



GREAT EASTERN DISTRICT OPERATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES **DRAFT**

Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue Station Monday 7th September 2020

The meeting was declared open at 1230 hours by the
Chairman, Wayne Della Bosca

1 Record of Attendance

Phillip Hay	Executive Officer	DFES
Wayne Della Bosca	Chair - Outgoing	Shire of Yilgarn
John Flockart	DCBFCO	Shire of Merredin
Graeme Keals	Regional Fire Manager	DFCA
Kelvin Tiller		Shire of Kellerberrin
Simon Bell	CESM/ CBFCO	Shires of Tammin & Kellerberrin
Stephen Crook	CBFCO	Shire of Merredin
Alan O'Toole	CEO	Shire of Bruce Rock
Jack Walker	EM Manager	Shire of Mt Marshall
Alan Nicholson	DCBFCO	Shire of Yilgarn
Ron Burro	CBFCO	Shire of Yilgarn
Grayson Hindmarsh		Shire of Yilgarn
Andrae Moore	Minute Secretary	DFES
Russell Wells	Superintendent	DFES – Bushfire Centre of Excellence
Rick Curtis	Assistant Commissioner	DFES – Learning and Development
Tracy McBride	VMSO	DFES
Jeremy Willis	AO Central Wheatbelt	DFES
Gary Rowles	BRMO	DFES

Apologies

Antony Sadler	Superintendent	DFES- Goldfields Midlands
Andrina Prnich	D/CEO	Shire of Merredin
Murray Dixon	CBFCO	Shire of Narembeen
Justin Corrigan	AO Lower Wheatbelt	DFES
Ian Dalton		Shire of Bruce Rock
Tony Crooks		Shire of Bruce Rock
Geoff Ryan	CBFCO	Shire of Kellerberrin
Damian Tomas		Shire of Mt Marshall

Wayne Della Bosca thank the Committee, Administration Support and DFES for all their support over the years. Couldn't run these meetings without your support.



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- 1.2 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair
Nominations received for Chair from
- Murray Dixon (via Email)
 - John Flockart (nominated by Ron Burro).
- Votes were taken by show of hands (nominees left the room)
John Flockart was elected as new chair by majority 6votes to Nil

John Flockart took over as Chair of the meeting. John thanks Wayne for his dedicated 5 years as chair of this committee and understands he is now President of the shire of Yilgarn which will give him lots of adventures and wishes him well in this role.

Nominations for the Deputy Chair received from

- Murray Dixon (via Email)
- Ron Burro (nominated by Stephen Crook)

Votes were taken by show of hands (nominees left the room)
Ron Burro was elected as new chair by majority 6 votes to Nil

2 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday the 9th September 2019 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Moved: Jack Walker
Seconded: Stephen Crook
All in Favour

3 Business Arising from Previous Minutes - NIL

4 Action List - NIL

5 Correspondence –

5.1 Correspondence In

- Requests to attend and present at this meeting from AC Learning and Development – Rick Curtis and also the Bushfire Centre of Excellence.
- BOC Communique and report from representative, Murray Dixon

5.2 Correspondence Out

- BOC Communique to all members for review before today's meeting.



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6 Matters arising from the Correspondence – NIL

7 Submitted Agenda Item

7.1 Volunteer Management Support Officer – Tracy McBride introduced her role to the committee.

- Here to Assist Brigades and Units in improving administrative processes and procedures
- Work with BFB, VFRS, SES, VFES across the region
- Assist Strategic Volunteering and Youth Services with roll out of initiatives
- Individual projects as required
- Works within existing chain of command
- Works with Brigades and Units to problem solve admin issues
- Links to other DFES branches
- Current Projects include Pre-Season Deployment processes, Review of Membership application forms and a regional recruitment plan.
- Always available to assist – If you aren't sure if I can assist, please ask. If Tracy can't help, she will find out who can.
- vmso.goldfieldsmidlands@dfes.wa.gov.au
tracy.mcbride@dfes.wa.gov.au
9690 2306 or 0427 498 260

7.2 AC Learning and Development – Mr Rick Curtis

Thanked John for allowing him to attend. Thanked and congratulated Wayne Della Bosca for his service and congratulated John Flockart and Ron Burro on their new appointments

1. Looking at the methodology of the way DFES conducts training.
* What is your view on online/ modular training systems? Would they work with your volunteers in this region? Realise that one size does not fit all and need to be more flexible.
Kelvin Tiller – Training needs to be short and concise. 1 day. Online might be possible but face-to-face most likely as the older members won't do online. Younger might but best if both possible in the future.
Stephen Crook – The shorter courses are the better. New Younger farmers will like online for some of it and then come together to do the practical elements.
Rick Curtis – agreed. They are looking to make training more practical based and less theory. BFB members tend to be hands on learners.
2. Leadership Development – DFES wants to support Senior Volunteers (Chiefs FCOs Captains etc) in being better Senior Volunteers. Do you think there is a place for training on people management?
* Do you think there is a place for a pathway/ training for volunteers that want to progress through to become DFES Staff in the Rural or Natural Hazard environment?
Wayne Della Bosca - Definitely on the right track. Great way to get new corporate staff involved.



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Phil Hay – He had to work hard to get from BFB member to CESM to DFES Staff. He was lucky to have mentors for his development. A program would be great to assist people through.

* Is there an appetite for learning about people management?

Ron Burro – Not everyone can be a leader – if you don't have it, you won't get it.

3. Ease of using the Hub/ eAcademy – Would cheats or tutorials be helpful to using the system?

Ron Burro and John Flockart think it will.

John Flockart – Finds eAcademy frustrating to use. Not intuitive to use. Needs to be easier to use when it isn't something that is used all the time. If a member has a bad experience that won't go back.

Another change is that the Academy staff are trying to get out into the regions. The offer is there of anyone from a region, that may be visiting Perth for any reason, to pop into the academy in Forrestfield and say hello and have a look around.

7.3 Bushfire Centre of Excellence Update – Russell Wells

- New Australian Fire Danger Rating system is being developed. 6 years ago, it was decided a change was needed nationally. The new system is to be implemented by June 2022. The new system will use 8 fuel types for its calculation as opposed to the 2 it currently uses. It will have a fuel state editor which means it can be updated to reflect pre or post-harvest etc.

Ron Burro – 32 and above means a HVMB during a TFB. Will this change this.

- 4 groups are currently working on different sections, one of this is the legislative side and they are considering what it all means for HVMB etc.

John Flockart – Automated weather stations – will these be considered? BOM are involved currently but Russell wasn't sure if the DPIRD ones were. Phil Hay says they aren't currently but are being looked at if they should be including. DFES supports that they do. Private data could possibly be used also.

Alan Nicholson – Will an app be available for this?

Russel – Yes the Fire Danger Rating system does come with an app. The Emergency WA site is due to be redone so this may also go to an app.

Wayne Della Bosca – Do you believe there will be more or less TFBs with this? – Less hopefully. More accurate readings and taking harvest etc into account should mean less TFBs. Less restrictions for no purpose.

- There is a new training advisory group being developed and representatives are requested from each DOAC/ROAC

Phil Hay said he will email everyone with the description of the Group and what will be required. Nominations to be into him by end of October and then a vote can be held via email.

8 Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades of WA (Inc) – Dave Gossage

APOLOGY from Dave Gossage – report attached



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9 P & W Report – Graeme Keals

Achieved last meeting:

- **Burning** – Late start to the season in autumn due to dry conditions.
 - Completed Mount Hampton burn – 7km buffer across the north of the reserve.
 - Meranda North road burn commenced – 2 km of buffer completed.
- **Fire Access Tracks**
 - 200km of fire access tracks maintained in the Walyahmoning Rock area. This was mostly funded through the MAF mitigation funding.
 - 26km of Fire Access Tracks upgraded in the Chiddarcooping Nature Reserve.
- **Choper Rolling Program**
 - 70km of 50m wide buffer created using a chopper roller. This was completed from Parker range road to 17km south of King Ingram road. This was done along Emu Fence road and around private property to the east of this road.
- **Fires**
 - Busy season last season with 3 times the fires attended compare to most years. About 550,000ha burnt in the fires we attended. The fires in the Forrestania area contributing most of that area.

Upcoming Program

- **Burning**
 - Finish Walyahmoning burn - 6km of buffer burn.
 - Meranda North Road – 18km of scrub rolled buffer to burn.
 - Yellowdine – 7km of buffer to burn if sufficient fuel to carry fire.
 - Charles Gardner Nature reserve. 216ha burn to help to regenerate the reserve's species and provide a fuel reduced area so the whole reserve doesn't burn in one fire event.
- **Fire Access Tracks**
 - Chiddarcooping Nature Reserve – Finish last 17km of track upgrade.
 - Charles Gardner – 10km of track upgrade.
 - Yellowdine UCL - 141km of track upgrade and maintenance. (R for R MAF Funded)
 - Skeleton Rock UCL – 58km of track maintenance. (R for R MAF Funded)
- **Scrub Rolling**
 - Yellowdine North of the GE highway – 18km (R for R MAF Funded)
 - Skeleton Rock – 56km (R for R MAF Funded)
 - Charles Gardner NR – 10km



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Note: Quite a bit of the above work is proposed to be funded using R for R MAF grant money, which has not been approved yet. So, the program could be reduced. Most likely the Skeleton Rock work.

Contact for our Duty Officer is 9881 9200 all hours.

10 Local Government Reports

Shire of Bruce Rock – Alan O’Toole

- Trying to organise some more training – FCO course particularly
- Will be issuing infringements this year for Firebreaks

Shire of Kellerberrin – Kelvin Tiller

- 8 fires – mainly lightning strikes but also 1 header fire, 1 burnt out car and 1 yard burn that got out of hand.
- Training after harvest
- Simon Bell – 3 Bushfire sheds have been approved and are currently going to tender.

Shire of Merredin – Steve Crook

- Above average fuel loads
- Below average Rainfall
- 3 incidents – Controlled burn escaped and A housefire in Merredin jointly with Kellerberrin and Bruce Rock
- LEMC – Yvette Grigg from DFES gave them some refresher training in Emergency management which was fantastic
- Hopefully having some FCO training soon
- Fuel cards are being sorted by the Ranger, Stacey.
- AEDs – Stacey is looking into the training for these
- Still waiting on the Hines Hill 2.4
- All appliances are serviced ready to go for the season

Shire of Mount Marshall – Jack Walker

- Should have an above average harvest
- All fire appliances are booked in for servicing
- 4.4 for Welbungin
- Gabbin hopefully also receiving an upgrade to a 4.4
- 9 FCOs have been appointed this year – Training completed by Simon and Daniel
- 6 AEDs in the office waiting for someone to provide training and tell them what to do with them. Phil hay advised there is one for each vehicle and then a training AED. Phil will organise for Daniel Hendriksen to provide the training.
- Beacon VFES facility upgrade has begun. Expensive exercise - \$800,000



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- Jack Walker is retiring from the shire as at 3-th October 2020, so this is his last meeting. Thank you to all the committee and DFES staff from all over the years, for their help.

Shire of Yilgarn – Alan Nicholson

- Been busy – A lot of Lightning strike ignitions
- South of the Hwy – Average to above average rainfall. Pastures are light
- North of Hwy – Medium to average rainfall – Pastures are light to non existent
- Appliances are currently getting serviced
- Rebreathing serving – we need more notice in future, not the day of it happening – Phil Hay – DFE were not even aware of them but will take that back.
- Corporates are finally cooperating with Firebreaks now. Took 3 years to see a change. The only one still not complying is the Rail (ARC infrastructure) This year they are looking to infringe them if they don't comply
- Machine Supervision course on this Saturday.VFRS and BFB on it together

Shire of Tammin – Simon Bell

- Simon is still Chief. Hopefully there will be a new chief soon.
- Some members want to do the FCO course but don't have the prerequisites.
- BFAC meeting on the 16th September

11 Reports from DFES – Phil Hay – DO Avon

- Thanked Wayne for his time and effort as Chair of the this DOAC and to the community.
- Introduced the Bushfire Model (Scenario Playmat) Explained that 2 are available for each shire under LGGS. Encouraged to purchase for use by the Brigades
- RDC Presentation to the group – DFES RDC are there to help you. Please utilise them. We are not here to take over an incident from you, just assist where we can, while we can.
- Fuel loading – Natural vegetation is said to be as dry as it was in January last season, already.
- TFBS have already been in place in the Goldfields
- New 4.4 is being built now. DFES Goldfields Midlands have asked to have the first of Type to do a roadshow to our region.
- Jeremy Willis – As appliances are being serviced, he suggests you request the AVL also be upgraded. Please speak to your managers about organising this. It requires the vehicle to be outdoors for a certain amount of time and then the upgrade can be done remotely.



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- Gary Rowles -introduced tot eh group – New Bushfire Risk Management Officer for the region.

12 Late Items

- **Ron Burros** – eAcademy – Machine Supervision course – Staff a the shire need to do it but they can't as they don't have the Intro to Fire fighting Hyden Kulin fire last year – people there that have been working with machinery for a very long time – very competent and practised. Directed to Mr Curtis – Can we do an RPL for long term members that have the experience in machine supervision?
Rick Curtis – Agree and acknowledged the situation. If a course is being delivered by DFES then prerequisites are required. As a Local Government though, you can deliver training to who ever you want. It is done by you and therefore no Prerequisites are required.

A certificate of Attendance can be given to external applicants (Shire staff/ DBCA)

Phil Hay – RCC for intro to Firefighting and Fire Fighting is now available. It is a pretty easy process.

Paperwork gets completed by the Chief or captain.

Gets endorsed by the Manager and sent through. It does requirements like 'Minimum 3 incidents over a 3 year period'

13. OTHER BUSINESS

- John Flockart noted that the representation for the shires was not good – Please put it into your calendar early and work around it. It is a very important forum to have. We are part of something bigger and need to ensure we do our part.
- John Flockart thanked Jack walker for his service tot e community and the DOAC over many years.
- John Flockart also thanked Wayne Della Bosca, as outgoing Chair and Ron Burro for stepping up as Deputy Chair.
- John Flockart thanked DFES staff for their ongoing support.

Meeting closed 1420hrs

**Date for the next Merredin DOAC is Monday March 15th, 20210.
To be held at the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue Building.**



BUSHFIRE VOLUNTEERS

Issue: Report for DOAC/ROAC/BFAC meetings

Date: 7 September 2020

Sensitivity: Public

Notable issues since last meeting

Government and other stakeholders

Federal Government: Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

- The association was involved in discussions both at a State and Federal level about the Terms of Reference for a Commonwealth Royal Commission into bushfire.
- The Bushfire Volunteers formal submission covered the following key topics:
 - partisan politicisation of emergency services,
 - representation of and respect for ES Volunteers,
 - understanding the volunteer effort,
 - ensuring a sustainable workforce,
 - local resilience,
 - the United Firefighters Union,
 - AFAC,
 - the cost of bureaucracy,
 - the role of the Commonwealth in responding to emergencies,
 - conflicts of interest and other challenges in current incident review procedures, and
 - national training standards
- Our full submission is here: <https://www.bushfire.org.au/bushfire-volunteers-written-submission-to-the-2020-national-royal-commission/>
- The association was summonsed to appear as a witness on 3 July.

Federal and State Governments: Volunteer payment program

- The State Committee approved a policy last year to explain that the association does not support payments to Emergency Service Volunteers, but insists on compensation for any loss.
- The association met with the Premier and representatives of the Prime Minister to advocate for a policy of not making direct payments to volunteers, but to ensure neither volunteers or their employers (including farmers and self-employed volunteers) are not out of pocket for ordinary wages paid while the volunteer is responding to an emergency.

DFES: Fit-for-purpose vehicles

- The association is proud that after years of persistent lobbying, progress has been made toward building Fit-for-purpose vehicles for our service.
- We thank Commissioner Darren Klemm and Brad Delavale for their willingness to listen to the advice we have given for many years and work toward changing the status quo.

DFES: ESL Working Group

- The association has long advocated the need for the way ESL is spent to be completely transparent and more accessible to Bush Fire Brigades.



BUSHFIRE VOLUNTEERS

- One very big issue we had hoped to have resolved by now was to remove the “eligible items list” in the Local Government Grants manual because it creates the perception that only items on that list are available. Sadly, the LGGs Manual has not yet incorporated this change.
- We currently have 17 motions pending that will improve the situation for Bush Fire Brigades and Local Governments if supported.

DFES: ESL-funded Defibrillators on Bush Fire Appliances – Successful advocacy for common sense

- The association proposed more than a year ago that bushfire brigades should be able to access funding for AED’s from the ESL – just as Brigades from other services could.
- As a direct result, we achieved the very positive outcome of making AED’s for Bush Fire Brigades ESL funded.
- We thank Brad Delavale for listening to our advocacy and helping us correct this anomaly.

DFES: WAFES Conference 2020 – postponed until 2021, then reinstated with DFES only input

- DFES cancelled the WAFES Conference because of COVID-19 restrictions but recently reinstated it in a revised format.
- DFES has decided it will determine the program and deal directly with volunteers rather than through the various volunteer associations this year.

WALGA: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- We had a second meeting with WALGA last night where we progressed discussions to formalise a long-term engagement and consultation agreement between WALGA, Bushfire Volunteers and the SES Volunteers association.

Association news and updates

ConEx – the Bushfire Volunteers Convention and Exhibition: Trying to collaborate with DFES

- As part of our huge effort to radically increase the number and depth of direct services for our members and stakeholders, we have planned our first ever Convention/Exhibition specifically for Bush Fire Volunteers and the Local Government officers who support them in Collie in October.
- We have asked DFES to support the event by allowing Local Governments to claim ESL for volunteer costs (registration, travel, accommodation etc) just as DFES does for its volunteer conference.
- Details and the form to express your interest are available at: www.conex.org.au – please register and show your support for this very exciting event!

ES Volunteers Smartphone App – supporting our members and promoting volunteers

- A huge development since we last met is the launch of our smartphone app – ES Volunteers.
- The app is free to our members and their Local Governments and delivers three important things:
 - A effortless way for volunteers to record the time, type and location of volunteering. This provides valuable stats for Brigades and Local Governments that will help attract funding but also will give volunteers actual evidence if they ever need to make a health-related or workers compensation claim.
 - A virtual ID card that allows Brigade Captains to remotely disable the ID card of any volunteer that is no longer qualified to use it.



BUSHFIRE VOLUNTEERS

- A fantastic recognition feature that allows supportive businesses to offer special deals and discounts to essential service volunteers of their choice.
- Given that we have been constantly told to develop independent sources of income, we have built the app to be free for our members and deliver a steady income stream from other services.
- We asked DFES to collaborate to make it available for all their volunteers to no avail.
- Visit www.ESVolunteers.org.au for more info and sign up

Co-ordination of Coles gift cards – we are building opportunities for better community support

- We worked with Coles Group for a month or so late last year to distribute \$500 gift cards to all Bush Fire Brigades in WA.
- Importantly, we urged Coles to make their generous gift available to all emergency services.
- A number of WA Bush Fire Brigades still have not registered for their Gift Card – go to <https://www.bushfire.org.au/coles> now to claim it.

Volunteer Bushfire Games

- Bushfire Games were held in conjunction with the Mining Emergency Response Competition (MERC) on Langley Park in the Perth CBD for the first time in November last year.
- It was a very successful partnership and hence, was planned to take place again this year.
- COVID-19 restrictions delayed planning for the 2020 event and subsequently, the MERC team have recently advised this year will be a much smaller event with Bushfire Games re-joining in 2021.

Breaking Barriers for Women in the Bushfire Service research

- The association has secured a grant for research into the barriers that women face as volunteers.
- A project officer will be announced soon and they will be reaching out to women who have been, are or could be ES volunteers, partners of volunteers and others – please keep an eye open for this.

New Mental Health service coming soon – looking for a psychologist to review before launch

- The association is developing a new members service in the area of mental health and has put out a call for a psychologist who can review and provide guidance to ensure the tools and information is effective and sound – please spread the word and let us know of anyone you think could help.

Exciting new program to encourage innovation coming soon

- The association has developed an exciting new program to encourage innovation in partnership with a global leader – watch this space.

Association building capacity – enabling us to deliver more direct member services

- The association is committed to delivering more direct members services and is on the verge of announcing some very exciting plans and initiatives. Sign up to the newsletter to stay informed.
- We have recently appointed two full-time staff to deliver better support and engagement directly to our members. Alex and Sinead have hit the ground running and despite the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions, have created some awesome plans that will soon come to fruition for all.
- We are working hard to develop long-term income to enable the “back-end” work to be done – please be in touch if you know of a potential sponsor or partner.