



MINUTES OF YASS RIVER-NANIMA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING 1 NOVEMBER 2021

Convened by:	Kane Fillingham A/President
Attendees:	Kane Fillingham (Chair), Neville McMartin (Captain), Gareth Ellem (A/Senior Deputy Captain), Joanne Reid (Treasurer), Scott Burrows (Deputy Captain 1), Rick Mumberson (Deputy Captain 2), Kylie Eggins (Deputy Captain 3 / Training Officer), Damien Eggins (Deputy Captain 4), Tibor Fekete (Deputy Captain 6), Glenn Odlum (Equipment Officer), Sally Kaufmann (Food Controller), Karolyn Odlum (Junior Coordinator), Dave Beattie (A/Secretary).
Invited Attendees	Nil
Location:	On-line via Microsoft Teams
Date and time:	1 November 2021, 7:00 pm
Apologies:	Sonia Slattery (Deputy Captain 7 / WHS Officer)
Absent:	
Minutes by:	A/Secretary

No.	Agenda item
1	Opening and Apologies. The Chair opened the meeting at 7.03 pm by welcoming the members. He noted that Sonia Slattery was unable to attend.

No.	Agenda item
2	<p>Acceptance of Previous Minutes.</p> <p>Executive Meeting of 4 Jun 2021 – The Chair is continuing to work with Mr Burrows and Ms Kaufmann on the minutes of this meeting. Once this work is completed the minutes will be circulated to the members for comment.</p> <p>Executive Meeting of 13 Oct 2021 – No amendments were recorded.</p> <p>Actions Arising from Previous Minutes</p> <p>Internal Shelf for Cat 9 (Feb 19-5). The Cat 9 remains in out of service pending repair. Action on the installation of the shelf will be undertaken upon its return.</p> <p>RFS Recognition of 10 Years Service (Feb 19-8). A finalised membership list has been presented to the Executive Committee for review (see Item 5). The list is to be used to identify those members who qualify for recognition of their service.</p> <p>Mezzanine Works (Oct 20-1). The engineering certification of the work and floor loading is to be undertaken. Mr Mumberson stated that he had spoken to the certifying engineer on the matter and despite a busy schedule; the engineer would be able to perform the work. The Equipment Officer undertook to contact the engineer to coordinate the certification.</p> <p>Water Flooding at Rear of Shed (Oct 20-2). Mr Jason Mumberson had agreed to undertake the initial work to alleviate the flooding occurring at the rear of the fire shed. However, the Chair advised that a new source of grant funding might be available. Given that it is more difficult to secure grants for works already commenced, he requested that no work be initiated until this new source of funding could be investigated.</p> <p>Membership Status of Junior Members (Jun 21-2). Mr Odlum stated that Tarlo Odlum’s membership application had been resubmitted. The Captain advised that he had received a communication from the RFS on the matter just prior to the meeting but hadn’t had the opportunity to read the email. He noted that he was a delegate for new members and that he would process the application as a matter of priority.</p> <p>Propose Creation of Community Engagement Representative at next Brigade GM (Sep 21 -1). The Chair advised that the creation of the Community Engagement Representative had been identified as an agenda item for the December GM.</p> <p>Structure of the Executive Committee (Sep 21 -2). See agenda item 4.</p> <p>A GM be held on 1 December 21 (Sep 21 -3). The GM has been scheduled for 1 December 2021.</p> <p>A letter of appreciation to Yarrh Winery (Sep 21 -4). The Chair advised that a letter had been sent to Yarrh and a framed version would be presented at the Christmas Party. This action item had been completed.</p> <p>Request for Donations letter to be sent to Brigade Residents (Sep 21 -5). The Chair advised that a letter had been developed but changing COVID restrictions had in part, superseded its content. Consideration was now being given to incorporating its content into the next newsletter.</p> <p>Members be Reminded of the Roll Out of One RFS (Sep 21 -6). The Chair noted that this action</p>

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	<p>The Chair proposed that the Minutes of the previous meeting and the update on the actions arising be accepted.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Proposed: Chair Seconded: Mr Ellem Agreed</p>
3	<p>Reports</p> <p>Captain's Report. The Captain confirmed that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Cat 9 vehicle was still undergoing rectification work to resolve a cold starting problem and that he was seeking to have the RFS fund the activity. 2. The Ops Group will meet to review and prioritise a number of proposed hazard reduction burns. <p>Mr Mumberson advised that he would confirm whether recent work around Warrumbui would impact on their hazard reduction burn requirements.</p> <p>Training Officer's Report. The resumption of training will occur on 3 Nov 21. The training night would be used to confirm the status of the trucks, undertake some administrative activities and clean up the shed.</p> <p>The Equipment Officer highlighted that some painting would need to be done inside the shed but it couldn't be done on the training night. The Chair stated that work would need to be done to prepare the shed for the GM and queried whether the painting could be undertaken then. A working bee was tentatively proposed for 20 November 2021.</p> <p>Treasurer's Report. No changes since the last report other than the purchase of an additional scanner.</p> <p>Equipment Officer Report. The Equipment Officer advised that the axe on the Cat 7 had been replaced – this was a donation from the Odlums. The batteries in the Kestrels and torches have been replaced. He will establish a more comprehensive catalogue of equipment items including those items held by the Deputies.</p> <p>Catering Officer's Report. No activity therefore, nothing to report.</p> <p>The Chair proposed that the reports be accepted.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Proposed: Chair Seconded: Mr Ellem Agreed</p>
4	<p>Brigade Structure.</p> <p>The Chair opened discussion by stating that changes to the brigade structure were warranted to match the pace of change within the brigade and heightened level of activity associated with an increased membership. He noted that a forward-looking strategic plan was needed and that it should be taken to the AGMs so that all members could provide input. In this way, it would give the Executive Committee a mandate to undertake activities and further enhance overall transparency. To aid the member's deliberations he had circulated a discussion paper (see attached) that linked the proposed strategic planning process to a revamped Executive Committee structure. He pointed out that the current size of the Executive Committee was unwieldy and struggled to achieve a suitable level of consensus on major issues.</p> <p>The Members were unable to reach consensus on the way forward. While the majority agreed with the need for a strategic planning process they were divided on whether structural change would provide the</p>

No.	Agenda item
	<p>desired outcomes.</p> <p>Mr Fekete observed that, as a new Deputy, he sought out the processes necessary to perform his duties but couldn't locate any definitive guidance. He was critical of the state of the constitution and had found that basic "housekeeping" had not been observed – pointing to the lack of financial delegations as an example.</p> <p>Ms Kaufmann agreed with the need for a more strategic approach to planning but pointed out that the constitution was foisted on the brigade by the RFS in 2018 and has not been properly implemented to date. She went on to say that she was not in favour of reducing the size of the committee as it better represented the wider membership base. She also said that, had the full committee had a greater involvement in recent events, the outcomes might have been different.</p> <p>Mr McMartin said that change was needed to demonstrate that the brigade was serious about ensuring that past mistakes were not repeated. He noted that the proposed sub-committee structure gave more members a greater voice in the running of the brigade. It also offered greater efficiencies by better defining the roles of individuals and leveraging off the expertise available from the broader member base. He went on to say that the smaller Executive would then simply act as a cross-committee conduit and provide brigade level leadership and oversight.</p> <p>Mr Ellem also supported the proposed structure stating that the Deputies had the Ops Group as a forum for discussion and their views could be adequately represented on the Executive by the Captain and Senior Deputy. He noted that it had been his experience in business that large boards tended to work far less efficiently than smaller ones.</p> <p>Mr Odlum felt that the size of the Executive was a problem as it hampered good communication. However, he also expressed concern about who might be put onto the sub-committees, warning that sometimes the best intentions can go awry. Mr Odlum believed that financial delegation reform was essential as some of the current financial processes were overly complex and didn't think that he should constantly refer back to the Executive for relatively small equipment expenditures.</p> <p>The Chair agreed with Mr Odlum, noting that the intention was to utilise the forward planning process combined with a revamped financial delegation system to cut down on the red tape. That wasn't to say that appropriate oversight would be forsaken but there was room for improvement. In relation to the staffing of the sub-committees, the proposal was to use a member of the Executive to lead each sub-committee and ensure they ran smoothly but equally importantly, to better utilise the skills that exist in the brigade.</p> <p>Mr Burrows supported the development of a strategic plan. However, he had concerns about a reduction in the size of the Executive Committee stating that he considered that the more views presented in discussions led to better outcomes. He foresaw an external perception that only four people were really speaking for the whole brigade and a potential diminishment in the role of the Secretary position. He also queried why the Executive would want to reverse a previous decision that the Captain and Senior Deputy should not be involved in sub-committees. As far as who should be on the sub-committees, he felt that processes would need to be developed to ensure the right people were selected. Finally, he suggested that there was no need to put the proposal forward now but it should be left to the new President and Secretary to decide if they wanted to pursue the matter further.</p> <p>The Chair noted Mr Burrows concerns and said that the reason for putting the proposal forward now was to give the new Executive a clear forward-looking mandate, especially since most of the Executive members seem to be agreeing that change is required.</p>

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	<p>Ms Reid stated that she fully supported the concept of a strategic plan and that it should include a capital budget to facilitate appropriate financial delegations. She also supported a smaller Executive Committee but questioned the need for a finance sub-committee. She also believed that the new President should endorse any proposed changes.</p> <p>Ms Eggins advised that change was definitely needed and that she supported the proposed plan. She further noted that not all of the Deputies wanted to be on the Executive Committee.</p> <p>Ms Kaufmann added that while she favoured the larger executive Committee there might be room for some rationalisation. However, the incoming appointments should have the final say. She also proposed that, while the strategic plan was a good idea, it should not be “dumped” on the members but they should be forewarned in something like the Newsletter.</p> <p>Mr Ellem stated that the new appointments might actually be surprised that the Executive was not already working to a strategic plan. Therefore, he urged the members to start putting some thought into what such a plan should contain and to ensure they separate the strategic issues from the tactical.</p> <p>The Chair closed the discussion by saying that it had been his experience with the Little Athletics that a small executive supported by sub-committees was a superior system to a large executive. However, he recognised that the current committee felt that this was a step too far at the moment and that the only points of agreement reached at this meeting was that change was needed and that it should start with the development of a strategic plan. Therefore, he proposed that the Executive Committee develop a Strategic Plan that would provide a clear mandate for the actions of the Executive Committee and that this plan be presented to the 2022 AGM.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Proposed: Chair Seconded: Mr Ellem Agreed unanimously</p>
5	<p>Other Business.</p> <p>Honours and Awards. Mr Fekete voiced his concern that there appears to have been a lack of activity in managing the honours and awards for members of the brigade. He said that this was an important element for any organisation but particularly for a volunteer agency. He raised the possibility of appointing a sub-committee to examine the status of members who were approaching milestones.</p> <p>Ms Kaufmann said that once the work of the membership sub-committee was completed, the Executive would be in a position to determine who was in line for honours and awards.</p> <p>Brigade Register Sub-committee. Ms Kaufmann advised the members that the sub-committee had identified 43 members the brigade may have lost contact with over time, particularly during the Covid restrictions and required the Executive’s approval to approach those individuals to establish their intentions in relation to remaining involved in brigade activities. She also highlighted that there was a general need to approach all members and residents listed on the brigade register to ensure the personal details being held are current.</p> <p>Mr Odlum queried whether there were any rules surrounding the identification of who should be approached. Mr Fekete advised that the process being applied was consistent with RFS guidelines. Ms Kaufmann was requested to circulate the list of names to the Executive members and seek their response within seven days. At that point, the membership sub-committee would approach as many people on the list as practicable prior to the GM.</p>

No.	Agenda item
6	Closure. The meeting was closed at 8:43 pm.

David Beattie
A/Secretary
13 October 2021

Attachments

No	Document title	Author
1	Action Items	Secretary
2	Brigade Governance Structure – Discussion Paper	President

ATTACHMENT 1 – ACTION ITEMS

Date	Action Item	Responsible Member	Status
5 Feb 19	Shelf for Cat 9 Vehicle to be procured and fitted.	Captain	Open
5 Feb 19	10-Year Service Recognition. Definitive membership list to be reviewed by the Executive Committee.	Membership Sub-Committee	Open
6 Oct 20	Mezzanine Works. Engineering certification required	Equipment Officer	Open
6 Oct 20	Flooding at Rear of Shed. On hold pending possible grant submission.	Mr Mumberson	Open
4 Jun 21	Correct Membership Status of Junior Members. Proposal for ordinary membership included on next GM Agenda.	A/Secretary	Open
29 Sep 21	Propose creation of Community Engagement Representative at next Brigade GM. Included on GM Agenda.	A/President	Open
29 Sep 21	Structure of the Executive Committee considered at 1 Nov 21 Executive Committee meeting. Strategic Plan to be developed.	A/President	Open
29 Sep 21	A GM be held on 1 December 21.	A/Secretary	Open
29 Sep 21	A letter of appreciation be sent to Yarrh Winery	A/President	Closed
29 Sep 21	Request for Donations letter to be sent to Brigade Residents. Drafted but may be incorporated into Newsletter.	A/Secretary	Open
13 Oct 21	Members be reminded of roll out of One RFS	A/Secretary	Open
1 Nov 21	Develop A Strategic Plan for the 2022 AGM	President	Open
1 Nov 21	Circulate list of 43 names to Exec members	Ms Kaufmann	Open

ATTACHMENT 2 – BRIGADE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE - DISCUSSION PAPER

Yass River / Nanima Bush Fire Brigade Governance Structure – Discussion Paper

Outline

AGM approves an annually maintained Strategic Plan consisting of

1. **Operational Capability** – Field Officer pathways, training, hazard mitigation, catering and community engagement
2. **Infrastructure and Equipment** – to support and enhance Operational Capability
3. **Membership** – ensuring we continue to attract and retain membership and includes WHS
4. **Finance** – forecast income and expenditure that directly supports our Operational Capability

The Strategic Plan has a 3-5 year horizon with a 1-year focus.

Exec consists of President, Captain, Senior Deputy, Treasurer and Secretary

Exec chairs four standing sub-committees:

1. Operational Capability – Captain
2. Infrastructure and Equipment – Senior Deputy
3. Membership – President
4. Finance – Treasurer

Exec manages all day-to-day activities and reports to AGM on achievement against the plan. It also manages any crossover between sub-committees

Specialist sub-committees that report to the Exec can be formed as required, but then disband.

Only AGM and Exec minutes are published.

Background

At the September 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee, members queried the role of Deputy Captains on the Committee. From the discussions it became clear that there was no overarching guidance on the role of the Committee and the exact nature of the functions it was to perform. This lack of clear guidance was exacerbated when the constitution was examined and the role of the Executive Committee was articulated as:

8.3 The executive committee manages the Brigade other than in relation to operational activities.

8.4 The executive committee must manage the Brigade in accordance with any directions or conditions adopted by majority resolution at the AGM or a general meeting

So general meetings of the brigade are supposed to give direction to the executive committee. This is possibly something we haven't done in a consistent manner in the past. Clearly, all members have to understand the proposed direction for the brigade in order to discuss and propose modification as necessary. So we need to set the longer-term objectives and outcomes and devise an obvious pathway to those objectives. To achieve this, a forward-looking plan is required which the members can examine, nuance and support. The executive committee would then implement that plan.

But first we need to decide what our primary objectives are, something like:

We protect life, assets and the environment by providing emergency response to extinguish bushfire, and assist other emergency services agencies as required, during the response phase of emergencies. We train to respond to emergency situations, and plan and undertake bushfire risk mitigation activities as part of the preparedness and prevention phases of emergency management. We promote community resilience by engaging with community and supporting community activities.

The key elements that support our primary objectives are membership and equipment capabilities now and into the future. What we need is people, money, equipment and skills. Therefore, we need to present to each AGM an annual Strategic Plan that seeks to deliver these four key elements:

1. **Operational Capability** – Field Officer pathways, training, hazard mitigation, catering and community engagement
2. **Infrastructure and Equipment** – to support and enhance Operational Capability
3. **Membership** – ensuring we continue to attract and retain membership and includes WHS
4. **Finance** – forecast income and expenditure that directly supports our Operational Capability

To realise the plan and in the interest of efficiency, the Exec should be reduced in size and provided with the direct support of four sub-committees. The Exec should consist of President, Captain, Senior Deputy, Treasurer and Secretary.

The Exec should chair four sub-committees which each carries functions such as:

1. **Operational Capability**
 - a. Training
 - b. Field Officer pathways
 - c. Hazard mitigation
 - d. Catering
 - e. Media/ Community Engagement
2. **Infrastructure and Equipment**
 - a. Any infrastructure planning
 - b. Major Equipment Decisions
 - c. Management of trucks and equipment
 - d. Major capital improvement projects
3. **Membership**
 - a. Membership (incl maintaining the master list of members and quals)

- b. Attracting and retaining members
 - c. Awards and honours
 - d. Promotion of the Brigade profile within the local and wider community
 - e. WHS
4. **Finance**
- a. Budget
 - b. Donations
 - c. Grants

Exec manages all day-to-day activities and reports to AGM. It also manages any crossover between sub-committees. These sub-committees will be staffed with people best suited from the brigade. There are members who don't have an active fire-fighting role who could fulfil these positions.

Sub-committees could be formed using any member within the membership base.

By way of example, the President could oversee the Membership sub-committee. This committee would manage the one definitive membership list. The sub-committee would ensure that new members were appropriately inducted into the brigade and ensure any awards or honours are attributed in a timely manner. But as importantly, it would be proactive by possibly monitoring and reporting on the age profile of the brigade, WHS issues, looking to identify members who could fill various roles other than frontline fire fighting and ensure that junior members receive the necessary support. It would also ensure that the Brigades public profile be sufficient that we are attracting new members and has an appropriate level of awareness within our community.

The Exec would be responsible for submitting/updating the elements of the Strategic plan, which would be presented and adopted at each AGM. This provides our Members with a vision for what we aim to achieve and empowers them to support the plan, ultimately enabling the Exec to do its job.