

Your local voice

■ ■ ■ weston creek
■ ■ ■ community
■ ■ ■ council

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Minutes of General Meeting Wednesday 28 November 2018 Chapman Primary School Hall

Opening of Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7.42pm. The Chair, Tom Anderson, welcomed members and guests including Caroline Le Couteur and Paul Costigan

Apologies: Jeremy Hanson, Pat McGinn, Max Kwiatkowski, Janice Paull

105 people attended the meeting.

PRESENTATION

Are you bushfire ready?

Jason Sharples – University of New South Wales - Extreme and dynamic bushfire behaviour on Canberra's western edge

Ordinary Fire Behaviour



The colours are determined by mathematical formula.

Forest Fire Danger Index = Drought + Hot + Dry + Windy

Assumptions

- Rate of spread is determined by drought, hot, dry, windy, fuel and slope.
- The rate of spread doubles for each 10° of inclination (uphill).
- Different parts of a fire line do not influence each other.

This is valid for approximately 95% of fires but for critical modes of fire behaviour, this does not work.

Dynamic fire behaviour – these exhibit abrupt and significant changes in rate of spread and intensity.

- Junction fires
- Eruptive fire spread
- Vorticity driven lateral spread

Junction fire

- Where two fires join
- The point of intersection runs ahead really fast (from point to open area).
- These are driven by all flames leaning in on a spot fire and then two spot fires meet and get two junction fires.
- Pyroconvection is the buoyant measure of fire-heated air.

Eruptive fire spread

- Goes up a slope
- There is more air above than below.
- Small changes in slope make a big difference.
- Prone to happening on steep slopes and canyons.
- Fire doesn't behave in an ordinary manner.

Vorticity driven lateral spread (VLS)

- Fire can spread perpendicular to the wind, up and across, and spreads quickly

For this to occur

- Steepness of lee slope over 20°
- Aspect of lee slope in relation to wind speed – within 40° of the wind direction
- Wind speed >20kmh
- Fuel type/load – heavy fuels, mainly forest 15-20t/ha

Dynamic fire spread

- Can rapidly increase the expanse of the flaming zone and it is no longer an ordinary surface fire.
- This means that the fire releases significantly more power
- More power released from the fire results in violent pyroconvection.
- This leads to more erratic and unpredictable winds – mixing down of dry upper air
- Increased potential for ember transport
- Embers are the dominant bushfire attack mechanism.

Q. Is Weston Creek more vulnerable than the rest of Canberra?

A. Everywhere on the western edge has similar risk.

Q. What happened with the Queensland fires?

A. Heatwave combined with strong winds.

Q. Why do houses explode and trees stay there.

A. I don't know.

Q. Could it be because houses are solid structures and trees are narrow?

A. It depends on what is around.

Q. What are the dangers of radiant heat to people protecting houses?

A. Very high risk.

Q. In 2003 the fires came down the slopes rather than up. Why?

A. It depends on how mountains and hills affect the wind.

Q. What is an urban fire storm and why does this blast through?

A. A fire storm is not a natural disaster until it connects with an urban interface. It goes through in a slow even way.

Jeff Dowe – ACT Fire and Emergency Services - Planning and design for bushfire protection.
Bushfire protection measures

- water supplies and utilities
- landscaping around the house
- emergency management arrangements
- building construction and design
- asset protection zone – managed land
- access arrangements

New suburbs

- hazard assessment required for every development since 2003
- risk analysis to be undertaken
- prescribe asset protection zone
- Bushfire Attack Levels to be determined.

Q. Are these plans public?

A. Yes they are available from AVTPLA but only for new suburbs. The government is looking at making this necessary for knock down rebuilds in older suburbs.

Neil Wallis – ACT Fire and Rescue - Weston Creek is a primary asset interface

Know your bushfire risk

- ESA has published a map on their emergency service website
- Look at vegetation

Four simple steps

1. Discuss a bushfire plan
2. Prepare your home
3. Know the bushfire alert levels
4. Keep communication available – information numbers, website, apps

1. Stay or Go

- Know your risk relative to the conditions
- Know your capability to defend
- If you are staying make sure you are well prepared and really commit. Have the resources to defend the house. Make sure the hoses are long enough and that you have a proper water supply. When everyone turns the tap on at the same time, the water supply dwindles.
- If you are leaving know where, how and when. Determine what you need to take and leave early
- Always have a backup plan if it is too late to leave
- If you are not home, the roads may be closed and you can't get back. If there are vulnerable people in the house call 000 and let them know.

Q. Can you enforce an evacuation?

A. No – emergency services and the police will be too busy.

Q. Is there a register for vulnerable people?

A. It has been discussed but in practice, they are not kept up to date.

2. Prepare your property

- Most of the fire risk comes from your own yard
- The primary risk is ember penetration. They get into the house and then the fire goes out from the inside.

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- Treated pine timber decks are really bad.
- Clean your gutters out, remove dead vegetation and trim shrubs around the house.

3. Know the bushfire alerts

- Blue – Advice level – a fire has started but there are no problems
- Yellow – Watch and Act - heightened level of threat. Put in place your bushfire emergency plan, get things together, leave work and go home, go to a shopping centre – you don't have to go to an evacuation centre.
- Red – Emergency warning. You may be in danger – take action immediately.
- Fires always start blue and then go to yellow and then to red. However, rates of spread can be worse than expected and the fire will go straight to red. You may not have a lot of warning.
- If there is smoke in the area call 000.

Q. Are you ensuring that people aren't planting trees in fire breaks?

A. Land managers are keeping fire breaks clear. ACT Parks and Conservation keep grass and bush down.

Q. If you can't leave where do you go? Where can you find this out?

A. This varies a lot with the type of house – see the bushfire plan. Go to the opposite side of the house from the fire. Stay near an external door (not a bathroom in the middle of the home). There will be a period you can stay in the structure. The fire will go through in 15-20 minutes. You can die from radiant heat not just flames and smoke.

Q. What is the risk of oxygen depletion in houses?

A. It could be high. Staying home and defending your house is a risky option.

Q. What information has changed from command centres since 2003?

A. A lot of work has been done on community messaging. Text messages can be sent to phones that have recently pinged off mobile towers. Messages can be sent to landlines as well. These are a last resort. Do not wait for these warnings.

Q. Last time we were not given proper information. How has this changed?

A. There has been a huge culture shift. We are now giving much more and better information than before. Information is a top priority. Whole of Australia incident management systems have been developed.

Q. The bushfire pal does not mention the need to have phones charges, have transistors etc.

A. A really good point.

Q. In country Victoria they have signs saying this is a designated fire safety spot. Is there any consideration about doing that here?

A. Luckily in Canberra we have great access to safe places such as shopping centres. Tharwa and Uriara are more risky.

4. Community Emergency Information

- ESA website and Facebook page
- "Fires Near Me"
- 666 Radio
- Canberra Connect Ph.132281 for general information
- Always call 000 if there is an emergency.

Tony Wiggin – Community Fire Unit Coordinator (CFU) - What to do to prepare

1. Join a Community Fire Unit.

- You will be trained and issued with fire fighting gear to defend your home against ember attack. You will be able to organise skips to take away prunings etc from around houses.
- Join with other people in your area. There are five units in Chapman with 185

volunteers.

- Percy Crescent has five active members in their unit. (There were 25).
- Across the ACT there are 50 units strategically placed with 800 volunteers. These units are not stood up on a catastrophic day.
- CFU volunteer from audience. You will be given training on how to protect houses (wet them down early), getting out of the way of fire, don't get on top of roofs, leave and then come back to put out the small fires.
- You need to do one training session per year, 2 hours on line, 1 day practical and then you are assigned to a team.
- You need to have four people to arrive at the unit to commence when there is a fire event.

2. Precautions

- Install smoke alarms – the Fire Brigade will put them up for you. Test them monthly and change battery annually. Vacuum them if there is a lot of dust.
- Do not overload power boards.
- Clean the lint filter in your dryer.
- When storing electric blankets, roll them do not fold them.
- Home evacuations – have two points of evacuation and a meeting place.

Q. How do you organise skips?

A. Through your CFU

Website

www.esa.act.gov.au

Murrumbidgee MLA's – five minutes

Caroline Le Couteur

- Legislation to establish the ACT Integrity Commission should be passed on 28 November 2018. It will start around the second quarter 2019.
- The Canberra Times is full of stories about the changes to Compulsory Third Party saying that insurance companies are ripping us off and everyone will be worse off. The publicity is not right. I have not been lobbied by any insurance companies. There will be less need for lawyers as all medical costs will be covered for the first five years. This is an attempt to make things better for most people. It will be reviewed in three years.

Q. Is the Commission going to be called ACTIC?

A. ACT Integrity Commission

Q. Are judges going to be involved?

A. Not absolutely sure but the police won't be involved. The AFP issues are federal; government not ACT.

BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting of 31 October 2018

Motion: That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved as circulated.

Moved: Chris Wilson

Seconded: Rosemary Drabsch

Carried.

Business arising from the minutes of the meeting of 31 October 2018

- Nil

Treasurer's Report

- Main Account \$8138.94
- Fetherston Garden Account \$8929.44

Business arising from the Treasurer's Report

- Nil

Q. Have you considered having meetings here in the future?

A. The logistics are difficult. We have to get the key, set it up, pull it down and return the key. It is physically too hard. We will use it when we are expecting a lot of people to attend.

Bus Interchange in Weston

- There will be some work done in December/January
- The southern end of the car park – entrance closest to Brierley Street will be closed.
- The entry and exit will be changed.
- The carpark will be one way and an extra 26 carparks will be created.
- There will be new bus stops on either side of Parkinson Street.
- WCCC has asked for the 40kmh zone to be extended past the childcare centre.

Shops in Denman Prospect

- Will be opening in January

Meeting with Chris Steel

- Spoke about a community centre, Fetherston Gardens and the state of the public domain – pruning etc

Maximum dwelling unit numbers – CZ5 DAs

- This is an issue in Molonglo
- There are four developments that have allowed to build more than was agreed when land went on sale – some significantly over
- WCCC has done a submission.
- No community consultation is required. This was mentioned in the submission.

Enquiry into Libraries

- The report has come out saying there should be one in Weston Creek/Molonglo.

Walk in Centre

- This should be open in November 2019
- There will be other facilities not just doctors.

Q. Did you ask Chris Steel what is happening with the Weston Creek preschool site? (This was closed 12 months ok). The land should be given back to the Community

A. No but they are keeping it in abeyance. I will talk to him about it next time.

Q. What is happening with the old AFP site?

A. It is currently going through Estate Development Planning.

Q. Comment that the Fetherston Gardens Party was great.

A. We spent one and a half years budget on it.

The Chair wished everyone all the best for the festive season.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm

**Next Meeting Wednesday 27 February 2019
Raiders Club, Liardet Street Weston**