers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>
Craig Watts	Shire of Merredin	Chief Executive Officer
Lawrie Carr	Shire of Merredin	Acting Executive Manager Engineering Services
Sheree Lowe	Shire of Merredin	Emergency Services Officer

Apologies

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>
Chris Barnett	Burracoppin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Matt Barnett	Burracoppin South Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Chris Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Craig Last	Korbelka Brigade	Volunteer Firefighter
Lee Dalton	Korbelka Brigade	Volunteer Firefighter
Darren Major	Muntadgin Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Neil Smith	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Codi Brindley- Mullen	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager Strategy & Community

### 3.0 Confirmation of Minutes

3.1 **Motion:** That the Minutes of the previous Bush Fire Control Officers Annual General Meeting held on 21 March 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Moved: G Crees

Seconded: D Last

### 4.0 Business arising

4.1 "The ESO has been asked to confirm with the PPC manufacturers the life span of PPC." Stewart & Heaton have provided the following advice:

*It all really comes down to the condition of the garment. There are garments in circulation that are years old but they are in good condition and serviceable. The checklist below should help people to understand what they need to check and look out for and at what point they need to replace. While it is a 12 monthly list, I would recommend them being checked prior to fire season and straight after it.*

*We have had garment up to 8 years old before but they had very little use and were well stored so it really does come down to condition of the garments. With advances in technology in fabric this may extend but for now [6 years] seems to be the maximum.*

Wildland jackets	Anything that is certified to AS/NZS4824:2002 should be replaced, this standard was superceded by AS/NZS4824:2006	Check garments have no hole formation
	AS/NZS4824:2006 garments are still in circulation and can be used operationally providing they are in good condition (see 12 monthly check list to the right) or less than 6 years old. 6 years maximum recommended life span	check garments have no mould
	AS/NZS4824:2021 is new standard, new garments issued will be certified to this standard, recommended 6 year maximum lifespan	check garments have not been affected by rodent/insect activity
		garments should be cleaned and dried before storing to maximise lifespan
Wildland trousers	Anything that is certified to AS/NZS4824:2002 should be replaced, this standard was superceded by AS/NZS4824:2006	Check garments have no hole formation
	AS/NZS4824:2006 garments are still in circulation and can be used operationally providing they are in good condition (see 12 monthly check list) or less than 6 years old. 6 years maximum recommended life span	check garments have no mould

	AS/NZS4824:2021 is new standard, new garments issued will be certified to this standard, recommended 6 year maximum lifespan	check garments have not been affected by rodent/insect activity
		garments should be cleaned and dried before storing to maximise lifespan

4.2 “As most appliances are having trouble with the foam system, the CBFCO, ESO and Cr Van Der Merwe to investigate potential modifications or alternative foam systems such as may be in place in the VFRS appliances.”

No action was taken. Brigades were reminded that flushing appliances is essential after use of foam.

## 5.0 Reviewing the process for appointing Chief and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers

The Chief Bush Fire Control Officer has recommended that the Shire adopt a rotation policy whereby the positions of Chief and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers are rotated every two years with the Deputy stepping up into the role of Chief at the end of the period.

The predicted benefits of this system include sharing the workload, additional FCOs gain experience in these roles, and it ensures that all the knowledge is not held by one person.

FCOs queried and discussed training requirements, concerns around Work Health and Safety responsibilities and liabilities, and concerns around their capability of managing a large fire. It was also discussed whether it was possible or desirable for the Chief role to be delegated to a DFES employee.

***Motion:*** That the BFAC members support the proposal to rotate the CBFCO and Deputy CBFCO roles as provided within this report, and recommend that Council supports its implementation commencing in the 2025/26 financial year.

**Moved: M Caughey**  
**MOTION**  
**CARRIED**

**Seconded: K Crees**

## 6.0 Election of Office Bearers – 2025/2026 Fire Season

To nominate for the vacant positions, nominations must be made by an accredited Fire Control Officer. Sheree Lowe was nominated as Returning Officer.

The Returning Officer declared all Bush Fire Brigade positions vacant and called for nominations for the below positions:

**Moved: J Flockart**

**Seconded: P Van Der Merwe**

### 6.1 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Nominations for Chief Bush Fire Control Officer were received for:

- Glenn Crees

**Moved: J Flockart**

**Seconded: M Caughey**

There being no further nominations, Glenn was elected to the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Glenn accepted the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

## **6.2 Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer**

Nominations for Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer were received for:

- Paul Wanless

**Moved: M Caughey**

**Seconded: G Crees**

There being no further nominations, Paul was elected to the position of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Paul accepted the position of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

## **6.3 Fire Control Officers**

Nominated: As listed below.

That the following people being appointed as Fire Control Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2025/26 fire season:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Brigades</b>
Chris Barnett	Burracoppin
Nigel Edgecombe, Matt Barnett	Burracoppin South
David Last, Glenn Crees, Kael Crees, Stephen Crook	Collgar
Cam Gethin, Colin Miller, Luke Growden	Hines Hill
Sam Hooper, Craig Last (subject to training), Lee Dalton (subject to training)	Korbelka
Paul Wanless, Darren Major	Muntadgin
Neil Smith, Mick Caughey, Phil Gray, Marshall Crook, Dan Giles	Nukarni/Nokanning
Sheree Lowe	Shire of Merredin

**Moved: K Crees**

**Seconded: J Flockart**

## **6.4 Fire Weather Officers**

Nominated: As listed below

That the following people be appointed as Fire Weather Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2025/26 fire season.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Brigades</b>
Chris Barnett	North East
Nigel Edgecombe	South East
Neil Smith	North
Craig Last	South West
Stephen Crook	Central
Paul Wanless	South
Cam Gethin	West

**Moved: N Edgecombe**

**Seconded: S Crook**

### **6.5 Dual Fire Control Officers**

Nominated: As listed below.

That the following people be re-appointed as Dual Fire Control Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2025/26 fire season.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Brigades</b>
Sam Hooper / Lee Dalton	Bruce Rock
Cam Gethin and Colin Miller	Kellerberrin
Michael Caughey / Neil Smith	Nungarin
Darren Major / Paul Wanless	Narembreen
Chris Barnett	Westonia

**Moved: G Crees**

**Seconded: N Edgecombe**

## **7.0 Brigade Reports**

### **7.1 Chief Bushfire Control Officer**

The 2024/25 fire season was relatively quiet with not a lot of fire incidents. Some brigades seemed to be a bit busier than others, with Nukarni/Nokanning and Hines Hill called to some Great Eastern Highway and Merredin townsite fires.

The Restricted Burning Period is something that will continue to be an issue with the AFDRS and the inability to burn on a High fire danger day. I think we need to keep advocating for this to be reviewed as it is making it difficult to burn on even suitable days.

We had numerous Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans during the period and again I got a couple of upset farmers on the day I called it early. I still believe losing a few hours harvesting before nasty conditions occur is a lot better than waiting right up to when those conditions do happen and the possibility of fighting a fire in that sort of weather. I welcome any feedback on this.

What'sApp chat groups appear to be working well, just a reminder to communicate with ComCen when there is an incident, even 000 is quicker. But do communicate as much as you can with ComCen, that is what they are there for.

Thank you to Sheree for all that you do. Her behind the scenes work makes this job a whole lot easier. Just remember if you don't have time to send incident reports or any other issues or Sheree is here to support us. Also, if you have any training your brigade requires get organised early with Sheree so it can happen.

Thank you also to CEO Craig and DCEO Codi for the ease of communication when needed.

And lastly thanks to all you FCOs and the FCOs in your brigade. I believe we are in a good place now with some strong leadership which makes for safe and effective brigades.

### **7.2 Burracoppin BFB**

Captain not present

### **7.3 Burracoppin South BFB**

Only attended one fire, on Booran South Road. Were despatched to some other fires, but stood down on the way. Issued several burn permits, lot of smoke going

up in our area at the moment. The brigade has some younger volunteers in need of training before next fire season.

#### **7.4 Collgar BFB**

Attended some early fires - one on Booran South Road, one in November behind the BP in Merredin town, the one in January in Bruce Rock, and the small one just east of town the other day.

#### **7.5 Hines Hill BFB**

Attended the fire behind the BP, the Bruce Rock fire, a recent small fire in Kellerberrin shire, a call that turned out to be just people doing burnouts in Nangeenan, and a fire at a hobby farm from someone trying to do a fire break with just a cigarette lighter.

Ongoing issue with the water pump in the Tatra has finally been resolved. Wayne Bartlett discovered that the fuel lines had been put in back to front. Reported to DFES and the manufacturer, and apparently not the only truck this had been done to.

#### **7.6 Korbalka BFB**

Attended two fires in January – the one in Bruce Rock and another small one the day after.

#### **7.7 Muntadgin BFB**

Attended three or four fires - one on Merredin road, the Bruce Rock one, Murray Dixon's in Narembene, got stood down on the way to a couple. A few issues with the vehicle servicing, the firefighting gear isn't getting a thorough check with the annual service.

#### **7.8 Nukarni-Nokaning BFB**

Captain not present

#### **7.9 Shire of Merredin**

A big thank you to all of you, your brigades, families and staff for your time and effort again both during and outside the fire season.

The ESO echoed the Chair's thanks for the time, effort and assistance over the season, both on the fireground and behind the scenes.

A reminder that the Shire emergency number changed earlier in the year – please make sure the number you have in your phones is the updated one (6140 1234). Apologies for this change, it was out of our control and not ideal in the middle of fire season.

All brigades have received the following:

- Triangle emergency workers ahead road sign
- BIC – Camlock couplings
- 2 additional respirators per brigade (for brigades who have done the training)

Additionally, Korbalka and Muntadgin have received Thermal Imaging Cameras

Two brigades are testing a new foam product. This is a foam concentrate that comes in 2-litre bottles. Add the concentrate to 18 litres of water in a 20 litre drum, and it's the equivalent of a standard 20-litre drum of Class A bush firefighting foam, but it's easier to store and reduces the risks from manual handling of those 20 litre drums.

If any other brigades would like to trial them, please speak to the ESO.

## 8.0 General Business

### 8.1 Firebreak Orders 2025/26

**Motion:** Pursuant to Section 33 of the Bush Fires Act 1954, all owners and/or occupiers of land are required to carry out fire prevention work in accordance with the requisitions of this notice on or before 31<sup>st</sup> October each calendar year or within fourteen days of the date of becoming the owner or occupier of the land, should this be after the 31<sup>st</sup> October. All work specified in this Notice is to be maintained up to and including the 16<sup>th</sup> March the following calendar year.

**Moved: K Crees**

**Seconded: G Crees**

### 8.2 Prohibited/Restricted Burning Periods

**Motion:** That the Restricted Burning Period will commence on Tuesday 16 September 2025, and will continue until Friday 31 October 2025 and from Tuesday 17 February 2026 until Monday 16 March 2026 (permits required); and

The Prohibited Burning Period will commence on Saturday, 1 November 2025, and will continue until Monday, 16 February 2026 (no burning).

**Moved: L Growden**

**Seconded: J Flockart**

### 8.3 ESL application

The 2025/26 LGGS application is due next week; if anyone needs funding for anything and they haven't already spoken to the ESO, they are to contact the ESO as soon as possible.

### 8.4 Training 2025

DFES have made August "Local Government Focus month" in their training calendar. Level 1 Incident Controller will be run twice in Merredin during August. It's recommended that anyone likely to be in charge at a Level 1 incident complete this course.

ESO displayed the DFES Bush Fire Brigades training matrix (**Attachment A**) and explained the changes to the introductory bushfire training courses.

*Action: ESO to request if one of the Level 1 Incident Controller courses be swapped out for another leadership course*

### 8.5 Vehicle servicing

Due to ongoing concerns regarding the quality of pump and firefighter servicing from our heavy vehicle service provider, the ESO has investigated alternative options, and received a recommendation from the DFES head of Country Fleet for a mobile mechanic. The mobile mechanic is based in Toodyay and services all of the fire appliances around the Northam/Toodyay area. He is happy to travel to Merredin and service the Shire's heavy firefighting appliances.

*Action: ESO to keep mechanical servicing with the current local service providers; to trial the mobile mechanic for servicing the pump and firefighting equipment on the heavy vehicles; to give the current light vehicle service provider the choice to retain servicing of pump and firefighting equipment.*

## **8.6 Updates from DOAC**

A Bushfire Warning Triggers flow chart (**Attachment B**) was distributed to assist with decisions to put warnings in place.

## **8.7 Bushfire Operating Procedures – review**

Bushfire Operating Procedures will be updated to reflect the new process for electing Chief and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers, but no other updates were requested.

## **8.8 General reminders**

Brigades were reminded to communicate appropriately with ComCen to advise of brigade movements and incident conditions; to complete their incident reports; and to continue wearing appropriate PPE.

## **8.9 Other business**

- 8.9.1 John Flockart – John thanked everyone he had worked with over his years of firefighting in Merredin.
- 8.9.2 Glenn Crees – Chief and Deputy Chief get a lot of flack from calling Harvest Bans early. They're put in place for everyone's safety, please show understanding.
- 8.9.3 Sheree Lowe – This year's WAFES State Conference will also be the AFAC conference. AFAC is always a great conference, and brigades are strongly encouraged to send leaders (or up and coming leaders). All brigades are allocated 2 attendees, and travel, accommodation and food is paid for by DFES.

## **9.0 Next Meeting**

Schedule of Meetings:

Pre-season - Fire Control Officers 2025	October 2025
Bush Fire Control Officers AGM 2026	March 2026

## **10.0 Meeting Closure**

There was no further business and the Chair closed the meeting at 6.23pm and thanked all in attendance.