



**Shire of Merredin
Bush Fire Advisory Committee
Pre-Season Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, 13 October 2022 at 4.00 pm
Council Chambers, Shire of Merredin Administration Building, Merredin**

1.0 Attendance and Apologies

Delegates

Name	Organisation	Position
Stephen Crook	Collgar Brigade	Chief Bushfire Control Officer Chair
Michael Caughey	Nukarni/Nokanning Brigade	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer
Chris Barnett	Burracoppin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Nigel Edgecombe	Burracoppin South Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Stephen Higgins	Collgar Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Glenn Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Kael Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cam Gethin	Hines Hill Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
John Flockart	Korbelka Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Chris Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Sam Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	
Paul Wanless	Muntadgin Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cr Phil Van Der Merwe 4:52pm – 6:05pm	Shire of Merredin	

Officers

Name	Organisation	Position
Chloe Townsend	Shire of Merredin	A/Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Meg Wyatt	Shire of Merredin	Executive Officer

Apologies

Name	Organisation	Position
Sheree Lowe	Shire of Merredin	Emergency Services Officer
Lindon Mellor	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager of Engineering Services
Neil Smith	Nukarni/Nokanning Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Luke Growden	Hines Hill	
Darren Major	Muntadgin	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Phil Grey	Nukarni/Nokanning	
David Last	Collgar	

2.0 Official Opening

The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Njaki Njaki people of the Nyoongar Nation and paid his respects to Elders past, present and emerging. The Chair then welcomed those in attendance and declared the meeting open at 4.05pm.

3.0 Confirmation of Minutes

3.1 Confirmation of Minutes of meeting held on 14 October 2021

(Attachment 3.1A)

Recommendation: That the minutes of the Bushfire Advisory Committee Pre-season meeting held on 14 October 2021 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Moved: Glenn Crees

Seconded: Chris Hooper

4.0 Business arising

Nil

5.0 General Business

5.1 First Aid Kits

A/Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Chloe Townsend explained that it was time for all first aid kits and defibrillators to be serviced. It was stated that the first aid kits and defibrillators for the brigade units that are currently at Ross's Diesel will be collected by the Shire.

A reminder will be sent Monday lunch time to bring first aid kits and defibrillators in.

5.2 Changes to Fire Weather System

The Chair handed out information cards on the change to the fire weather system. He explained that they have added a no rating section. If any brigade members have already been on BOM site and looked that the Merredin ratings over the next few days it will be in the first two sections.

The information card has also given an information section on each of the sections of the ratings, what the fire behaviour will be in each of those sections and what you should do in those situations.

The benefit of the cards given out by the Chair is the QR section which will pull up a page on the internet for the ratings. Volunteers should save this page so it is brought up straight away. The DCBFCO suggested that everyone bring it up on their phones now to go through what they need to do.

The Chair went through each section on the webpage with the group.

K Crees - What is the average humidity?

S Crook – It goes between 10 and 20.

J Flockart – If you play around with the webpage and put 'Windspeed at 2m Mark' to 29, it automatically puts a figure in for the Windspeed. DFES are doing some work in the background to make sure figures are matching.

C Hooper – Is it just giving a higher reading than what we have been using?

J Flockart – Yes. There is a fault somewhere and they are working on it.

M Caughey – One good thing about this app is the 'my location' and you can put Merredin and it will give you some indication of what weather is coming.

J Flockart – DFES are hoping that with system there will be less total fire bans.

S Crook – The forecast section will be able to help with writing permits as well.

M Caughey – The technology should get better overtime.

J Flockart – The red line across the middle graph, that scale 37.4 is equivalent to 32 on the old scale.

M Caughey – I’m not sure if that is 100% true as we asked DFES and they haven’t give us an answer yet.

S Crook – For now we will still be writing permits until the end of October 2022, we just need to make it clear at the bottom that they cannot use it when the reading is in the high scale. When Phil gets here, we will see if VFRS require the permit section to extend by the 2 week block.

J Flockart – I would like to note that it is based on 4.5 tonne per hectare.

5.3 Changes to Harvest Ban Index

The Chair explained this has been a bit of a struggle as anyone that has tried to get more information on this have been provided a link and when they follow the link the link fails.

C Hooper – Will we use this through harvest?

S Crook – We will see what happens in the next week or so and wait for more information.

N Edgecombe - Is this just for us or state-wide?

C Townsend – It is Australia wide.

5.4 Contacting DFES Comm Cen

The Chair reminded all brigades that they must call DFES Comm Centre every time any member of the brigade truck turns out to a fire (whether it’s their fire or a neighbouring fire or a fire outside the Shire), a controlled burn or training exercise away from the station. Even when the unit is getting serviced.

C Hooper - We have asked in future that Ross’ Diesel let us know if they are waiting for stuff so we can take the truck back and it isn’t sitting at the workshop.

S Crook – I think that it is a Shire liability thing because once tyres are marked as being well over and they are sent back in action and something happens we are liable.

J Flockart - Can I move that the brigades change their timing of the annual servicing, and only one truck is serviced at a time and no other truck is brought in to be serviced until the other is completed.

Motion:

That the Shire start the servicing of brigade units in the first week of July, with one brigade unit being brought in at a time and no other brigade unit being brought in to be serviced until the other is completed.

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Chris Hooper

5.5 Fire Appliance Annual Services + Capital Fleet Assets

All fire appliances have had their annual service. Multiple issues were found while servicing the appliances however these have been or are being rectified.

The 2023-24 Capital Offer for Fleet Assets have been received from DFES. Some of the appliances will be needing replacement. The Shire would like to request replacements however there are 4 different types to choose from. The Shire would like to get the brigades that appliances need replacing preference for which type they would like.

The Chair went through the Capital Offer for Fleet Assets and discussed what each brigade needed.

It was decided that the Shire would request a 4.4 Broadacre for Collgar for 23/24 and a 4.4 Broadacre for Korbelka for 27/28.

DFES have advised that they are hoping to deliver the Hines Hill unit in June 2023.

M Caughey - Suggest we have a discussion later in the meeting to decide which type of truck Collgar and Korbelka get.

S Crook – I think we should choose now as it is due tomorrow.

It was decided that the Tatra would be chosen for each 4.4 Broadacre, both Collgar and Korbelka would get a Tatra 4.4 single cab. After the meeting Kael Crees requested that Collgar get the Isuzu instead of the Tatra.

The Chair requested the Chief Executive Officer put a letter in with the submission, and explain that it is costing the Shire money and it is not currently deployable.

Phil Van Der Merwe entered the meeting at 4:52pm.

5.6 Fire Reports

The Chair reminded all brigades that reports must be completed by every brigade that turns out to a fire. Doesn't matter if you're helping a neighbouring brigade, or if the fire is outside of the Shire.

The Chair asked if anyone had been to any fire incidents except for Hines Hill.

The Chair asked Phil Van Der Merwe to give a run down of what they had to deal with during the traffic crash.

P Van Der Merwe – We had an orange truck catch on fire, and the fire was going across the road. There was 1 Police truck, we had one fire truck, the Hines Hill truck was there, and Kellerberrin came from the other way. The Police said they needed a loader to clean it up, however they didn't want to pay for it. We are needing to find someone to pay for the loader and Main Roads won't pay for it. When it comes to a fire I can't authorise a loader, on that night we got the insurance to authorise the loader so we could clean the crash up off the road. It has gotten a bit harder then just telling the Police we need a loader, Main Roads ended up authorising the loader, it isn't just as easy as getting someone to bring their loader out as they might not get paid for it. We need to be careful of how we get things authorised. We can easily use the Shire as it is easy for them to get money back from Main Roads. Now Main Roads is saying we have authority to close the road but don't have authority to open the road.

S Crook - We got the call at 9:15am the latest and we left at 2:15pm and Main Roads turned up at 2:30pm.

P Van Der Merwe – The problem we get when we block the highway for too long is cars and trucks trying to find alternative routes. What we have decided is it is a Police issue to block and unblock the roads, we won't close the road we will just block it unless the road is completely damaged then the Police have to stay. If it is a traffic issue then it is Police, if it is traffic with fire it is still Police and then us for combat. If it was hazmat with a crash,

police are in charge as it is traffic. We will call out Main Roads at the same time we get the call from COMCEN.

5.7 Importance of PPE

The Chair reminded all brigades about importance of wearing PPE. Any new members that require PPE issued, or any old members who need PPE replacing can come into the Shire and be issued with PPE from the store.

5.8 Controlled Burns – Insurance

The Chair advised that if any brigades want to undertake controlled burns as a favour or fundraising exercise for a neighbour, or as a training exercise for new members, please ensure the Captain contacts the Shire. If they get the approval of the Shire first, then the appliance and crew are covered under insurance; if they don't loop the Shire in, they're not covered.

J Flockart – For everyone's information, it doesn't happen here much but does happen in other areas, if you help out on a burn you cannot accept any type of payment, however you can charge but you need to do it through the Shire and they then reimburse the brigade.

5.9 Membership Lists

Current membership lists were distributed to brigade Captains to be updated and returned.

5.10 Vehicle Identifier Stickers

Attachment 5.7A – Guidelines for Operating Private Equipment at Fires

Attachment 5.7B – Vehicle Identifier Fire Response Application

Attachment 5.7C – Vehicle Identifier Sticker Register

The current stickers that are on vehicles are out of date and new stickers are available to be ordered. The stickers haven't been ordered yet as each volunteer wanting a sticker/need a sticker needs to complete the application form and we will need to fill out the sticker register. Forms were handed out to everyone to fill out.

5.11 Review of Bushfire Operating Procedures

Attachment 5.8A – Bushfire Operating Procedures

The Chair asked if everyone was happy to leave it to himself and Mick to go through it and then get back to everyone with notes.

S Crook – I believe it will be updated with the new fire danger rating system

J Flockart – I would like to suggest that Stephen gets a copy of the template, so if there were discussion notes can be made.

The Chair asked if everyone can read through it and then get back with any notes they may have.

5.12 Fire Fighting Foam

The Shire has 4 drums of foam for each brigade. The Chair suggested anyone that is dropping off their first aid kit on Monday they collect 4 drums of foam for their brigade.

C Gethin - Does it go off?

P Van Der Merwe - Yes it can. I suggest you do a drill with your brigade to check the foam and keep it out of the sun.

5.13 Washing of PPE

P Van Der Merwe – You can wash it just don't put soap with it. If you come to one of our call outs where you get covered in stuff do not wash it in your washing machine, it will wreck your washing machine. When we go to a mat truck fire all our gear goes in a box and taken to Perth to get dry cleaned.

S Crook – The washer dryer place in town has just opened up, maybe they would be approachable for this.

5.14 Nominations for FCOs

S Crook – We have had a number of FCOs retire, and training has taken place for other volunteers. If anyone would like to nominate someone to be a FCO.

K Crees – Collgar would like to nominate David Last.

C Gethin – Hines Hill would like to nominate Luke Growden and Kieran Hardy.

J Flockart – Korbalka would like to nominate Sam Hooper and remove John Goodier

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Nigel Edgecombe

5.15 Training

The Chair advised that there is a half day course that DFES are talking to Sheree about running the course. It is a Fire Awareness course for farm workers, and seasonal workers. They can do this course and then corporate farm investor groups who are putting a stop to them fighting fires can allow them to be on the fire ground to help fight fires. We are unsure if it gives them a DFES ID but it gives them a certificate.

M Caughey – They are not allowed to operate DFES appliances. It would be great for them to do it. We are hoping it will occur close to harvest or by the end of harvest when the workers are here. We will probably have one in Nungarin and one in Merredin at this stage.

S Crook – We will keep you updated on this.

5.16 Around the Table

M Caughey – Can I be added to everyone's WhatsApp groups. There have been a couple times when I have tried to contact brigades but haven't been able to. I went to the DFES conference this year, every brigade is allowed to take 2 people each year. I found it quite good and there were some great speakers, if you go I think it would be great to get a few people to go down it would be worthwhile. I chose to meet with the Commissioner and Minister for Emergency Services, you got 15 minutes with each of them, I spoke about the new WHS laws and the concerns. The conference is for all emergency services not just fire.

G Crees – We have changed our Captain, it is still listed as Steve Higgins but he left a year ago.

N Edgecombe – We haven't had our meeting yet, nothing to report. I have issued 1 burning permit and the fast attack unit is going well.

C Barnett – Nil. Will have to have our meeting in a week or so. We will need some new uniforms as well.

K Crees – Wanted to bring up the possible replacement of our shed, is that in the pipeline? We have also got a new 50,000L tank.

G Crees – We recognised the passing of George Giraudo, he was our longest serving member.

P Wanless – Our meeting is next Thursday.

C Hooper – Korbalka has their meeting tonight and I have issued 3 permits.

P Van Der Merwe – If one brigade is getting a certain camlock fitting then all brigades should order the same so that they fit all.

S Crook – We need to locate the key for the standpipe in Burracoppin.

K Crees – Our fuel card didn't work when I tried to use it the other day.

C Townsend – Could all brigades please make sure they provide receipts when they get fuel.

P Van Der Merwe – An easy way of providing the receipts for fuel is taking a photo of the receipt and sending it through to Chloe.

J Flockart – It is also important that brigades take a photo before you take water from a standpipe and after.

P Van Der Merwe – When a volunteer has passed I found the families really appreciate receiving their service medals. It may be nice to organise for the family to receive George's service medal at a Council meeting or at the Australia Day presentations. In regards to the cleaning of gear, I'd advise volunteers not to get around in dirty tunics, make sure it is clean, if you have just been to a stubble fire it is okay to go in the machine, it is mainly when you go out to one of our fires, or a header or truck fire bring it in to get cleaned. When you get them cleaned you could use that to get spare sets, when you hand it in then get a new set. We burnt Tamma Park the other week, still green underneath, I think we need to extend and give a weeks' notice to extend.

S Crook – We can't actually extend only for VFRS in the town boundary, once it is approved by Shire it is approved for everyone. We just state once it is done that we let everyone know not to do permits.

S Crook - We will put a request to the Shire to extend the restricted period in to the two week block of the prohibited period.

P Van Der Merwe – On behalf of Shire I would like to thank everyone, the Shire still needs everyone, and you are here to protect the community, you do a lot more than just protect paddocks and farms. From the Shire side of things and Councillors thank you heaps, we have your back and we are hopefully getting things back on track and want to help you all that's why we have decided to keep Sheree's position. Any dramas at all come and give us a call, we are here to back you.

S Crook – The Volunteer Association AGM is on Saturday, Dave Gossage sent an email out to all volunteers to submit our support or numbers of having the Volunteer Association. I think the Association is important and we need a Volunteer Association body.

J Flockart – I will do that if you would like. Just a quick background, the Volunteer Association represents every volunteer in the state, their AGM is on Saturday and if you would like to go it is in Wagin. Tonight, every volunteer in the Shire should get the membership form and sign up, if you appoint a proxy from the brigade then they get numbers. Stephen should have a contact email that he can forward you, I just ask that someone from each brigade signs off on that proxy.

J Flockart - Next Thursday in Quairading at 6pm there is a seasonal update, DFES are going to do a regional update, if anyone is interested in going. They are hoping CBFCOs and DCBFCOs will go to that.

S Crook – They are running one in Koorda as well.

J Flockart – There is a move afoot to bring water bombers further out into the region to help during summer. Slowly but surely starting to put more resources on the ground in the Wheatbelt region, they have been having updates with the Chiefs and Deputies when the weather is bad. They have said as soon as you have a fire to put out the word and let them know, do not wait until the fire gets bad, the sooner they get intel the sooner they can start dispatching people and resources. We have a new super Damian Pumphrey, he is a hands on bloke and is trying to get out to the regions to meet with people.

P Van Der Merwe – Your Association is really important, they are the ones that will stick up for you. Support them where you can, if you aren't getting the trucks etc go through your Association if you can't get answers.

6.0 Next Meeting

To be advised.

7.0 Close

There being no further business, the Chair thanked those in attendance and declared the meeting closed at 6:05pm