

# Bush Fire Advisory Committee – Mullewa

## Meeting Minutes

<b>Meeting Name</b>	Mullewa BFAC Meeting	<b>Meeting No.</b>	1/ 2022
<b>Meeting Date</b>	27 January 2022		
<b>Meeting Time</b>	08:30 am		
<b>Meeting Location</b>	Chambers Room, Mullewa District Office		
<b>Attendees</b>	Cr Jerry Clune – Councillor (Chair) Cr Steve Cooper – Councillor Cr Tarleah Thomas – Councillor (via Teams) Cr Michael Librizzi – Councillor Brendan Weir – Tenindewa FCO Brett Steele – Mullewa South Captain/FCO Murray Preston – Casuarinas Captain/FCO Chris Lee – CGG Director Infrastructure Services Wayne Ellis – CGG Coordinator Emergency Management Murray Smith – CGG Emergency Operations Officer Selina Boryczewski – Secretariat	<b>By Invitation</b>	DBCA, DFES, VFRS
		<b>Late Apologies</b>	Peter Barnetson – Tenindewa FCO Kieran Mussen – DFES District Officer
		<b>Non Attendances</b>	Daniel Critch – Tenindewa Captain/FCO Vacant – Mullewa Central Captain/FCO Zac Grima – Tardun/Pindar Captain/FCO Tony Crudeli – Mullewa VFRS Captain Brodie Selby – DBCA District Fire Coordinator
		<b>Distribution</b>	Attendees, CGG Council

### 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Acting Chair opened the meeting at 8.32 am and welcomed attendees.

### 2. NOMINATION OF CHAIR (BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE)

**Motion by returning officer Wayne Ellis:** Recommendations for a new Chair for the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting.

**NOMINATION BY:** Cr Cooper  
**NOMINATED:** Cr Clune  
**SECONDED:** Cr Librizzi  
 (No further nominations)

### 3. REVIEW – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The City of Greater Geraldton is in the process of reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Bush Fire Advisory Committee (BFAC) Mullewa meeting to bring it up to current standards.

- The draft Terms of Reference will be circulated mid-February for the Committee's input and consultation before the next meeting in March. A timeframe will be given to review and provide feedback. Once everybody is in agreeance, the draft Terms of Reference will be tabled at the March 2022 meeting for approval.

*Action: The City is to circulate the draft Terms of Reference to the Committee. Committee members are to provide feedback within a timeframe.*

## **5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted.

**MOVED:** Brett Steele  
**SECONDED:** Murray Smith

## **6. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 6.1. Bush Fire Brigade Agreement– The City engaged consultants to undertake a local law review. The original local law was very old and had everything wrapped up into one. The review separated the administrative requirements from the original local law into one operational agreement that sets out how the brigades will function, sorting the “should dos” from the “have to dos”. It is fundamentally the same, just more user friendly. All of the agreements have been signed and received. No further action is required at this point.
- 6.2. Application for Mitigation Assistance Fund – A Bush Fire Risk Management Plan of the City identified large areas of State Government owned land (areas vested with the City) with vegetation near housing and infrastructure that, without action, would become a fire risk. The Mitigation Fund has allowed the City to carry out mitigation works such as slashing, mulching and widening of fire breaks in areas such as Strathalbyn, Mullewa, Drummonds and Cape Burney, where vegetation is close to residents.

The City was allocated \$334000 and approximately 70% through parcel three. This funding opportunity is open twice per year. The next application will be submitted in April 2022, in preparation for the next bush fire season.

## **7. KEY DISCUSSION POINTS**

### **7.1. WHS Legislation**

- The WHS legislation will now be enforced in March 2022.
- The new WHS legislation changes the definition of volunteers into employees meaning inductions, fitness for work, competencies and training etc., will be a requirement.
- The new WHS legislation also introduces the concept of industrial manslaughter.
- As these changes essentially double the City’s workforce, the City are currently working through their responsibilities, taking into account timing and cost.
- The City has offered training for Bush Fire Brigade volunteers before the WHS legislation comes into effect to ensure core competencies are up to date. The next round is in March 2022 with 12 spots available and five already registered.
- The City acknowledges that the training timing is not very convenient, but wants to provide the opportunity for volunteers to complete the training before the WHS legislation comes into place.
- DFES training is the standard. The minimum training requirement is 32-hour (two weekends) training. The requirement is the same for all Local Government areas.
- Rural Fire Awareness course for Farm Response Brigade (Brigades with no truck) is a six-hour course (guideline is a maximum of 15 attendees), however, is not yet accepted by DFES as the minimum standard.
- DFES currently has five trainers that are volunteers.
- DFES stipulates the training requirements, not the legislation.
- DFES does not recognise Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at the moment.

- Committee asked if experienced operators can be fast tracked or assessed on the job.
- Committee expressed concerns about getting volunteers to attend training on weekends. Weekdays may be a better option.
- The City has a responsibility to make sure that volunteers are best trained and medically fit to perform duties.
- Brigades considering handing the trucks back so they can just do the six-hour course.
- WALGA LGIS Midwest conference Tuesday 1 February 2002 to discuss the requirements.
- The City has attempted to gain insight from the local DFES Superintendent, WALGA and Deputy Commissioner with no result.
- Suggestion for a text message to volunteers regards training dates.
- Under the new WHS legislation, the definition of an officer is anyone that reports to a CEO, including Fire Control Officers. The CEO, as a person conducting a business or undertaking, is responsible for making sure we have the safety systems, HR and budget etc. for the implementation of the WHS legislation.
- The Director is responsible for making sure the WHS legislation is implemented. If a volunteer was to be injured, he is personally liable for \$5M and up to 20 years imprisonment and cannot be insured.
- The CEO and the Director are responsible to ensure that the systems and training are in place to ensure everyone can carry out their tasks safely.
- Under the new WHS legislation, farmers will also be liable if they send employees out to fight fires without the required training.

*Action: The City to talk to DFES about reducing the training to core operators instead of the whole brigade, as well as what they recommend as a minimum training requirement.*

*Action: Captains to encourage volunteers to attend the training before the WHS legislation is enforced for everybody's health, safety and wellbeing.*

*Action: Captains to advise the City of the dates they would like the weekday training.*

## **8. AGENCY AND BRIGADE REPORTS**

- 8.1. Chief Bush Fire Control Officer - Murray Smith
  - Total Fire Bans (TFB). Districts are to be reviewed in future but out of our control. Farmers are frustrated when there is a power outage, Western Power will not re-energise the lines if there is a TFB in place.
  - Reasonably incident free holiday period. Only one or two small fires.
  - Captains will receive emails regarding March training requirements.
- 8.2. Coordinator, Emergency Management – Wayne Ellis/Chris Lee
  - New WHS legislation.
  - Nothing else to note.
- 8.3. Department of Fire & Emergency Services
  - Nil as no representatives present.
- 8.4. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (P&W)
  - Nil as no representatives present.
- 8.5. Mullewa Central Bush Fire Brigade
  - Nil as no representatives present.

- 8.6. Mullewa South Bush Fire Brigade - Brett Steele
- Three fires, three days in a row during harvest, possibly caused by machinery. They were well attended and well ran. Nothing else to report.
- 8.7. Tenindewa Bush Fire Brigade - Brendan Weir
- Same as Mullewa South. At the first header fire, two tractors with ploughs were damaged. Fire was during harvest so everybody turned up. Headers weren't damaged.
- 8.8. Pindar/Tardun Bush Fire Brigade – Cr Tahlia Thomas
- Nothing to note.
- 8.9. Casuarinas Bush Fire Brigade - Murray Preston
- Six small fires and a big fire on Burma Road, a quiet year overall.

## **8 GENERAL BUSINESS**

- COVID vaccinations - As per current State health directives double vaccination is required by 31 January. No guidance on how that will be enforced. On the fire ground, DFES have been asking volunteers to provide vaccination paperwork through their hub.
- Restricted burning starts 15 February 2022.

*Action: Wayne to advise the committee of the Restricted Burning Permit end date.*

## **9 NEXT MEETING**

MARCH 2022 – To be scheduled

SEPTEMBER 2022 – To be scheduled

## **10 CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.37 am