

Your local voice



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Minutes of General Meeting Wednesday 30 October 2019

Opening of Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7.35pm. The Chair, Tom Anderson, welcomed members and guests.

Apologies: Shelby Schofield, Mark Boast, Chris Wilson

PRESENTATIONS

ACT Police update on Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley – Sgt Simon Coady

- **Facts about ACT Policing**
 - They are part of Australian Federal Police – employed and trained by AFP
 - Supported by purchase agreement with ACT Government
 - 670 frontline officers
 - 200 unsworn staff (e.g. HR, finance)
 - 100 other “specialist” staff
- **Advantages of being part of AFP**
 - ACT Policing inherit the infrastructure and systems from AFP
 - Includes forensics and tactical response support
- **ACT Policing model**
 - More reactive today over being proactive unfortunately
 - Struggle for high-visibility public presence
 - Lack time, ability and resources to be more visible to prevent crime
- **Seeking funding from government for more members**
 - Increased funding supported by ACT government
 - Funding has been successfully petitioned
 - Will receive an additional \$33 million from ACT government
 - Equates to 60 new police over next 4 years
- **Outcome of extra funding:**
 - Funding will improve proactiveness of ACT police
 - Improve efficiency within ACT Policing
 - This will allow a gradual change as they ‘reinvent’ their approach to policing
 - Ultimately will improve community services
- **Offences common to Weston Creek/Molonglo**
 - Property offences
 - Break-ins
 - Vehicle break-ins
 - Property damage

- Anti-social behaviour in public spaces
- **Trends are noticeable:**
 - Downward trends in crime coincide with the arrest of individual/group responsible for a given type of crime
 - Shows trends in response of crime, rather than crime itself
 - Recurring crimes/reoffences also influence trends

Q: Do incidents reported by public go on crime statistics if they aren't followed up by police? Have seen a discrepancy in crime stats and crimes called in.

A: They only go on crime stats if crime has been recorded during police attendance. If no offence occurs, or lack of evidence/cooperation results in no arrests, then the crime is not added to stats.

Comments:

- Recent closure of government housing has moved low-socioeconomic residents to places like Coombs.
- We have seen an increase in crime in these areas since as crime as moved with them (not to imply all residents of public housing are criminals!).

Q: If there is movement of crime due to movement of public housing, is there been any increase in policing in these new areas?

A: There has been a change in crime mostly due to just increase in overall population. Crime has not significantly gone down in other areas and thus we cannot move police away from other areas to serve new ones. There are not enough resources and we are dependent on more funding from ACT government over redistribution of resources by ACT Policing.

Q: Decline in Neighbourhood watch? Is ACT Policing training new Neighbourhood Watch in new suburbs? What is the relationship between police and NHW?

A: Dedicated members of ACT Policing work with members of NHW. Not sure of any decline.

Comments:

- There are 4500 members of NHW in ACT.
- There is a move to community reporting crime to Facebook [FB] pages over NHW.
- People are staying within FB pages more, often not reporting to police.

Q: There has been a rise in bad traffic offences on John Gordon Drive (e.g. street racing). They are regular and noisy. What is ACT Policing doing about it?

A: We are aware of such activities and it is being worked on. We are trying to combat street racing. If ever you see street racing please notify police, give details, times, locations, numberplates ASAP.

Q: What is the future of police presence in Molonglo Valley?

A: There is talk of new stations to combat population growth. However, it isn't going to happen in the short term. Molonglo will remain to be covered by Woden Police. There are increasing numbers of calls to service and we are working on increasing the number of police in the area. Calls to service work via a triage system, and thus often the increasing numbers of petty crimes are set aside until more serious offences are dealt with, leading to longer response times.

There is "hope": changing their organisational structure with the aim of increase the number of frontline police to increase public visibility.

Q: You mentioned before that there are 670 police officers, how many are on at any one time?

A: In woden, 1 sergeant and a minimum of 6 officers, 2 response cars and 2 office staff per station per shift. Three shifts per day with an overlap of rosters during peak times.

Comments:

- Member concern regarding the lack of police at any given time per precinct.
- Would be very difficult to have any sort of visible police presence with so few police.

Q: Do police patrol shopping centres and what is their relationship with security personnel?

A: Security personnel have citizens power of arrest. They would follow a framework set out independently by their employers. They must call police ASAP after apprehending a criminal.

Q: How do police work with ACT Fire Services? Do you have plans for evacuating vulnerable people in the event of a major fire in the Molonglo Valley?

A: Short answer, yes. Follow up with Chris Condon of the ACTRFS. In such an event, police and fire services set up a multijurisdictional operations centre. Police *support* fire service response. ACT police may serve all ACT and occasionally NSW fire services.

- **Some crime statistics for Weston Creek/Molonglo Valley**

- Calls for service in WC/Molonglo are common and increasing
- 292 calls to service in October (not including Woden district which is covered by same police precinct)
- Not all calls are resultant of crimes
- Up from September (280 calls in same time frame)
- No. of burglaries are not increasing
 - 43 burglaries reported in October
 - 20 motor vehicle thefts
 - 70 reports of property damage
 - These numbers are not mutually exclusive and may refer to same event
- Often police know who is responsible for a crime
- Challenge is gathering sufficient evidence to put the criminal before a court.
- The ACT Policing website releases an annual report of crime statistics which is available to the public.

Comments:

- Police are responding to more than 9 calls a day.
- Please do not hesitate to contact the police.
- ACT Policing wants to work with the council to improve the safety of the region.

Q: ACT policing vs federal law regarding marijuana growing? Marijuana “worse than ice” on the poisons index. People who grow marijuana at home should be locked up.

A: A lot of what is said regarding marijuana is political commentary. ACT policing does not stand by the statement that “marijuana is worse than ice”. Legislation regarding marijuana does not come into effect until 2020. When that happens, ACT Policing will respond in line with ACT government legislation.

Presentation finished at 8:12pm.

ACT Rural Fire Service: Are you Bushfire Ready? – Christopher Condon

- Chris is a senior liaison officer at ACTRFS
- **Has everyone seen fire alert levels?**
 - Emergency warning – fire will impact people, need to act
 - Watch and Act – need to be aware of fire survival plans
 - General advice – keep an eye on the situation, develop fire survival plan
- **Fires Near Me phone app**
 - NSW and Australia wide versions
 - NSW version has more detail than the Australia wide version and receives more development updates

- All ACT fires to appear in NSW Fires Near Me app
- **Emergency Services Australia Incidents Map**
 - Denotes where ESA is currently responding
 - Will denote type of fire
 - Also shows motor vehicle accidents, house fires, responding paramedics
- **ACTRFS Operations in Weston Creek/Molonglo Valley**
 - Pierce's Creek fire last September
- **Equipment**
 - Well resourced, spread across 8 brigades
 - 13 light units (utes for 2 people, 400-600L of water)
 - 15 medium units (small fire trucks, 3 people, 1500L)
 - 25 heavy tankers (5 people, 3000 – 4000L)
 - Bulk water carrier (9600L)
 - Water availability during a drought is an issue
 - 18 command/support vehicles
 - 4 quick fill and pump trailers
- **Aviation resources**
 - Funding from Commonwealth government
 - Additional helicopter shared with NSW available now with funding
 - 3 contracted aircraft
 - 1 specialist intelligence aircraft (SIA) capable of live camera footage, infrared imaging. Can detect small fires from over 40km away
 - 2 medium helicopters (6 crew, 500-800L buckets)
 - Additional aircraft available from National Aviation Firefighting Centre
 - 4 Large Air Tankers (LATs) available – drop fire retardant. They can also drop just water.

Q: Are there dangers associated with fire retardant?

A: It isn't used around water catchment areas. ICON monitors water quality and would pick up concentrations of retardant in water. Areas are mapped to record where retardant has been dropped in the past.

- Hume Helibase
- Canberra Airport has provided a retardant mixing base
 - More efficient than resourcing retardant from Albury/Wagga Wagga
- 2 LATs dropped water and retardant at the Peirce's Creek fire
- **Seasonal Overview**
 - So far lower than previous years
 - 2 fires in structures
 - 3 in outside storage facilities
 - 28 mobile property fires (cooking, vandals to blame)
 - 39 bush/grass fires in the last fire season (September to April)
 - Fire season getting longer
 - 2 waste fires
 - 5 other fires
 - ACTRFS assisted 6 other agencies in fighting fires including in the United States and Canada
 - Assisted SES for severe weather/natural disasters
 - 21 good intent calls (following up calls of already known fires)
- **Fire Danger Ratings and Readings (1 September 2018 – 30 April 2019)**
 - Low/moderate – 113 days
 - High – 100 days
 - Very high – 25 days

- Severe – 2
- Extreme – 0
- Catastrophic – 0
- Total Fire Bans (TOBAN) – 5
- This year we have already had 6 Very High days – not good news
- Often declared TOBAN to limit risk during high stress times (e.g. Pierce's Creek)
- **Plant**
 - 2 D4 dozers on rigid floats
 - 1 grader on contract with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)
 - Recovery plans with the Department of Environment
- **Fire Investigations**
 - 9 ACTFRS wildfire investigators
 - ACT Fire and Rescue and AFP Forensics also have trained investigators
 - People on a fire fighting team do not investigate source of fire - biased
- **Farm Firewise satisfies Emergencies ACT 2004 sect. 78**
- **Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP)**
 - Identifies:
 - fire fuel management
 - priorities for asset protection (e.g. livestock)
 - stock water levels
 - critical issue this season

Q: Are there designated meeting points for Weston Creek during a fire emergency?

A: Yes, but they're not advertised to public. ACTFRS will let public know on the day which centre to retreat to, as it is dependant on the location and movement of the fire. The Public is informed via text to mobile phones, a pre-recorded message is sent to landlines, on the ACTFRS website, on ABC radio, and to everyone that has been in the effected radius within the last hour.

Q: What are the biggest risks this bushfire season?

A: Risks include:

- the landscape is very dry
- it has been dry for two seasons now
- there is lots of dry grass which is a fire risk
- ACTFRS is concerned the public is not better prepared for a fire emergency

Comments:

- Houses in Weston Creek area are now built to better building standards (e.g. copper gas lines instead of plastic ones which can melt)
- There are less pine plantations close to houses
- Improved regulations regarding houses to reduce ember penetration around eaves

Q: Does the ACTFRS carry out ongoing fire hydrant maintenance?

A: ACTFR and ICON water are responsible for fire hydrant maintenance in the Weston Creek area. The issue is that there are so many fire hydrants everywhere. Please report to ICON if you notice one is out of service.

Q: What happens to pets during a fire evacuation?

A: Evacuation centres usually take pets on a leash. The ACTFRS website will inform residents if pets are allowed. They don't supply pet food for pets.

Q: Member concern for hazards associated with native trees.

A: Make sure to maintain your native trees, clearing debris from below them and raking up leaf litter so that fire is less prone to spreading. Clean gutters and prune trees to increase distance between trees and house.

- Q:** Does the ACT have the right to force evacuate during a fire emergency or only advise?
A: Cannot be sure, probably no. Advise to not get on roof of house if you choose to not evacuate.
- Q:** How many evacuation points are there planned for the Molonglo Valley?
A: Unsure of exact number. There are already centres across new suburbs, chosen during estate development plans.
- Q:** What proportion of fires are arson related?
A: Large majority of fires are deliberately lit. Most are small (Pierce's Creek fire is an exception to this, as it was a vehicle fire). ACT Policing have caught and charged arsonists. They do track actions of known arsonists.
- Q:** How to reduce the number of arsonists?
A: NSW has increased the imprisonment time for arson from 8 to 16 years minimum to reduce arson reoffences.
- Q:** Apparently there is a new fine of \$500 for dropping cigarette butts. How is this being advertised to the public?
A: This infringement is not enforced by the ACTRFS. This crime comes under the Litter Act and can be enforced by Rangers. Can also be reported to Fix My Street or Access Canberra.
- Q:** Are internet/NBN boxes fire resistant?
A: Telecommunication companies are responsible for ensuring their hardware is built to a specific standard to resist fire damage.
- Q:** Is the ACTRFS heavily reliant on volunteers? How many hours do they provide?
A: Volunteering varies between brigades. May be 2-4 hours weekly. Overall there is a 'phenomenal' number of hours dedicated to fire response and training by volunteers.
- Q:** Which brigades are active in this area?
A: Molonglo Valley and Rivers Brigade will share resources across the river.
- Q:** What is the process of recruiting volunteers in new suburbs?
A: Denman Prospect Group, ACT Fire and Rescue.
- Q:** When an incident occurs, do we assume all Canberrans have a bushfire survival plan?
A: There was a survey conducted which found that more than 50% of Canberrans have a bushfire survival plan (higher than expected). You can download a general one of the ACTFR website. Chris called for a show of hands which showed that less than 50% of those attending the Meeting had a Plan.
- Comments:**
- Priorities of fire rescue personnel:
 - protect life →
 - protect property/assets →
 - protect environment.
 - If you are present, rescue officers will focus their resources on you rather than saving your property. If able, leave them to do their job and stay safe.
 - Don't climb on your roof during a fire
 - Turn hose off at the tap, not the nozzle as the burnt hose then will not run water
 - Don't have vegetation up against house/windows
 - Choose metal flyscreens over fibreglass

Q: Is there a risk of embers penetrating roof tiles?

A: About the same as other roof types, e.g. corrugated iron

Q: How will we know which evacuation centre to go to if the fire destroys telecommunication services?

A: Phone networks may be busy during an emergency, but mobile networks should stay up and running even during a power outage as they have backup generators.

Q: Can water in swimming pools be used by fire rescue services?

A: Yes, they have the right to take pool water. Usually considered a last resort, they will only take up to 2/3 of a pool's water to prevent damage being done to the pool.

Q: Have been told in the past to fill a bathtub with water, what is the purpose of this?

A: Provides a source of water for drinking and feeding to pets while fire services use the water in pipes to put out fires in the area.

Comments:

- Power poles are often made from timber
- Powerlines should be considered live unless specifically told they are not
- Assume live even during a blackout
- ACTRFS are trained to advise public should not go closer than 8m to a fallen power pole during a fire emergency

Presentation finished at 9:13pm

5 Minutes with MLA's - Talks with Caroline Le Couteur

- The littering fines are not really enforced within the ACT
- CCTVs have been put up at known dumping points – rego owners may be fined in such a case
- Chances of being fined are therefore increasing
- There is a pressure on builders/construction workers to keep loose rubbish contained to prevent it blowing away
- Caroline's motion to have an independent investigation into the planning and development of the Molonglo Valley passed with unanimous agreement
- Developers have not necessarily achieved sustainable development and this needs to be improved.

Q: Does this motion affect adjoining areas?

A: Depends on the Terms of Reference

Q: There has been a lack of a community owned building being proposed. What is happening about this?

A: This is covered by the motion. The government has no power to make the owner of a site available to the public.

Comments:

- Member concerns regarding lack of community services in area (e.g. scout halls, community centre, churches, schools, emergency services). The preparation for sales process has started for a block of land within which there is a requirement for the Community space to be available for some 30 hours per week at Community rates. Another space in another site is said that the owner wants \$90,000 rent per annum.

- Member concerns regarding lack of police resources:
 - Visibility is crucial for crime prevention
 - There appears to be no capacity to increase visibility
 - Prevention vs reaction – requires a better balance of funding
 - Requirement for review
 - This is essentially a political question
- Government has chosen not to put resources into combatting homelessness
- Coombs Peninsula proposed development – 30 houses planned. This goes against the findings of the Legislative Assembly Committee.
- Is a campaign required? Public support would be welcomed via a petition.
- The Coombs and Wright communities are frustrated by the lack of community service developments.
 - There appears to be a focus on money over community services
 - A previous 900-signature petition was seemingly ignored by the Assembly and the Government. This relates to the Public Housing developments in 2017 in Weston Creek.
 - One member called for a halt on development in Molonglo
 - Feels as though there is a lack of representation
- Members showed their appreciation for Caroline Le Couteur for her support and efforts

BUSINESS MEETING

- **Minutes of the Meeting of 30 October 2019**
 - **Motion:** That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved as circulated.
 - Moved: Pat McGinn. Seconded: Janice Paull. Carried.
- **Treasurer's Report**
 - Main Account \$10,403,94
 - Fetherston Gardens Account \$15,787.58
- **General business**
 - Old AFP Site Development in Weston
 - Development application comments closes 15 November 2019
 - ACTPLA website
 - Increase to 261 townhouses
 - The large park has been removed and there are smaller green spaces
 - Only two access points now
 - more people now have access to green spaces
 - The company will install traffic lights and an extra turning lane at the Heysen Street/Streeton Drive intersection
 - Site will be levelled with the benches taken out though it will still slope from the south east corner to the north west corner as there is a drop of some 28 metres over the block. This takes the block back to what it was before it was developed for the AFP buildings
 - No registered trees in the area (only 'regulated')
 - Only 4 registered trees in Weston Creek
 - The Company will replace every tree removed with 3 trees
 - There will also be more trees up Heysen Street alongside Fetherston Gardens as well as additional plantings along Unwin Close
 - Comment – there are no single dwellings left along Heysen Street
 - One Member asked should we do a Petition to stop further development?

Comment from Chair – The Development Application for the Estate Development Plan was lodged around August last year. It took the ACT Bureaucracy 6 months to agree on what they wanted and would approve during which the Company could not speak to the Bureaucracy. The Company then spent 3 months in lodging their Development Application and gaining final agreement for this to be lodged. Council is not aware of what discussions may have covered.

- **Molonglo developments – Update by Ryan Helmsley**
 - Zapari Development. The company has lodged a request for Re-Consideration of their Development Application. The Site had been planned for 44 units; the original development application had been refused and the developer has recently lowered planned dwelling from 221 down to 149. The amendments to the proposed development plan are not welcomed.
 - Are the units undersized? Probably.
 - 1-2-bedroom units announced
 - Guidelines have been put on Save Molonglo Facebook page
- **Finalising submission for budget – the main items include**
 - Community Centre at Cooleman Court renovation and some reconstruction
 - Duffy and Fisher shops upgrades
 - Public domain work required as it looks tired with signs over shadowed by bushes, trees/bushes overgrown and dead trees and branches in many locations
 - A need to bring forward development of bridge over Molonglo River and the start of work on the Group Centre
 - Need for shops in Wright and Coombs and how to achieve this
 - Suggestion that the Government buy back the site

Comments:

- 51 weeks until ACT election
- Liberals are doing the rounds
- Community space in Coombs advertised on website is disappointing
- Cycle paths in Coombs up Heysen Street to be built late 2019, early 2020
 - Discussions to divert the proposed path to behind power station seems to have been agreed to – this was supported by Pedal Power and Equestrian Group
- 2 November 2019 is a Combined community Council meeting. Pat and Tom to attend.

Closing of meeting

- No further questions
- The meeting closed at 9.53pm

<p>Next Meeting Wednesday 27 November 2019 Raiders Club, Liardet Street Weston</p>
