

Shire of Lake Grace

Bush Fire Advisory Committee  
(BFAC)

# Minutes

17 October 2023

Meeting Commencing at 4.00pm

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Minutes for the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held at the Newdegate Country Club, Newdegate-Pingrup Road, Newdegate, on 17 October 2023 at 4.00pm.

## 1 OPENING & ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS

The Chairman, Cr Ross Chappell, declared the meeting opened at 4:05 pm.

## 2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*Presiding member to read:*

I begin today by acknowledging the Ballardong people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

## 3 RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Members	Delegate	Y/N	Deputy	Y/N
Councillor	Cr Ross Chappell	Y	Cr Anton Kuchling	N
CESM	Mr Matt Castaldini	Y	Nil	
CBFCO	Mr David Roberts	Y	Nil	
DCBFCO	Mr Brad Watson	N	Nil	
Senior FCO – West	Mr Kevin Naisbitt	Y	Nil	
Senior FCO – Central	Mr Peter Walker	Y	Nil	
Senior FCO – East	Mr Hugh Roberts	Y	Nil	
Lake Grace North BFB - FCO x1	Mr Evan Wyatt	N		
Lake Grace Town BFB – FCO x1	Mr Chad Stanton	N	Nil	
Lake Grace South BFB - FCO x1	Mr Kevin Naisbitt	Y	Mr Scott Strevett	
Newdegate North BFB - FCO x1	Mr Bill Lloyd	N	Mr Ian Lloyd	Y
Newdegate Town BFB	Mr Callun Tonkin	Y		
Newdegate South BFB - FCO x1	Mr Geoff Richardson	Y	Mr Wes Hall	Y
Lake King BFB - FCO x1	Mr Jason Sugg	N		
Varley BFB – FCO x1	Mr John Zurnamer	N	Mr Craig Newman	Y
Mt Madden / Dunn Rock BFB - FCO x1	Mr Anthony Teale	Y		

### Other Attendees:

Alan George – Shire of Lake Grace CEO  
 Amanda Giles – FCO  
 Dean Rintoul – FCO  
 Dwight Ness – FCO  
 Craig Shalders - FCO  
 Scott Ball - FCO

**Apologies:**

Lindsay Brownley - FCO

Brad Watson - DCBFCO

Rhys De Landgraft - FCO

Evan Wyatt - FCO

Scott Strevett - FCO

Jason Sugg - FCO

Mitchell Davies – DBCA Regional Operations Manager

Dan Sanderson – AVBFB Representative

George Young – DFES A/Area Officer Narrogin East

Craig Smith – DFES Superintendent Upper Great Southern

Craig Elefsen – Shire of Lake Grace MIS

**4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**BFAC Resolution:**

That the minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee meeting held on 29 March 2023 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Moved: David Roberts

Seconded: Geoff Richardson

Voting Requirements

Simple majority required. **CARRIED**

#### 4.1 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

An update will be provided by the relevant responsible person for each item.

Meeting Date	Brigade / Report Title	Details of Required Action	Resp Officer	Current Status	Action Completed
17/10/2019	Service Medals	Medals ordered. Ceremony to be organised.	Doug Dunham, Brad Watson and Cr Chappell to coordinate the event with the CEO.	<p>Medals at Lake Grace. CESM believes many medals should not be issued.</p> <p>Require FCO input on members who should be issued a medal.</p> <p>Have money for an event through council.</p> <p>CBFCO: Local Brigades To decide who should get it</p> <p>Fix Start dates with support.</p> <p>Re-forward email of medals to Brigade FCOs.</p>	Ongoing
02/07/2020	Radio communication issues	Workshop in to be arranged with stakeholders to define the issues and the specific areas where problems are occurring and plan a way towards a joint solution	CESM  DFES GS/ Operational Communications	<p>With DFES Op. Comms &amp; GS</p> <p>No Update.</p>	Ongoing
29/03/2023	Change Prohibited Burning Time	BFAC endorsed extending the PBT from 31 Jan to 28 Feb.	CESM / DFES Legal	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>BFAC Item Passed. Council Item Passed. Working to complete documentation for DFES &amp; DFES Legal</p>	Ongoing

2022	Shire BFB Life Membership	Proposal to establish a Shire BFB Life membership for recognition of outstanding service.	CBFCO/ CESM		
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## 5 REPORTS

*If possible, please submit written reports prior to the meeting.*

### 5.1 CHIEF BUSHFIRE CONTROL OFFICER

It is of the highest importance for our brigades to be better coordinated. The brigades need to have at least 2 meetings per year, pre-season and post-season. This allows for the community to get to know the FCOs and allows the FCOs to share preparedness information or response strategies with brigade members. Brigade Captains need to call a meeting with their community and go from there. Over the last few years, the Mt Madden/Dunn Rock brigade and Lake King brigade have set up and used a brigade WhatsApp group to help with the coordination of meetings, discussion around local fire matters and coordination of response at a local level which has been highly beneficial.

Anthony Teale: The WhatsApp group has also been very helpful to record attendance at fires which makes completing the fire reports so much easier.

**Action:** Set up Brigade WhatsApp groups.

### 5.2 DEPUTY CHIEF BUSHFIRE CONTROL OFFICER

*(Submitted prior to the meeting from Brad Watson)*

I would like the group to consider seasonally bringing the Prohibited burning period forward by 2 weeks as we are expecting people to start harvesting shortly and we don't want fires lit under permit while we are harvesting.

*(Discussed in General Business)*

### 5.3 BRIGADE CAPTAIN REPORTS

#### 5.3.1 Lake Grace North BFB (Farm Response)

Nil

#### 5.3.2 Lake Grace South BFB (Farm Response)

Nil

#### 5.3.3 Lake Grace Town BFB

Nil

#### 5.3.4 Newdegate North BFB (Farm Response)

Nil

### **5.3.5 Newdegate South BFB (Farm Response)**

Wes Hall: We had a situation just recently with a person requesting a permit and was denied. We have discovered that the person has been lighting fires every few weeks without a permit. The reason for declining the permit was around land status and if permission had been sought to clear the land. This was escalated to the CBFCO who has assisted. The Shire has supported reporting the clearing activities to DWER for investigation.

CBFCO: If someone rejects a permit, you must put it on WhatsApp, as the process is that following a permit rejection, the person is to contact the CBFCO.

### **5.3.6 Newdegate Town BFB**

Nil

### **5.3.7 Varley BFB**

Nil

### **5.3.8 Lake King BFB**

Hugh Roberts: Last week we had a brigade meeting with 25 people in attendance. We discussed fire preparedness, response strategies and went through the truck.

### **5.3.9 Mount Madden/ Dunn Rock BFB (Farm Response)**

Anthony Teale: We had our first incident of the season last Sunday, with hot material from a previous burn being disturbed by a machine. We have our pre-season meeting this coming Thursday.

## **5.4 Shire of Lake Grace**

We have contracted mitigation work through our Mitigation Activity Fund Grant Program submission at the Telstra Tower in Lake King and between the Lake King Primary School and the toilet block. These should have strategic benefit to the community in assisting to reduce fuel load around critical infrastructure.

We were able to secure a good price on our mitigation activities as we selected the contractor DFES had mobilised to our area for their works on unallocated crown land and unmanaged reserves around townsites. There is some work to be done around the northeastern edge of the Lake King townsite and through the reserve behind Lake King Agencies, as well as up behind the CBH emergency storage site at the north of the reserve.

DFES have also engaged the contractor to do some work in Newdegate to the northeast of the CBH site, creating a reduced fuel buffer and establishing a fire break along the back fence lines of the properties that front onto Newdegate North Road in town.

## 5.5 DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Fire & Emergency Services



### DFES Upper Great Southern Lake Grace BFAC Report 17 October 2023

Many thanks to all of your continued support in training and mitigation across the Winter/Spring period; I acknowledge this takes a lot of time away from loved ones and work commitments, and it is truly appreciated. Unseasonal hot weather is pushing us towards another long, hot summer, and as such, I'd like to emphasise that we continue to be available to support Local Governments, FCOs and brigades as required.

#### Key Messages

**Harvest Water Bomber Support:** Fixed-wing aircraft will again be forward staged in the Wheatbelt from 01 November (weather pending) until mid-December (harvest and risk dependant). To utilise these resources effectively, call for them early to minimise turnaround time and ensure a Ground Controller is allocated with Talk-Around selected on the radios to communicate with the aircraft.

**High-Season Fleet:** This year, during the 2023/24 high-threat period, the Upper Great Southern has a plan in place to support high-risk areas with additional appliances when they become available. These appliances are currently being utilised in the North of the state, which is continuing to see significant fire activity through much of the Kimberly and Pilbara regions, and as such, their return and availability for the South of the state will be determined by weather conditions and risk moving forward.

**Reporting:** With harvest fast approaching, we are encouraging FCOs and brigades to ensure that all fires are being reported to 000 (ComCen). This assists in collating information to better understand the incidents and fuel age throughout the region and ensures that the documentation supports landholders who lose property/machinery due to fire.

**Lithium-ion batteries:** Last year, firefighters responded to 64 structure fires caused by lithium-ion batteries, up from 34 in 2020. Firefighters have already been called to 32 of these incidents in 2023, with the State now in its busiest period of the year for residential fires. Information on lithium-ion battery fires and prevention tips can be found at <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/hazard-information/fire-in-the-home/lithium-ion-batteries>.

**Smoke Alarms:** An alarming 75 per cent of deaths caused by home fires last year occurred in properties that were not fitted with working smoke alarms. Change your smoke alarm battery

every year if it has a replaceable battery; test it every month by pressing the 'test' button and clean it twice a year with a vacuum cleaner to remove cobwebs and dust.

All smoke alarms, regardless of the type or model, need to be replaced every ten years. For more information on maintaining your smoke alarms, visit [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/smokealarms](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/smokealarms)

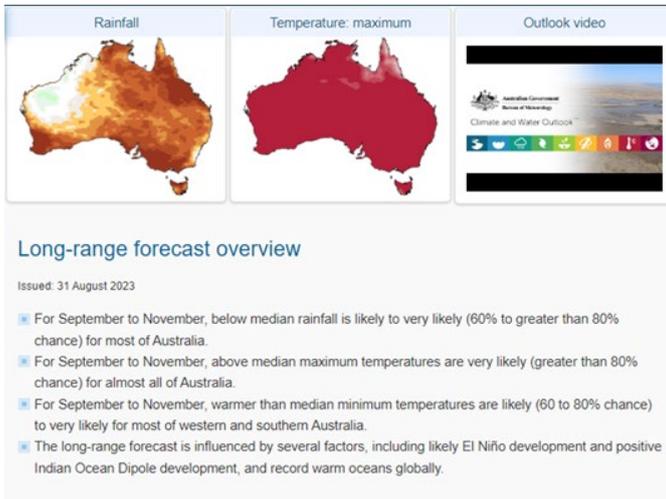
## Recent Events

**Canada Deployments:** Over 50 Department of Fire and Emergency Services staff and DBCA personnel have lent their skills in complex incident management functions such as public information, sector command, fire behaviour analysis and heavy equipment coordination to international wildfire efforts.

## Points of Interest

### **Preparing for the upcoming Bushfire Season:**

The Seasonal outlook is still pending; however, we are conscious of the extreme season in the northern hemisphere and the climatic indicators observed this year. Training is happening at a consistent pace, and pre-season briefings are coming together. A summary of the seasonal outlooks released to date is below.



### *Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for Spring 2023 in Western Australia*

#### Summary

- Winter rainfall has been below average for southern WA and above average for northern WA. This is reflected in the relative root zone soil moisture for these regions.
- An above average wet season in the Kimberley has delayed curing in the savanna grassland and subsequently the late dry season.

For southern WA in late spring, drier and warmer conditions may contribute to higher surface fuel availability and make bushfires more difficult to suppress.

For further information see: [dfes.wa.gov.au](http://dfes.wa.gov.au)

For DFES assistance, the Regional Duty Coordinator can be contacted on 1800 865 103 at any time.

## Key Circulars

**66/2023 – Updates to PPC and Uniform** – New lightweight material is available for LG Bushfire Brigades to order.

**64/2023 – All Hazards Deployment Register** – Online Operational Interstate/International Deployment planning tool for all availability and interest from all volunteer fire services

**170/2023 – Emergency Services Volunteer Fuel Card Scheme FY 2023-24** - Volunteers affiliated with the following emergency service BGUs are eligible for the Volunteer Fuel Card, which can be used to purchase fuel for their personal vehicles.

- Bush Fire Service
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service
- Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services

*All circulars can be found by logging in to the Volunteer Portal*

## Staffing

District Officer Narrogin Simon Vogel will be transferring to a new position in Perth, effective 20 October 2023. District Officer Emergency Management Paul Blechynden has been appointed to District Officer Narrogin from the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, leaving the District Officer Emergency Management position vacant.

Gavin Stevens is now on some leave (new baby) from mid-October to early December, for which I will be covering Gavin's Area Officer role and will continue to be accessible on the mobile and email below.

## Adverse Fire Weather Event 3-6 February 2022 community report

### Six key lessons across all fires/ events

DFES regards the AAR process as fundamental to developing an efficient and effective response to incidents alongside the State's overall preparedness. This report details the observations, insights, and lessons gained from this process. This provides an opportunity for DFES and its partner agencies to continue to learn from these events.

DFES Reviews are publicly available here: <https://publications.dfes.wa.gov.au/>

As an agency, we are about continual improvement; the lessons highlighted are explained in detail in the full report.

The six lessons are outlined below:

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<b>Lesson 1:</b> Pre-emptive preparation	Preliminary preparations made by the SOC, MOC, and ROCs based on the predicted weather, relating to resource stand-by and deployment, were deemed successful and should be considered for future events.
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<b>Lesson 2:</b> Early communications to pre-formed teams	Personnel involved in the pre-formed teams (PFT) were able to deploy with little notice, even those not on-call. While this was successful, there should be a more coordinated roll out of the information to ensure sufficient information is provided to those attending.
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<b>Lesson 3:</b> Role clarity of communication lines	Improved communication is imperative during incidents, for not only battling bushfires but for planning and resource deployment.
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<b>Lesson 4:</b> Contingency plans for identified locations	Facilities at or close to the fireground need to ensure they are in safe identified locations, with contingency plans in place.
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<b>Lesson 5:</b> Planned and coordinated community communication	There is an opportunity for improvement when it comes to community messaging to ensure consistent, timely, coordinated, and current messaging is always used.
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<b>Lesson 6:</b> Wider engagement at event locations	Learning opportunities are present during and after all incidents and should be actioned and embraced more widely.
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I wish you all the best with harvest, and I look forward to continuing to support the Lake Grace team throughout my time in the Upper Great Southern Region.

Many thanks,

George Young

Acting Area Officer Narrogin East

0475 224 640

AOEastUpperGreatSouthern@dfes.wa.gov.au

## 5.6 DBCA PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE



Department of **Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions**



### **Notes for Lake Grace BFAC**

Hopefully we can get some Autumn burning done in the Like Grace Shire as we have burns starting to stack up. As discussed at the ROAC the funding and as a result our burn priorities are targeted at the Mitigation Action Fund in UCL so burns on Nature Reserve's are becoming a lower priority.

Next Autumn we will have the burns at Dragon Rocks, Silver Wattle and Lake King UCL.

Latest I have on Grain Harvest Water Bombers (attached) is that they will commence at Cunderdin on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November and then move to Narrogin about the 16<sup>th</sup> of November.

Reminder we have reloader bases in Hyden and Ravensthorpe with an operating range of 100km's, so the Lake Grace Shire can source bombers from both directions.

### **Report for Regional Operational Advisory Committee Upper Great Southern September 2023 Mitchell Davies Regional Operations Manager Wheatbelt Region**

#### **Bushfire Mitigation**

Parks and Wildlife Service, Wheatbelt Region completed four of its planned burns and partially completed another 4. The majority of the burns completed were in the Northern Wheatbelt or the Southern Rangelands east of Hyden. We did commence a burn in Dryandra and North Tarin Rock.

We completed the mitigation works (Scrub Rolling) planned in Lake Magenta, Silver Wattle and the UCL south of the Newdegate – Ravensthorpe Road in the Shires of Kent and Lake Grace.

#### **Reporting Fires to Parks and Wildlife Service**

All fires effecting or threatening Parks and Wildlife Service managed land in the Wheatbelt needs to be reported to the Duty Officer on **9881 9200**. This number is available 7 days a week.

The Wheatbelt Region continues to provide bushfire resources that are available on a roster system throughout the bush fire season including weekends and public holidays.

## 5.7 REGIONAL OPERATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A number of topics were discussed including;

- AFDRS – Permits (No change to thresholds yet, change is difficult as it is set in legislation)
- AFDRS requirement for field observations – people to submit a photo or upload
- Reporting fires to 000 is important to get support (Aircraft/Machinery/DFES staff)
- Grain Harvest water bombers are expected in Narrogin this year again, if needed request early.
- CES Act is coming, expecting exposure draft bill in early 2024 for a 3 month review period. It is important to review and provide feedback.
- BoM Update – Higher Max & Min Temps, Heatwaves.
- Terms of Reference update requirement – to state model rules and reframe the purpose of the meeting. (A point of escalation for BFACs when they have unresolved issues.)
- WP: Helicopter washing and siliconing works should have started by now in the eastern part of the shire. Works to be completed by 2027 for the whole shire. WP noted that installing SPS systems will remove a lot of powerlines and poles in the area when completed.

## 5.8 COMMENTS ON REPORTS

## 6 GENERAL BUSINESS

### 6.1 AFDRS - HVMB

A discussion was held regarding Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans, with a consensus that the threshold of FBI 40 was effective.

A comment was raised and shared that there is a fair amount of low barley crops which could lead to an increased chance of ignition through rock strikes. A sentiment echoed that some practice is also changing to cut lower regardless of crop height.

#### **Discussion:**

It has taken some time in the past to enact HVMBs and we need to make the call earlier. It was decided that if weather observations are requested and no response is received after 15 minutes, a ban will be applied.

Some farms in the Varley, Lake King, Mt Madden area have recently invested in weather stations from Origo.Ag. members in the group are able to see each others live weather data, assisting with weather readings for HVMBs. Noting any reputable weather stations are suitable to use, please submit your readings ASAP when requested.

It was queried if HVMBs can be applied pre-emptively for forecast bad conditions which is certainly an option. There is an AFDRS platform which can aid with that decision making accessible after some short online training.

CESM: It would be good to produce a map with the locations of weather stations with respect to the zones to aid decision making or seek readings/ observers in gaps.

## 6.2 CESM: Emergency Register & Resource List

The Emergency Register and Resource list for the Shire has been started but need info. *The document is a Shire document, only for distribution to FCO's for use at incidents.*

The intention of the document is to provide a list of all registered brigade members, by brigade, with contact details, local contractors and their machinery, any relevant shire contractors (traffic management, plumbers, electricians etc), privately owned fire response equipment in each brigade, fire water locations on a map, possibly the revisited homestead map.

This can be used by FCO's at escalating incidents to be able to have an idea of equipment within neighbouring areas when you are assisting each other. (You will have a good idea of what is in each of your own patches, not always what is in another area).

I need your help to provide the data to assemble this one.

### **Discussion:**

Concerns were raised about sharing information about what equipment is available in the community FCOs can determine equipment locally, limited appetite for a combined FCO resource for all zones.

Concerns were raised about wear and tear on machinery used in firefighting. As per the insurance, this is not covered, only loss or damage. Expression that community will not support private machinery going into reserves due to wear and tear costs escalating.

CEO echoed reluctance to utilise Shire machinery in reserves for the same reason. Contract machinery will need to be engaged for support, preferably through DFES/DBCA.

Action: CESM to inform agencies of requirements to support with machinery.

## 6.3 Training

Thank you to the FCOs who attended the training session earlier in the year, we had some great results, which has opened opportunities for furthering our training journey next year.

## 6.4 Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGS) - Updates

We were unsuccessful in the application for a Lake Grace Bush Fire Truck, however, we may be in luck with some whispers that we might get a high-season vehicle for Lake Grace Town to help justify our case for a permanent appliance.

The 3x fast fill trailers are still ongoing, I am working with Earnshaw Ag to try to get these finalised as previously advised.

## 6.5 Sectorising & Incident Response

- Minimum Bush Fire Incident Response Protocol Document Reminder
- BEATs Implementation Update – November 2023 go live.
- Discussion about sectorising fires.

Create a Life Members Board – Located at the Shire Office  
Magnet Name Badge or small trophy  
Criteria: FCO/CBFCO/Captains, extended service etc, CESM to work with  
CBFCO/DCBFCO

A question was raised to clarify burning on High FDR in unrestricted burning period.  
CESM: Will seek clarification and distribute.

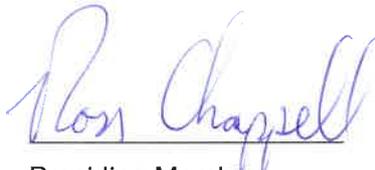
Ross: Be Safe, thank you for your attendance

**7 MEETING CLOSED**

Presiding Member, Cr Ross Chappell, closed the meeting at 17:40 pm.

**8 CERTIFICATION**

I, ROSS CHAPPELL certify that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023 as shown were confirmed as a true record at the meeting held on the 26 March 2023.



Presiding Member

26/03/2024

Date