

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

**Thursday, 15 October 2020 at 4.00 pm
 Commercial Hotel, Merredin**

1.0 Attendance and Apologies

Delegates

Name	Organisation	Position
Stephen Crook	Collgar Brigade	Chief Bushfire Control Officer Chair
John Flockart	Korbelka Brigade	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer
David Beck (late)	South Burracoppin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Michael Caughey	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Darren Major	Muntadgin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Paul Wanless	Muntadgin Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Glenn Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cam Gethin (late)	Hines Hill Brigade	Captain
Chris Barnett	Burracoppin Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Chris Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
John Goodier	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Neil Smith	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Nigel Edgecombe	South Burracoppin Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cr Phil Van Der Merwe	Shire of Merredin	

Officers

Name	Organisation	Position
Andrina Prnich	Shire of Merredin	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Calvin Shotter	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager of Engineering Services
Stacey Jaskiewicz	Shire of Merredin	Ranger

Apologies

Name	Organisation	Position
Cr Julie Flockart	Shire of Merredin	President
Cr Mal Willis	Shire of Merredin	Deputy President
Cr Romolo Patroni	Shire of Merredin	Councillor
Joe Alvaro	Nukarni/Nokanning Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Luke Growden	Hines Hill Brigade	

2.0 Official Opening

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 4:00 pm and welcomed all in attendance.

3.0 Confirmation of Minutes

3.1 Confirmation of Minutes of meeting held on 18 October 2018 (Attachment 1)

Recommendation: That the minutes of the Bushfire Advisory Committee Pre-season meeting held on 18 October 2018 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

The Chair read the Minutes from the previous Bushfire Advisory Committee Meeting held in 2019.

Noted

4.0 General Business

The Chair addressed the attendees with a pre-season concerns and issues for consideration.

4.1 Re-establishment of Merredin Bushfire Brigade

Discussion raised on the possibility of re-establishing a Merredin Bush Fire brigade to provide more support to the VFRS.

A Motion was put forward and will be investigated by the Ranger before being put forward to the Shire of Merredin Council for further consideration.

It was Moved by John Flockart and Seconded by Glenn Creeves that the Merredin Townsite Bush Fire Brigade be re-established.

Carried

4.2 Report Brigade preparedness

a Member callout/SMS/WhatsApp

The Chair advised that there were 16 fire related incidents requiring call outs during the 2019/20 fire season. The Chair requested that each brigade ensure all their new and current members have been added to all contact channels. Attendees discussed the importance of fire vehicles officially contacting DFES run COMCEN (on 1800 198 140) before leaving the fire station for any call outs. COMCEN are able to monitor the location of the fire vehicles and can provide assistance in the instance of an emergency situation.

b Unit service/operation: Preseason vehicle checks

The Chair was advised that all brigade vehicles have recently been serviced, though the Ranger advised there are some ongoing issues with the setup of the Nukarni/Nokaning vehicle including blocked foam pumps which the Captain of the VFRS, Phil Van Der Merwe has offered to assist with fixing.

c Water supplies

The Chair discussed issues regarding low water levels in local dams.

The Shire is to research appropriate funding for a mapping system to be set up and tags to be placed next to the relevant property's emergency services road number or on the road gate to advise if there are private water sources available on the property in the event of a bush fire emergency. Owners will be compensated by the Shire for the water usage.

The Shire has applied for a grant for funding from DFES for a new water tank to be placed within the Shire. This grant does not cover repairs for existing tanks, though it was noted that there are several older tanks that require maintenance and repairs. Particular focus required in the north-west of the Shire.

Muntadgin reported that the taps need to be check over at their tank.

The Chair and Cr Van Der Merwe met with the new managers of the Solar Farm to determine what the Shire requires regarding fire mitigation and the use of the Solar Farms water tanks.

d PPE levels

The Ranger advised that new uniforms have been issued to all volunteers who have requested them and encouraged anyone without a uniform or whose uniform is over five years old to request one. There are more uniforms that need to be issued to members of the Muntadgin Brigade. Cr Van Der Merwe raised the matter of ensuring there are sufficient levels of fire foam on board fire vehicles and to take caution when flushing the fire foam pumps as the chemicals are dangerous to breath in.

4.3 Brigade/Shire/Weather Officer contacts

Some Fire Weather Officers were having issues with electronic humidity sensors which is with the Merredin and Districts Farm Improvement Group (MADFIG) and have now been replaced. To ensure the process is more efficient going forward there is potential for the Fire Weather Officers to form their own WhatsApp group.

4.4 Restricted Period dates

The Chair advised that DFES has issued a statement advising that due to severely elevated fuel and soil dryness levels and an increased risk, the Goldfield/Midlands region commenced its high threat season on 15 October.

The restricted burning period dates which have been set was raised. There is an option to extend the dates out by a further two weeks should the need arise (concerns around fire mitigation works to be carried out by the Volunteer Fire and

Rescue Service). This would be purely for outstanding Brigade Hazard Reduction Burns and not for general public.

4.5 Introduction/induction of new Fire Control Officer's

N/A

4.6 Interpretation of Firebreak Orders (As sent out with rates notice)

The Chair advised that where the land is greater than 400 hectares, the property requires a three-metre fire break clear of any flammable materials. This takes effect as of 1 November 2020 through to 16 March 2021.

The Ranger will soon begin conducting firebreak inspections on all townsite properties within the Shire, request assistance from Fire Control Officer where possible. Fire Control Officers to inspect all rural properties however, if assistance needed, the Ranger can attend or manage any as requested. Any properties that breach the fire break order will be recorded by the Shire and the owner will be issued with a warning letter followed by an infringement if the issue has not been rectified within 14 days.

4.7 Upcoming Training

The Ranger requested Fire Control Officers go back to their brigade and confirm future training session date opportunities that will avoid any major conflicts.

4.8 Completion of Incident Reports

The Chair requested that each brigade ensure their incident reports are accurate and submitted in a timely manner.

4.9 Standard of dress for attendance to any incident must be in accordance with regulations

The Chair discussed the need to ensure all volunteers attending any fire call outs are dressed in the required supplied uniforms to ensure they are covered by insurance.

4.10 Date for Fire Break Inspections

The Chair discussed reviewing the dates for the 2021/22 fire break inspections and the possibility of holding the inspections two weeks earlier. This option will need to be brought to the 2021 Bush Fire Advisory Committee AGM for consideration.

5.0 Next Meeting

The next Pre-Season Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting will be held at the Burracoppin Hall on a date to be confirmed.

6.0 Close

There was no further business and the Chair closed the meeting at 6:20 pm thanking all in attendance.