

Minutes for the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held at the Shire of Northampton Council Chambers, Northampton on Monday 23 March 2026

1. Meeting Opening

The meeting commenced at 2:02pm.

2. Attendance

Cr Karl Suckling – Shire Councillor and Chair
Tatiana Vafiades – Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO)
Matt Johnson – Ajana/Binnu - Proxy
Wes Teakle – Captain Isseka
Damien Harris – Deputy CBFCO North
Scott Bridgeman – Deputy CBFCO South
Captain Sandy Gully/Alma BFB
Joe Wood – Captain Port Gregory/Yallabatharra BFB
Brian Robinson – Executive Manager Community, Development & Regulation
Mark Teale – Department of Fire and Emergency Services

Guests

Julia French – Parks and Wildlife District Fire
Trevor Jones – Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Ex Officio

Tina Souroup - (Minute Secretary)

3. Apologies

Scott Rintoul – Captain Northampton VFRS
Lindsay Rowe – Captain Horrocks BFB
Kyle Carson – Captain Ajana/Binnu
Travis Glass – Fire and Rescue Kalbarri
Rob McKenzie – Shire of Northampton Ranger
Brock Lucev – Shire of Northampton Ranger

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 30 September 2025 to be considered for adoption.

MOVED: Tatiana Vafiades

SECOND: Joe Wood

That the Minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting 30 September 2025 are confirmed.

MOTION CARRIED 7/0

5. Business Arising from Last Meeting

Referring to the table below - List of Actions from Minutes,

1. **Supply DFES Approved Communication Devices (WAERN Radios) for Each Brigade.** Some vehicles have been installed with the communication devices; the other remaining vehicles will be installed over the off-peak period. An audit has been completed for handheld devices and there is no record of any units being received. DFES has received a pallet, and the scheme was to replace old for new.
2. **A List of Equipment and Contractors Available for Mitigation and Response Situations.** The Shire's CBFCO/Community Emergency Services Manager is still progressing with this; however, it will be completed before July to update First and Final Firebreak and Fuel Reduction Notice.
8. **Additional Water Resources for Fire Fighting.** The Shire should be able to apply for funding to have Water Tanks placed at strategic locations where water supply is limited once the Shire's Fire Mitigation Plans are approved.
11. **Additional Airport / Runways to Provide Water Refill Opportunities for Aircraft.** The CBFCO is to liaise with Manager of Corporate Services to explore lease arrangements. At current time RFDS/ DBCA has stated that they would not use the existing air strip in Northampton in its current state.
14. **Capital Grant – Starlink Communication Equipment.** The CBFCO has obtained a quote from ML Communication to provide 7 Starlink devices – Alpher Hyper Link Starlink. 4 are proposed to be located to Binnu, Isseka, Horrocks and Port Gregory with 3 spares which would be issued to the CESM and 2 Deputy Chiefs. Cost of installation is in the attached quotation. With residual funds it was discussed that the yearly subscription be paid. There is also a recommendation to Council as follows:

Moved: Damien Harris

Seconded: Scott Bridgeman

The Committee supports the use of Local Government Small Commitment Fund to purchase 7 or 8 Starlink units which includes the first-year subscription.

Carried 7/0

To reduce overhead costs, the Starlink unit subscriptions can be temporarily downgraded to a lower service plan during off-peak periods.

6. General Business

6.1 Shire Adoption of Bushfire Operational Guidelines

The draft Bushfire Operational Guidelines were endorsed by Council at its Ordinary Council meeting held on 16 October 2025.

6.2 Appointment of Chief Bushfire Control Officer and Honorarium

Consistent with the Committee's recommendation, Council resolved to support the appointment of Ms. Tatiana Vafiades to the position of CBFCO at its October meeting. Additionally at its November 2025 meeting, Council resolved to amend the Shire's adopted budget, allocating an honorarium of \$3,000 to ensure the volunteer does not incur costs associated with the position.

It was discussed that the appointment for the CBFCO should be a set role, ensuring the position is reviewed.

6.3 Appointment of Community Emergency Services Manager

Following the State Government allocation of funding and completion of the recruitment process, Ms. Tatiana Vafiades has been appointed as Joint Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) for the Shires of Northampton and Chapman Valley.

The committee will need to appoint a new Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) ahead of the next fire season. Discussion occurred on the workload resulting from both CBFCO and CESM roles and the potential for conflict of interest. For example, the officer being required to perform in their CESM role in Chapman Valley would then not be available to act as CBFCO. In addition, relying on the CESM to cover both positions poses an operational risk: if the CESM is deployed to another area, the district could be left short-handed during a fire event.

Whilst no resolution was passed, the role of CBFCO will be considered at the May meeting prior to setting the annual firebreak notice.

6.4 Review 2025/2026 Annual Firebreak Notice

Brigades are asked to have their Annual General Meetings in May to formalise relevant information on Fire Break Notice 2026/2027 including the Permit Issuing Officers.

Mr. Scott Rintoul sent an email in this regard seeking feedback on:

Burning Restrictions in Residential Areas

- Under 1000 m² – Burning prohibited within townsites. (except i.e. fireplaces, wood fire cooking and fire pit)
- 1000–2000 m² – Prohibited unless outside the townsite or with a permit.
- Over 2000 m² – Burning within townsites may be allowed with conditions or a permit.

Mr. Robinson detailed that this was the first year of having a non-bare earth requirement to help with sand drift and erosion in certain areas.

The committee discussed the potential implementation of a year-round Green Waste burning restriction.

A draft Annual Notice will be presented to the next BFAC meeting to be held in May 2026.

The Aerial fire break inspections resulted in 26 letters being sent to various property owners with warnings for non-compliance.

In addition to the above Mr. Scott Rintoul also tabled the following via email:

Planning Requirements for New Housing Builds

I'd like to propose having extra guidelines for looking at new buildings in areas without scheme water:

- Larger water tanks (e.g., 50,000–100,000 L total storage, with a dedicated firefighting reserve).
- Installation of 2-inch male and 4-inch male camlock fittings, with the 4-inch camlock being preferred for heavy appliances.
- Ensuring all-weather access for heavy appliances to reach the tank for drafting and asset protection.

Following discussion a recommendation for Council was tabled:

Moved: Tatiana Vafiades

Second: Damen Harris

The Committee request the Shire implement requirements for homes not connected to reticulated water supplies to have a water tank(s) with firefighting couplings to ensure that water may be used in the event of a fire.

Carried 7/0

6.5 Resignation of Bush Fire Mitigation Officer

At its meeting held in September, the Committee was advised that the Shire, together with several other local authorities, had been successful in obtaining access to a Bush Fire Mitigation Officer. Mr. Scott Rintoul was appointed to the position.

Mr. Rintoul has recently resigned from the position. Prior to resigning Mr. Rintoul completed draft a Bushfire Management Plan, Draft Treatment Plans for the Shire's four primary townsites and examined water supply access.

6.6 Draft Bushfire Management and Mitigation Plans

Feedback is sought on the draft plans prepared by Mr. Scott Rintoul, prior to those plans being considered by Council. Prior to being circulated to and considered by BFAC members, Mr. Robinson was advised that the plans had been prepared as two separate documents, one relating to Kalbarri and one the balance of the Shire. Feedback was requested on whether the two documents should be merged.

Moved: Tatiana Vafiades

Seconded: Matt Johnson

The Committee recommends the two Fire Mitigation Plans be merged into one document to include all areas of the Shire, with focus on the individual townsites of Northampton, Horrocks, Port Gregory and Kalbarri.

Carried 7/0

6.7 Local Government Grants Scheme (ESL)

Operational Grant

DFES has for the 2026/2027 financial year made an offer to allocate the Shire being \$59,810. Shire Officers are seeking a substantial increase to that figure. The Shire's new CESM has completed audit of the Shire's Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) needs, indicating significantly more funds are required to bring the brigades Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other equipment up to standard.

Status of Capital Grants

As previously advised, the Shire has been awarded the following capital grants for the 2025-2026 financial year under the State's Small Election Promises:

- a) \$20,000 towards the purchase of a trailer and Star Link Communication Equipment, for use by the Shire of Northampton Bush Fire Brigades;
- b) \$20,000 towards the purchase of a trailer and Star Link Communication Equipment (Clark Mast), for use by Kalbarri State Emergency Services; and
- c) \$45,000 towards upgrading to motor-driven roller doors for Kalbarri SES.

Since that time, the Shire received approval to proceed with out of budget expenditure to repair the Port Gregory Fire BFB Roller Door.

Brigades have asked for equipment and is hoping this can be added to the new budget 2026/2027. Items include Lockers and fridge for Horrocks members, and new tank for Isseka and Port Gregory requesting the large roller door be replaced due to maintenance wear and tear.

Kalbarri SES have had an increase in assets with the arrival of a Boat Trailer, 2 ATU's and Trailers, A Ute and is to retain the Troop Carrier.

6.8 2026/2027 Personal Protection Clothing Requirements

Ms. Vafiades is coordinating a review of remaining PPE requirements for the coming financial year. The Committee is encouraged to discuss the requirements to firm up arrangements and time frames. There is still helmets available to be issued to members.

6.9 Training

Discussion is required on preferred/required training for the balance of the current financial year and training to be completed during the 2026/2027 financial year. The upcoming Rural Awareness Training was postponed and is going to be rescheduled for later, should be before end of financial year. If funds in budget need to be reallocated this needs to be reported early as this needs to be approved by Council.

7.0 Other Business

Newly appointed CESM Ms. Tatiana Vafiades reported that there was 27 fire incidents that included pole top fires and property fires. There was three fires within proximity of town being 2 properties and the commonage. Fire breaks were all completed, and all reimbursements have been received.

Tatiana Vafiades and Joe Wood attended a Harvest Fire Meeting and there was a 25% increase in calls with regard to harvester fires.

Tatiana Vafiades asked if another WhatsApp group can be created for the Northampton Non-Emergency chat. This will be discussed further.

Julia French (DPAW) Officer's report was presented and is attached along with maps of the upcoming burn schedule for mitigation week starting in May. DPAW have a long burn season commencing. They have two 12000 water tankers, two fuel tenders, and two visual message signs being used to communicate burns being deployed to the area.

Brian Robinson briefly stated that from last meeting Neil Broadhurst had retired and that Jamie Muir was the new Executive Manager of Works and Technical Services and was starting to prepare the access from the foreshore through to Murchison Station.

Mr. Scott Rintoul raised the issue of vehicles with trailers on firegrounds, suggesting that additional guidance be provided or advertising around vehicle requirements on the fireground, particularly regarding not allowing trailer-mounted fire units due to safety and operational limitations. It was discussed that Trailers are not to be used on Fire Grounds and educate farmers on this and task them to do a non-operational activity.

The committee discussed having an Informational sheet that is sent out with the Annual First and Final Firebreak and Fuel Hazard Reduction Notice on Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans and Total Fire Bans. Following discussion, the following on the requirements and potential exemptions desired by some of the farming community, the following recommendation was passed:

Moved: Karl Suckling

Second: Wes Teakle

**That requirements of Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans be strictly enforced,
No means No.**

Carried 7/0

The Committee was advised that Hon. Rob Horstman MLC will be preparing a petition regarding the Telecommunication Services in country areas. Once finalised he will present this to parliament.

Training Day / BBQ

Mr. Rintoul advised that he would like to organise a training day and BBQ catch-up for the BFB's, VFRS and Farm Response. Happy to host this at the Northampton VFRS, Ms. Vafiades and Mr. Rintoul will discuss and discuss with the Community Development

Officers to bring in all Volunteers to the day not just bush fire bridges, there may be Grants available for this event.

Ms. Vafiades thought it may be a good idea to have an Education display at the Northampton Agricultural Show with all Emergency Services be involved and have competitions and involve the children in the displays.

Cr Suckling congratulated Tatiana on the communication that she has been relaying to the groups.

7.1 Report from Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

Mark Teale DFES officer's report was presented and is attached.

8.0 Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee will be scheduled for 15 May 2026 at 2pm.

9.0 Closure

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 4:20pm.

Shire of Northampton Bush Fire Advisory Committee – List of Actions from Minutes				
No	Action	Comment	Responsible Officer	Status
1.	Supply DFES approved communication Devices for each Brigade	Discussions to occur with DFES over potential supply of communication devices as part of Shire's Operational Grant. Potential supply of 2 DFES approved handheld community devices per brigade as part of the 2025/26 DFES Operational Grant. 26/5/25 – DFES waiting for roll out. Bushfire Mitigation Officer identified 5 "additional" Waern Radio's which are currently with DFES for updating.	EMCDR	Commenced.
2.	<i>A list of equipment and contractors available for fire mitigation and response situations</i>		CBFCO	Pending
3.	Secure Use of High Season appliance from DFES for 2025/26 fire season.	As a minimum high season appliance to be sought over harvest period, preferably a 4.4 if available. An additional peak season fire unit was made available by DFES	CBFCO	Complete
4.	Testing of Automatic Vehicle Location Devices	Testing of AVL's to occur in a coordinated manner.	CBFCO/Deputy CBFCO's	Complete
5.	Preparation of Bush Fire Operational Guidelines	Draft Guidelines to be prepared based on Collie example for consideration at the next meeting (19/5).	EMCDR	Finalised / Review

6.	The Terms of Reference be updated with the identified proxies.	An agenda item is being prepared for consideration at 17 April 2024 Council meeting.	EMCDR	Completed
7.	Secure Budget funds to undertake a formal review of the Shire's Bush Fire Management Plan.	Subject to Shire budget process. 26/5/25 – DFES Officer Mark Teale to advise if assistance can be made available from DFES.	EMCDR	Completed.
8	Additional water resources for fire fighting	Funding to be sought under the Shire's proposed 2025/26 Annual Budget towards a water tank and associated fittings water supply for the purposes of firefighting and road maintenance.	EMCDR	Pending.
9	Standardisation of Fire Fighting Couplings	The CBFCO undertake an audit of existing couplings and obtain costs for the replacement of the couplings to be considered as part of the Shire's annual budget process.	CBFCO	Pending.
10	Additional PPE for Brigades	Shire to seek increase in funding to \$15,000 per year through DFES operational grants and/or Shire budget processes. 26/5/25 – Mark Teale to provide standard equipment list.	EMCDR	Completed
11	Additional Airports/Runways to provide water refill opportunities for aircraft.	Shire Officers to confirm current status of access arrangements for private airfields located at Northampton (primary preference), at Kyle Carson's property in Binnu & West Ogilvie.	CBFCO & Manager of Corporate Services	Pending

		Northampton is not of an acceptable standard.		
12	Amalgamation of Isseka, Sandy Gully/Alma Bush Fire Brigades	Isseka and Sandy Gully/Alma brigades to consider potential for amalgamation.	CBFCO	Rejected - Complete
13	Use of Trailers on Fire Ground	Use of trailers on fire ground to be addressed in draft Operational Guidelines (see Item 5)	EMCDR	Complete
14	Capital Grant-Starlink communication equipment	Liaise with FCO in Chapman Valley Funding allocated. Direction required whether to proceed with Starlink for vehicles rather than trailer mounted?	EMCDR	Pending
15	Terms of Reference	Update to reflect Cr Karl Suckling as Chair and allow for flying minutes.	EMCDR	Completed
16	Appointment of CBFCO	Ms. Tatiana Vafiades be appointed as CBFCO	EMCDR	Completed.
17	Sta Link Communication Devices	The Committee supports the use of Local Government Small Commitment Fund to purchase 7 or 8 Starlink units which includes the first-year subscription.	EMCDR/CESM	New
18	Access to domestic water supplies	The Committee request the Shire implement requirements for new homes not connected to reticulated water supplies to have a water	EMCDR	New

		tank(s) with firefighting couplings to ensure that water may be used in the event of a fire.		
19.	Draft Bushfire Mitigation Plans	The Committee recommends the two Fire Mitigation Plans be merged into one document to include all areas of the Shire, with focus on the individual townsites of Northampton, Horrocks, Port Gregory and Kalbarri.	EMCDR/CESM	New
20.	Harvest and Vehicle Movement Exemptions	That requirements of Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans be strictly enforced, No means No.	EMCDR/CESM	New