



Operations Consultative Committee Minutes

Date of Meeting: **Friday 15 March 2019**

Time from/to: **0900 – 1630**

Chair: **Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM – NSW RFS**

Required Attendees: **David Turner – RFSA (Deputy Chair) Les Ayres – RFSA**
Brendon Ede – RFSA Graeme Wilson - RFSA
Geoffrey Ryan – RFSA Krystaal Hinds- RFSA
Andrew Macdonald – RFSA

AC Jason Heffernan – NSW RFS (Executive Officer)

Invited Speakers: **AC Peter McKechnie – Director Regions South and West**
AC Kelly Browne – Director Information & Communications Tech.
AC Steve Yorke – Director Operational & Mitigation Services
Mr Corey Shackleton – Director Community Resilience
Inspector Michael Gray, A/Manager Operational Doctrine

Apologies: **Elizabeth Ferris AFSM – RFSA**
James Brady – RFSA

Location: **NSW RFS Headquarters 4 Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park**

Agenda

No.	Agenda Item	Responsible	Time
1.	<i>Coach departs Mercure Hotel for HQ</i>		0800
2.	State Operations Tour	AC Jason Heffernan / CS Ben Millington	0830
3.	Commissioner's Address Committee members noted the Commissioner's Address	Deputy Commissioner, Rob Rogers	0900
Morning Tea			1000
4.	Welcome and Introduction	Chair	1030
5.	Acceptance of Apologies	Chair	1035
6.	Declaration of Conflict of Interest	Chair	1040
7.	Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting	Chair	1045



No.	Agenda Item	Responsible	Time
8.	Matters arising from minutes of previous meeting	Chair	1050
9.	Base Camps	AC Steve Yorke	11:00
10.	Update on Fire Trails Project	Corey Shackleton	1130
	Lunch - Barwon and Barwon West 4.04 & 4.05		1200
11.	Outside of NSW deployments	CS Ben Millington	1300
12.	Road Closure Confusion– RFS Business paper 3/047	RFS	1345
13.	Reversal of Ban on Brushcutters – RFS Business paper 3/048	RFS	1415
14.	Catering SOP	David Turner	1445
15.	Operational Systems Update (Call out App, AVL Update, BIRS,)	AC Peter McKechnie / AC Kelly Browne	1515
16.	General Business	All	1600
17.	Meeting Close	All	1630
18.	<i>Coach departs HQ for Mercure Hotel</i>		<i>1645</i>
19.	Dinner – Mercure Hotel Parramatta 106 Hassall Street Rosehill		1800 for 1830

Minutes

1.	Deputy Commissioner's Address Committee members noted the Deputy Commissioner's Address
2.	Welcome and Introduction The Chair welcomed Graeme Wilson (RFS) to the Committee
3.	Acceptance of Apologies Elizabeth Ferris AFM – RFS James Brady –RFS
4.	Declaration of Conflict of Interest Nil.
5.	Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting The Committee accepted the previous meeting minutes of October 2018



RFSA

6.	<p>Business arising from previous minutes</p> <p>Deputy Commissioner Rogers asked the Committee if there was a concern that members were not being given the opportunity to have input into the agenda as raised at the last meeting.</p> <p>Following discussion it was identified that there were two items to be discussed at today's meeting.</p> <p>Items may be raised during the meeting however if the matter is complex then it was agreed that a business paper be completed so all parties are aware of the issue and meaningful discussion could ensue during the meeting allowing for a way forward.</p> <p>The members indicated they were more than happy with how this committee was operating and the level of consultation provided.</p> <p>Remote Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS)</p> <p>The committee enquired about the Remote Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS) capability of the NSW RFS.</p> <p>AC Heffernan advised there is a RPAS Service Standard to be finalised and this will provide clarity about how NSW RFS RPAS operates. The Service will be looking at going into small and medium RPAS units at this stage and appropriate frameworks will be developed to facilitate.</p> <p>Funding has been allocated to allow assessment, testing and trialling of various units.</p> <p>Larger RPAS units, which are based on military specifications may have applications including covering some of the helicopter tasks currently being undertaken e.g. Line scans etc.</p> <p>Once information is obtained, the challenges of information sharing need to be considered and worked through i.e. ICT needs.</p> <p>Once the framework and policy is finalised, RPAS units can then be trialled with a view to implementation.</p> <p>Surf Life Saving utilise RPAS technology and are happy to support the NSW RFS with development.</p> <p>Action: Luke Wallace to provide an update at the next meeting.</p> <p>Update on U turns</p> <p>The NSW RFS has directed brigades are not to use U turn bays on major roads and motorways. It was noted that FRNSW continue to utilise U turn facilities.</p> <p>The NSW RFS continues to draw from the judgement of the Wells case defining what an emergency event is.</p> <p>The NSW RFS and other agencies have discussed the matter with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). It has been agreed that two actions need to occur:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing signage to be amended to identify agencies authorised to use the U turn bay; and• Risk assessment needs to be undertaken for each U turn bay to ensure appropriate signage is erected authorising those agencies to use the U turn bay; and its safe operation. <p>The principal concern of the NSW RFS is to ensure our volunteer members are appropriately protected when undertaking their duties including using U turn bays. Until the issue is resolved with new signage, use of U turn bays will not be allowed.</p> <p>It was noted that a recommendation was made to RMS some 18 months ago.</p> <p>40KM/H update</p> <p>The recent introduction of the 40km/h zone for emergency service activities trial continues. The committee noted some elements within the community had concerns about the trial. It was agreed that an education process needs to occur within the public domain.</p> <p>The 40 km/h zone has been implemented successfully in other states and to ensure successful implementation in NSW the public needs to be fully informed, and any issues identified and addressed.</p>
	<p>Base camps</p> <p>Assistant Commissioner Steve Yorke presented to the committee on NSW RFS base camp capability.</p> <p>AC Yorke provided copies of the NSW RFS Base Camp Manual. The manual is a guide to the establishment, management and demobilisation of NSW RFS base camps.</p> <p>There are four levels of base camp and each one varies depending on the requirements.</p> <p>During the current fire season camps have been established inter and intrastate.</p> <p>Toilets/showers and kitchens are now sourced through appropriate contracts and provided as required as part of a base camp. This is more cost effective than the NSW RFS owning, maintaining and moving these units.</p> <p>AC Yorke advised base camps can be established for emergency service personnel accommodation as well as for community accommodation when community members have been displaced for various reasons.</p> <p>Base camps, wherever possible, are not established close to aircraft operational bases to ensure camp guests are afforded the best opportunity to rest etc.</p> <p>Review of base camps is an ongoing process with a focus being the future capability and available products for replacement.</p> <p>All base camps are alcohol free and this is not seen as being needed to change.</p> <p>Fire Trails</p> <p>Director Community Resilience Mr Corey Shackleton provided a presentation to the committee on fire trails.</p>



	<p>There are two components to fire trail planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning works being undertaken by the Local BFMC, and• Once planning is completed the physical works are implemented. <p>As part of the Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) program, a total of 42 BFMCs have been engaged with the initial consultation and the two day workshop having been completed. Ten BFMCs have signed off on the process, forwarded the required data and maps have been completed. The maps are then forwarded to the BFCC for approval.</p> <p>The Lower Hunter zone was the pilot group and has continued to lead the way. There is a three year window to complete the project and the aim is to complete the FAFT workshops by October 2020.</p> <p>The program has been revised with initial consultation being with the group officers and captains within the BFMC area, and then a sign off from the BFMC. There are some variations between tactical and strategic trails.</p> <p>The data of three regions (East, West and South) shows there is over 2500km of strategic trails and 3000km of tactical trails. Each area is different in terms of the amount of strategic or tactical trails.</p> <p>The planning phase has started to develop a good picture of what the future holds for fire trails in terms of the future state and costs. We had estimated that there was some 7500km of trails. There have been some issues encountered and the most common major issue is bridges.</p> <p>Mr Shackleton presented a video to the group that highlighted the work the Soil Conservation Service has undertaken as part of the FAFT works plan.</p> <p>Work has recently been completed on some private lands and the feedback to date is very positive.</p> <p>The NSW RFS has tested technology that captures the details of the trail, slope etc. In the future the program will be available for all volunteers to access.</p>
	<p>Outside of state deployments</p> <p>Inspector Michael Gray presented to the committee on interstate and overseas deployments.</p> <p>All deployments outside the state is coordinated by AFAC through the National Resource Sharing Centre. The NSW RFS is the coordinating hub for NSW, ACT, QLD and NT resources when the NRSC is activated.</p> <p>A number of challenges are regularly faced when deployments occur including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short Notice requests (Turn on / Off)• Welfare / Fatigue• Movements• Duration length• Day / Night Shifts• Communications• Fleet changes



	<p>Inspector Gray has been tasked to undertake a review of the operational deployments that have occurred in the last season.</p> <p>The review will cover a deployment from start to finish and will be aimed at identifying issues which can then be addressed.</p> <p>The member availability app will become important in the future as we will be able to push requests for strike teams out through the app and avoid districts and regions filtering the information.</p> <p>In a number of deployments, SCAT teams have been deployed with our contingent and the benefits of this is being seen e.g. at a recent injury the paramedics were in close proximity and were able to assist with treatment earlier and transport to hospital.</p> <p>There was a discussion regarding the age of the vehicles being sent away for deployments.</p> <p>Discussion also ensued on the importance of the role of the response team coordinator in assisting with the logistical side for deployed strike teams. This allows the strike team leader the opportunity to focus on the operational side without worrying about the small things. Typically this role is filled by a staff member but there is no reason why a volunteer could not do the role.</p> <p>Feedback from the review will be sent to AC Heffernan for review and discussion with DC Rogers. Once the review is completed information will be provided to the wider volunteer membership.</p> <p>The four regions have advised that they will get districts to hold after action reviews and this information will feed back into the review.</p> <p>There was a suggestion that perhaps it may need to be more targeted to individuals. This will ensure that districts aren't filtering what is being said.</p> <p>Feedback on the deployments can be sent to Michael Gray via email Michael.gray@rfs.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>RFSA Business paper 3/047 – Road Closure SOP</p> <p>The Safe Working on Roads Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was discussed.</p> <p>Members should only perform traffic control if they have been trained and accredited, otherwise it will be necessary to consider closing the road and seeking assistance from NSW Police. Members may perform traffic control under the control and direction of NSW Police if they feel they are capable of performing the tasking.</p> <p>The Safe working on roads SOP will be provided with these minutes.</p> <p>AC Heffernan noted that a review of the Safe Working on Roads as well as Safe Driving SOPs is currently underway and the committee shall be asked for their view when drafts are available.</p>



RFSA

RFSA Business Paper 3/048 - Brushcutters

There was a discussion about the business paper previously circulated seeking to have brushcutter blades reintroduced for use by Brigade personnel.

The most injuries reported are from our brushcutters over the last few years. There was a discussion about whether it was blades coming off or disintegrating that was causing the injuries. Anecdotally, it appears that the injuries are occurring when the blades strike items including on the ground. Some examples of the injuries sustained were provided.

DC Rogers advised the committee that our mitigation crews are specifically trained to use brushcutters and need to undertake yearly certification. Despite the training and recertification requirements, serious injuries are still occurring.

The main problem is the blade on the brushcutter. Minimal injuries have been recorded when the corded head is utilised.

The NSW RFS is now reviewing the ongoing use of this equipment and the ways that injury minimisation can be implemented, noting there is a continual need for brushcutters.

A number of working groups comprising the NSW RFS, Work, Health and Safety and Safe Work NSW representatives, have undertaken reviews and are working with the manufacturer to address the concerns.

A number of pieces of new safety equipment have been developed to assist with combating the problems. AC Yorke showed the new helmets being introduced to mitigation crews using brushcutters.

The review of the brushcutters identified 20 recommendations and from that it was determined the preferred option was to move away from brushcutters and move into more mechanical tools. The NSW RFS is also investigating other machinery on offer such as the push-along machinery, remote controlled operated machinery, Razorbacks. The Service has also recently purchased two positracks.

Mitigation crews are specifically trained to use brushcutters and there is an organisational reluctance to allow volunteers to use these items in the field, due to the risk that use of the equipment exposes.

AC Yorke to prepare a document for the committee members to show the types of injuries sustained and the training and recertification process undertaken.

The NSW RFS appreciates and understands the frustrations that brigades feel, however the decision to restrict use of brushcutters is based on safety considerations. This state-wide restriction only extends to the use of blades and does not extend to corded heads

If brigades are doing HR preparation, mitigation crews are available to assist with preparatory works.

Whilst the business paper seeks to have the current restriction reversed, this will not occur. The June 2018 brief covered the ban of blades on brushcutters to everyone.

Action: Closed



Catering At Incidents (RFSA)

Standard Operating Procedures refer to brigades being self-sufficient for 24 hours.

Generally, it has been suggested by a number of brigades that this be reduced to 12 hours. Ration packs may be available on some trucks, however this is not the norm.

Whilst catering brigades attempt to provide catering the provision of catering is restricted due to:

- Available resources, and
- Not all districts have a catering brigade.

It was felt that there needs to be a trigger point for when catering gets dispatched. Is that 5 or 10 trucks...amount of time ?

The intention is for trucks to be self-sufficient to a degree for a period of time. An example is if an MVA occurs at 1am and a brigade responds with a crew of two and the incident is two hours away from the local town. This is an example of when a truck would need to be self-sufficient.

It was suggested some districts are hiding behind the policy and not providing appropriate catering or welfare to members. DC Rogers stated that if this is the case, it is not acceptable and should not be happening.

The Safe Handling of Food and Catering SOPs are to be reviewed this year.

There is a difference between policy position and common sense.

Clarification is required to ensure there is a clear understanding of when catering is to be provided and when brigades need to be self-sufficient.

When should catering brigades be mobilised? It was felt that each district should have a plan in place when to activate catering. There needs to be a catering plan similar to operational.

The reality is that there is no single solution that will fit all areas and there will be variances. Guidelines need to be developed and districts need to review the guidelines and determine their capacity to implement. Each SMT needs to review and sign off on the guidelines and expectations of the district.

If members have specific examples of when catering hasn't been provided, these need to be sent to AC McKechnie for review.

The review is taking place now and will be out later this year for brigades to review and make comment on the revised SOP.

Ration packs are available for districts to purchase and it is a local business decision to purchase them.

Action Item: Committee members are asked to think about the catering issue and bring potential solutions to the next meeting.



Brigade Purchased Equipment (RFSA)

Discussion lead onto brigades purchasing their own equipment, such as pagers and radios. This does not mean that the NSW RFS is not supplying the brigades, it means they are wanting more than what the Service considers is sufficient.

DC Rogers addressed the committee and said he felt that the discussion was good and that it was important that members felt they could raise issues with the RFSA representatives, and know that the issues important to them were being discussed. These discussions strengthened the relationship and showed the importance of the Association.

There was a discussion about staff and management and the senior management teams, and how they need to have a plans in place. The systems are there, we just need to use them.

There was a discussion on fatigue management and each area is different.

Action item : Discuss fatigue management at the next meeting

Outstanding items with State Council

Classification of Brigades e.g. Rural, Village Brigade etc. is still in progress.

Drafting Water from Dams (RFSA)

The Commonwealth has recently adjusted the disaster support arrangement such as refilling water tanks etc, once the incident is over. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has the right to advise that if it is an agricultural area and they make that assessment we are happy to assist DPI. This is regardless of a fire. We have been working with DPI in this instance.

A rural liaison officer is now integrated into IMTs as required, and are talking to property owners about which dams to take water from.

Agencies now have to be proactive when it comes to fires and in this case we are launching the helicopters and planes as soon as we hear of a fire, especially on major fire danger days

Communication strategy in the southern part of the state.

Willingness of other states to promote NSW products is very limited.

Local areas such as up as far as Wagga are receiving Victorian TV.

There was a discussion on the PVC – Solar panels. PVC Stock, 11 litre extinguisher.

Members to send link and get the infrastructure group to investigate it.

Anthony Clark joined the meeting and discussed advertising in Southern Border and ACT and also explained what the NSW RFS does in those areas.

Mr Clark to provide an example of the advertising in the Southern Border.

Action item: An example of the advertising in the Southern Border to be sent with the meeting minutes.



	<p>Suggestions of other ways / where we can advertise can be sent to Mr Clark.</p> <p>Action Item: Mr Anthony Clark to be invited to present at the next meeting.</p> <p>OCA Dispatch Process (RFS)</p> <p>AC McKechnie advised that the new process is being trialled at Cumberland. To date the feedback from Cumberland has been very positive.</p> <p>Cumberland is putting together a training guide and this will be integrated for ongoing training within Districts.</p> <p>Action Item: Committee to be taken through the process of OCA dispatch at the next meeting.</p> <p>Status Panel (NSW RFS)</p> <p>AC Browne joined the meeting and introduced Steve Marriot from Motorola. There was a display of the status box that will be part of the automated vehicle locator.</p> <p>Mr Marriot presented the status box to the members and explained its function as part of an AVL. The status box will be installed as part of the GRN upgrade programme.</p> <p>Availability App (NSW RFS)</p> <p>The NSW RFS received over 40 EOIs for the app and through the process, 14 potential suppliers were identified for the presentations.</p> <p>The NSW RFS now has a finalised list. Committee members will be involved in the next part. Requirements are being reviewed and vendors will then be invited back. Seven vendors have been selected, and from there the evaluation process will commence. Part of the evaluation will focus on the future viability of the product.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that members shouldn't be paying for response apps and the selection will be integrated into one system. The best systems are required for our organisation not just a singular brigade.</p>
	<p>Meeting closed</p>
	<p>Next meeting – Friday 5 July</p>