



Minutes

Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday 27 May 2026 at 6:00pm

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**MINUTES OF SHIRE OF MURRAY
BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE MURRAY SHIRE COUNCIL, 1915 PINJARRA ROAD, PINJARRA
ON WEDNESDAY, 27 MAY 2026 AT 6.00PM**

1 DECLARATION OF OPENING/ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS

The Chair Cr Ange Rogers declared the meeting open the time being 6:00pm.

It should be noted that decisions of this committee are only recommendations to and not decisions of Council. Committee recommendations should therefore not be actioned on or otherwise relied upon until Council has formally considered and decided on the Committee recommendations.

2 ATTENDANCES/APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

PRESENT

Voting Members

Cr Ange Rogers (BFAC Chairperson), Douglas McLarty (FCO Coolup VBFB), Anthony Cocivera (FCO Dwellingup VBFB), Michael Webster (FCO North Dandalup VBFB), Dean McGuinness (Captain South Yunderup/Ravenswood VBFB – Proxy for Lawrie Caffin), Justin Crotty (Captain/FCO West Murray VBFB) and Kevin Jones (FCO Pinjarra VFRS).

Non-Voting

Dean Unsworth (Chief Executive Officer), Donna Walker (BFAC Executive Officer/Manager Ranger and Community Safety), Justyn Bennett (DCBFCO), Jarron Van Elst (DCBFCO), Brendan Webster (DCBFCO), Ken Jones (Captain Pinjarra VFRS), Ricky Southgate (District Officer Wellington - DFES) and Chantelle Goff (Minute Taker/Emergency Management and Administration Officer).

Guests

Louise Pleasance (Acting Director Corporate Services), John Kowal (Manager Emergency Services Planning and Mitigation), Stuart Kirkham (Coolup VBFB), Lorraine Webster (North Dandalup VBFB) and Mark Wood (West Murray VBFB).

APOLOGIES

Nicole Stevens (Coordinator Ranger and Community Safety/CBFCO), Lawrie Caffin (FCO South Yunderup/Ravenswood VBFB) and Jayden Vitler (DBCA Representative).

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil.

There were eight (8) ex-officio members, three (3) members of the public and two (2) members of staff in attendance at this time.

3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING

3.1 Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting – 22 October 2025

Recommendation

That the Minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 22 October 2025 be noted.

4 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Nil.

5 BUSINESS ARISING**5.1 2026/2027 Bushfire Compliance Notice**

File Ref: D26/22931
Previous Items: BFAC 21 May Item 5.4 BFAC25/006.
Applicant: Nil.
Author and Title: Donna Walker, Manager Ranger and Community Safety
Declaration of Interest: Nil.
Voting Requirements: Simple Majority
Appendices: Item 5.1 - Appendix 1 - Draft Bushfire Compliance Notice 2026/2027

Suspension of Meeting Procedures**Recommendation/Committee Decision BFAC26/001**

Moved: D McLarty
Seconded: A Cocivera

That BFAC suspend Meeting Procedures (as per Shire of Murray Meeting Procedures Local Law 2015 Clause 12.1) to allow open discussion on item 5.1, the time being 6.09pm.

In Favour: Cr Ange Rogers, Kevin Jones, Douglas McLarty, Anthony Cocivera, Michael Webster, Justin Crotty and Dean McGuinness

Against: Nil.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 7:0

Resumption of Meeting Procedures**Recommendation/Committee Decision BFAC26/002**

Moved: D McLarty
Seconded: A Cocivera

That BFAC resume Meeting Procedures (as per Shire of Murray Meeting Procedures Local Law Clause 12.1) the time being 6.20pm.

In Favour: Cr Ange Rogers, Kevin Jones, Douglas McLarty, Anthony Cocivera, Michael Webster, Justin Crotty and Dean McGuinness

Against: Nil.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 7:0

Amended Recommendation/Committee Decision BFAC26/003**Moved: D McLarty****Seconded: A Cocivera****The Bushfire Advisory Committee recommends that Council:**

- 1. Endorses the 2026/2027 Shire of Murray Bushfire Compliance Notice as attached at Appendix 1 with the exception of the change to clause 3 for land greater than 45,001m²; and**
- 2. Recommends that Council approves for the publication of the 2026/2027 Shire of Murray Bushfire Compliance Notice in accordance with the provisions of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.**

In Favour: Cr Ange Rogers, Kevin Jones, Douglas McLarty and Anthony Cocivera**Against: Dean McGuinness, Michael Webster and Justin Crotty****CARRIED 4:3**

Officer Recommendation

The Bushfire Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

1. Endorses the 2026/2027 Shire of Murray Bushfire Compliance Notice as attached at Appendix 1; and
2. Recommends that Council approves for the publication of the 2026/2027 Shire of Murray Bushfire Compliance Notice in accordance with the provisions of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

Reason for Change:

Doug McLarty put forward the amended recommendation to remove the proposed clause 3 and retain clause 3 as written in the 2025/2026 Notice, for the upcoming fire season.

In Brief

To determine the Shire of Murray 2026/2027 Bushfire Compliance Notice (**Notice**) to manage bushfire related matters within the district in accordance with Section 33 of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* (**Act**).

Background

Historically, the Shire reviews the content of the Notice annually to ensure it remains contemporary. In preparation for the review the Shire's Bush Fire Control Officers were consulted with on 20 April 2026 to provide feedback on the current Notice and its effectiveness, that feedback has been incorporated into this report.

Report Detail

The Notice is developed in accordance with section 33 of the Act and is designed to provide important information about bushfire preparedness and prevention, bushfire risk mitigation plus sufficient means to direct landowners to undertake works to prevent the outbreak, spread or extension of a bushfire. The Notice also provides a mechanism for Special Work Orders to be issued to landowners to further reduce bushfire hazards, if required.

During consultation with Bush Fire Control Officers and Shire staff, the following amendments were proposed to the Notice and are marked in blue text as shown in **Appendix 1**:

- **Bushfire Prevention Work Requirements**

- 2. *Area of land - greater than 4,001m² and less than 45,000m²*

- Reduce the boundary requirement from 50 metres to 20 metres.
- Include mineral earth to reflect the Act definition.

- 3. *Area of land greater than 45,001m²*

- Amend Clause 3 to:

Where the area of any land in the Shire is greater than 45,001m² in size, the owner/occupier of the land shall:

- i. Reduce and maintain to a height of 50 millimetres or less, all flammable material on the land by mowing, slashing, baling or grazing OR;

Where the owner/occupier of land within the Shire is unable to comply with the abovementioned requirements of Clause 3(i), the owner/ occupier of the land shall:

- ii. Construct and maintain a mineral earth firebreak inside all external boundaries of the land as close as practicable, within 20 metres of the boundaries so as to form a continuous firebreak around the land and;
- iii. Comply with the requirements as described in clause 4 and clause 5.

Reason for Change:

The proposed requirement is intended to reduce bushfire fuel loads and limit the potential spread and intensity of fire on larger rural properties, while also improving access and operational safety for firefighting activities.

It should be noted that this requirement only comes into effect if the owner/occupier is unable to comply with 3(i) – *Reduce and maintain to a height of 20 millimetres or less all flammable material on the land by mowing, slashing, baling or grazing.*

- **7. Variations to the Notice**

- State closing date for variations as “1 November each calendar year” to ensure review and approval prior to Prohibited Burning Period commencement.

- **11. Burning garden refuse or rubbish during limited burning times (s.24G of the Act)**

- Insert a new clause and renumber remaining clauses.
 - v. No burning on a declared Public Holiday.

- **12. Use of Solid Fuel, Fire Pits and Solid Fuel Cooking Equipment**

- Removal of the specific dates and amend to “*Fire Pits are only permitted on private property during restricted and unrestricted burning periods unless the Fire Danger Rating is High or above or a Total Fire Ban or Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban has been declared.*”

- **13. Definitions**

- Insert a definition for “Rubbish”.

Reason for Change:

Fire Control Officers requested further clarification on what constitutes the word “Rubbish”. The definition of Rubbish was extracted from the *Shire of Murray Health Local Law 2018* and included into the Notice.

The proposed Notice will be published within the *Government Gazette* and also within the local newspaper as required by the Act and distributed to all ratepayers with their Rates Notice. All information contained in the Notice will also be advertised on the Shire's website and periodically various subjects and information from the Notice will be advertised on the Shire's social media site to bring to the attention of owners/occupiers' important information during the bushfire season.

Council Plan

Focus Area	Planet
Outcome 6	A resilient community equipped to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.
Objective 6.1	Minimise risks and impacts from fires, floods and natural disasters.
Actions 6.1.1 & 6.1.2	Implement bushfire mitigation works. Implement the Local Emergency Risk Management Plan to raise community awareness, understanding and confidence in what the Shire is doing to address bushfire risks.

Other Strategic Links

Nil.

Statutory Environment

Section 33 of the Act provides local government with the legislative authority to make a Notice requiring all owners or occupiers of land within the district to undertake work on their land for preventing the outbreak of a bushfire, or for preventing the spread or extension of a bushfire which may occur.

Section 24G(2) of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* requires a local government to by notice publish in the Gazette and a newspaper circulating in its district, to prohibit or impose restrictions on the burning of garden refuse within its district that is otherwise permitted under section 24F of the Act.

Section 25(1)(1a) of the Act provides a local government the ability, by notice published in the Gazette and a newspaper circulated in its district, to prohibit or prohibit the lighting of fires in the open air in its district for the purpose of camping or cooking for such period during the prohibited burning times as is specified in the notice.

Sustainability & Risk Considerations

Economic – (Impact on the Economy of the Shire and Region)

Nil.

Social – (Quality of life to community and/or affected landowners)

Nil.

Environment – (Impact on environment's sustainability)

Nil.

Policy Implications

Nil.

Risk Management Implications

<i>Risk Level</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Moderate	The proposed amendments to the Notice are considered appropriate for the Shire fire risk and community expectations.

Consultation

The review of the Notice has taken place with consultation between Shire staff and the Shire's Bush Fire Control Officers.

Resource Implications*Financial*

Funds are provided in the annual budget for the development and publishing of the Notice.

Workforce

Nil.

Options

1. Support the recommendation.
2. Amend the recommendation.

Conclusion

The proposed Notice is required under section 33 of the Act and applies a reasonable standard of fire prevention requirements across land categories within the Shire to prevent the spread or extension of a bushfire. The Notice also prescribes additional Special Work Orders to be issued as required for the provision of additional requirements to manage any land that is considered to pose a higher bushfire risk.

5.2 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer Model

File Ref:	D26/22960
Previous Items:	Nil.
Applicant:	Nil.
Author and Title:	Louise Pleasance, Manager Governance
Declaration of Interest:	Nil.
Voting Requirements:	Simple Majority
Appendices:	Item 5.2 - Appendix 1 - Revised Position Descriptions - Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Recommendation/Committee Decision BFAC26/004

Moved: D McGuinness

Seconded: J Crotty

That the Bush Fire Advisory Committee:

- 1. Supports a volunteer Chief and Deputy Bush Fire Control Officer model for the Shire of Murray;**
- 2. Supports the proposed revised position descriptions, as show in Appendix 1, for the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer roles for inclusion within the Bush Fire Brigade Standard Operating Procedures Appendices;**
- 3. Notes that remuneration, honorarium or reimbursement arrangements for the positions will be subject to separate consideration by Council; and**
- 4. Notes that an Expression of Interest process will be undertaken seeking nominations from Brigade members for the positions of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.**

In Favour: Cr Ange Rogers, Kevin Jones, Anthony Cocivera, Michael Webster, Justin Crotty and Dean McGuinness

Against: Douglas McLarty

CARRIED 6:1

In Brief

This report provides information regarding the review of the current leadership structure for the Shire of Murray Bush Fire Brigades, specifically relating to the role of the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (**CBFCO**) and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers (**DCBFCO**).

The Shire has operated under both volunteer and employee-based leadership arrangements, including the undertaking of CBFCO functions by the Shire's Coordinator Ranger and Community Safety position.

A workshop involving brigade leadership representatives was undertaken on 15 April 2026 to collaboratively consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (**SWOT**) associated with two proposed models:

- A Shire funded and employed CBFCO; and
- A Volunteer CBFCO and DCBFCO model.

Following the workshop, Brigades were requested to discuss the SWOT outcomes with their members and provide feedback to the Shire regarding the preferred model.

This report summarises the consultation undertaken, outlines the feedback received from Brigades, provides analysis of both models, presents revised draft position descriptions for the Chief and Deputy roles and recommends continuation of the volunteer leadership model based on the feedback response.

Background

The Shire of Murray is responsible for the establishment, maintenance and management of Bush Fire Brigades in accordance with the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and the Shire of Murray Bush Fire Brigade Standard Operating Procedures (**SOPs**).

Historically, the CBFCO role has operated as a volunteer position appointed by the local government under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

Over the past two years, due to operational and organisational circumstances, the functions of the CBFCO have at times been undertaken by the Shire employee occupying the Coordinator Ranger and Community Safety position. This arrangement was implemented to support continuity of operational leadership and emergency management coordination during periods of transition.

As part of ongoing review and consideration of bush fire management arrangements, the Shire undertook consultation with Brigade leadership representatives regarding the future preferred structure for the CBFCO role.

On 15 April 2026, a workshop was conducted involving Brigade leadership representatives to discuss and consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) associated with two proposed leadership models:

- A Shire funded and employed CBFCO; and
- A volunteer CBFCO model.

The workshop was intended to provide Brigade leadership representatives the opportunity to collaboratively discuss both models and identify operational advantages, concerns and opportunities associated with each arrangement.

Following the workshop, the SWOT analysis was circulated to Brigade leadership representatives with a request that the information be discussed with Brigade members and that Brigades provide feedback to the Shire regarding their preferred model to assist in informing future consideration of bush fire management arrangements.

Report Detail

The consultation process undertaken by the Shire was intended to support collaborative engagement with Brigades and ensure Brigade perspectives were considered as part of future bush fire management planning.

The workshop held on 15 April 2026 provided Brigade leadership representatives the opportunity to openly discuss operational considerations associated with both proposed leadership models through a facilitated SWOT analysis process.

The consultation process specifically sought feedback regarding:

- Operational effectiveness;
- Brigade leadership and culture;
- Succession planning;
- Volunteer engagement and confidence;
- Governance and accountability considerations;
- Emergency management coordination; and

- Long-term sustainability of the leadership structure.

The workshop and subsequent feedback process identified both advantages and challenges associated with each proposed model:

Volunteer Model

The volunteer model was identified as providing strong connection with brigade culture, operational credibility within brigades and continued volunteer ownership of bush fire leadership within the district.

Brigade feedback also identified that volunteers with local operational knowledge and established brigade relationships contribute positively to operational coordination and engagement.

Additional benefits identified through the consultation process included:

- Local operational knowledge and experience;
- Strong volunteer relationships and trust;
- Established understanding of Brigade capability and community expectations;
- Continuation of Brigade leadership pathways and succession opportunities; and
- Preservation of volunteer ownership and culture within the Bush Fire Brigades.

Challenges identified with the volunteer model included:

- Succession planning and role sustainability;
- Increasing operational and administrative workload;
- Volunteer availability during major or prolonged incidents;
- Balancing operational leadership with personal and employment commitments; and
- Ensuring adequate administrative and organisational support for the role.

Paid Employee Model

The paid employee model was identified as potentially providing increased availability, administrative consistency and greater integration with Shire operational management functions.

The paid employee model was identified as potentially providing:

- Increased operational availability;
- Stronger administrative consistency;
- Greater integration with Shire operational management functions;
- Improved capacity to undertake strategic emergency management activities; and
- Greater day-to-day organisational oversight.

Concerns identified through Brigade consultation included:

- Reduced volunteer ownership of the role;
- Potential disconnect from Brigade culture and operational relationships;
- Concerns regarding long-term Brigade engagement and morale;
- Potential perception of reduced Brigade autonomy; and
- Challenges balancing operational emergency management functions with broader organisational responsibilities.

The feedback received from Brigades following the workshop indicated majority support for the continuation of a volunteer CBFCO model. The summarised submissions from each Brigade is as follows:

Respondent	Comment
North Dandalup VBFB	Brigade's position is for a Volunteer Chief. Requested to see the PD's for both CBFCO & DCBFCO to support the roles
Dwellingup VBFB	Brigade supports a Volunteer Chief & Deputy structure. Requested to see job descriptions for the roles
Coolup VBFB	Brigade's preference is for a Paid Chief and Volunteer Deputies model. Requested to see the position descriptions
West Murray VBFB	Brigade position is for a Volunteer Chief. Would like to the volunteer CBFCO payment of around 10-15k with a car. Request job descriptions for both Chief & Deputies
South Yunderup / Ravenswood VBFB	Brigade states that since the PD's were only sent out on 13 May, this did not give them sufficient time to provide a fully informed response. They further reiterated that they oppose any unilateral appointment by the Shire of a CBFCO (that is or will be otherwise in the paid employ of the Shire in any position in addition to performing the role of the CBFCO). Further state that the CBFCO should be appointed based on merit and on a volunteer basis with the addition of a wholly maintained Shire vehicle.
Pinjarra VFRS	Acknowledged that they are not actively involved in the process however general consensus from brigade is for a Volunteer Chief & Deputy.

On consideration of the feedback received, it is considered that the volunteer leadership model remains the preferred operational structure for the Shire of Murray and has been recommended in this report.

Proposed Position Descriptions

As part of the review process, revised draft position descriptions have been prepared for the CBFCO and DCBFCO roles and were provided to Brigades during the consultation process.

The proposed amendments are intended to:

- Provide greater clarity regarding the operational responsibilities and expectations of the roles;
- Improve consistency and understanding of responsibilities;
- Support succession planning and future Expressions of Interest processes; and
- Strengthen governance and operational accountability.

The revised position descriptions do not fundamentally change the responsibilities currently outlined within Appendix 4 of the Bush Fire Brigades SOP's instead they aim to better articulate the duties and expectations already associated with the positions. This is important to ensure that, regardless of the model ultimately adopted, any person appointed to the CBFCO and DCBFCO roles has a clear understanding of the responsibilities of the position.

It is proposed that the revised position descriptions, as show in **Appendix 1**, be incorporated within the Bush Fire Brigade SOP Appendices to support role clarity and understanding of the role responsibilities.

Governance Considerations

The Bush Fire Advisory Committee (**BFAC**) provides an important advisory and consultative role regarding Brigade operational matters. However, the determination of the preferred leadership model and any associated remuneration arrangements remains a matter for Council.

Accordingly, the purpose of this report is to:

- Inform BFAC of the consultation outcomes;
- Seek a recommendation on the preferred model; and
- Seek support for the proposed position descriptions.

Any remuneration, honorarium or reimbursement arrangements associated with the CBFCO and DCBFCO roles would require separate consideration by Council through the budget process.

Should the volunteer model be supported by BFAC, an Expression of Interest (**EOI**) process for the CBFCO and DCBFCO positions will be undertaken prior to Council approval in order to prevent any delay in appointing the Bush Fire leadership roles for the 2026/2027 fire season. The nominations will be assessed by the Shire based on relevant operational experience, leadership capability, qualifications and knowledge relevant to the roles.

The EOI process would be circulated to all Brigades to provide eligible members the opportunity to nominate for consideration.

Council Plan

Focus Area	Planet
Outcome	A resilient community equipped to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.
Objectives	Minimise risks and impacts from fires, floods and other natural disasters.
Actions	Implement the Local Emergency Risk Management Plan to raise community awareness, understanding and confidence in what the Shire is doing to address bushfire risks.

Other Strategic Links

Nil.

Statutory Environment

The *Shire of Murray Bush Fire Brigades Local Law 2024* provides the requirements for SOP's for the management and operation of the Shire's Volunteer Bushfire Brigades including the election of brigade office bearers including FCO's, CBFCO and DCBFCO, Captains, Lieutenants, Secretaries and Treasurers.

The appointment of FCO's, CBFCO and DCBFCO is dealt with in accordance with section 38 of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, which states:

38. Local government may appoint bush fire control officer

- (1) A local government may from time to time appoint such persons as it thinks necessary to be its bush fire control officers under and for the purposes of this Act, and of those officers shall subject to section 38A(2) appoint 2 as the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer who shall be first and second in seniority of those officers, and subject thereto may determine the respective seniority of the other bush fire control officers appointed by it.

Sustainability & Risk Considerations

Economic – (Impact on the Economy of the Shire and Region)

Nil.

Social – (Quality of life to community and/or affected landowners)

Nil.

Environment – (Impact on environment's sustainability)

Nil.

Policy Implications

Nil.

Risk Management Implications

<i>Risk Level</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Moderate	The role of the Chief Bush Fire Officer is a requirement of the <i>Bush Fire Act 1954</i> .

Consultation

The Shire and representatives from each District Bush Fire Brigade attended a workshop on the 15 April 2026 to discuss and consider the model for the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Following the workshop the analysis results were provided to all brigades requesting feedback on the preferred model.

Resource Implications

Financial

Nil.

Workforce

Nil.

Options

1. Adopt the recommendation for Council consideration of the preferred model for the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.
2. Amend or reject the recommendation and determine an alternative position for Council consideration.

Conclusion

The consultation undertaken with brigade leadership representatives and brigade members has provided valuable operational feedback regarding the future bush fire leadership structure within the Shire of Murray.

Feedback received through the workshop and brigade consultation process indicates a majority preference for continuation of a volunteer Chief Bush Fire Control Officer model.

The proposed revised position descriptions are intended to strengthen role clarity, operational understanding and governance consistency regardless of the future model adopted.

This report therefore recommends continuation of the volunteer leadership model, incorporation of the revised position descriptions within the SOP appendices and progression to an Expression of Interest process for nominations for the vacant positions and put the recommendation for Council to consider endorsement of the volunteer model.

6 MOTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETINGS

Nil.

7 NEXT MEETING

The next Bush Fire Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday 8 July 2026 commencing at 6:00pm. The meeting will be held at the Shire of Murray Councillors Lounge and Chambers at 1915 Pinjarra Road, Pinjarra.

8 CLOSURE OF MEETING

There being no further business the Presiding Member declared the meeting closed the time being 6:49pm.

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CHAIRPERSON