



Community Bushfire Reference Group Terms of Reference

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1. BACKGROUND

The Adelaide Hills Council (**Council**) district is comprised of extensive areas rated as high bushfire risk. The Council recognises the extent of the threat to lives and property created by that risk.

In an ongoing manner, the Council has undertaken works on its land to reduce the bushfire threat posed to life, as well as to the assets on that land and adjoining community assets. It has also worked with government agencies and the community to manage the overall bushfire threat and to increase the community's preparedness for future bushfires in its area.

The Council recognises the expertise, knowledge and experience that exists within the community regarding such risks, as well as the importance of working closely with relevant agencies to assist it with its bushfire mitigation activities, to ensure constructive and effective approaches to increase community resilience.

2. ROLE

Against this background, the Community Bushfire Reference Group (**Group**) has been established by the Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) of the Council for the purpose of providing advice to the CEO, or their delegate, on bushfire mitigation and preparedness including, but not limited to, matters such as local bushfire risks (including specific risks in certain locations), threat assessment and knowledge of bushfire mitigation plans across other organisations, including those operating in the Council area.

The Group will share not only its own insights, but those of other groups and community members, with respect to challenges to preparedness and suggest effective strategies, as well as provide links to other organisations with bushfire knowledge, skills and experience.

The Group will be consulted by the CEO, or their delegate, during the preparation and implementation of the Council's bushfire mitigation programs and activities.

3. STRATEGIC LINKS

Strategic Plan 2020-24 – A brighter future

Goal	1	A Functional Built Environment
Objective	B3	Consider external influences in our long term asset management and adaptation planning
Priority	B3.4	Proactively adapt our built environment to changes in social and environmental factors to minimise the impact from natural hazards such and fire and flood

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Goal	2	Community Wellbeing
Objective	C4	An active, healthy, thriving and resilient community
Priority	C4.5	Take an all hazards approach to emergency management so we can support the emergency services and the community before, during and after disaster events
Goal	4	A Valued Natural Environment
Objective	N2	Recognise the benefits of ecosystem services and improve environmental resilience by reducing environmental impacts
Priority	N2.3	Mitigate bushfire risks across the landscape by undertaking fuel reduction activities including woody weed control, maintenance of asset protection zones and educate & enforcement to reduce fuels on private property
Goal	4	A Valued Natural Environment
Objective	N3	Nurture valuable partnerships and collaborations and engage the local community in the management of our natural environment
Priority	N3.1	Increase knowledge and environmental awareness within the community through engagement and education



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4. FUNCTIONS

The Group will provide advice to the CEO, or their delegate, as and when requested, regarding:

- Bushfire mitigation strategies in the Council's area;
- Opportunities for coordination of bushfire mitigation activities;
- Preparation and implementation of the Council's bushfire mitigation programs and activities;
- Networking opportunities to connect with experts, community groups, organisations and skilled individuals in the areas of bushfire mitigation;
- Community preparedness for bushfire response and recovery;
- Community engagement and communications relating to bushfire preparedness;
- Recovery needs of communities impacted by bushfire events; and
- Areas for improvement relating to preparedness, disaster risk reduction, bushfire response and recovery

The Group will act as a conduit between the CEO, or their delegate, and the community to ensure the timely and effective exchange of accurate information and messaging relating to bushfire preparedness in the Council area.

5. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Group shall be determined by the CEO from time to time and may differ depending on the nature of the advice being sought in any particular instance.

Generally (but without limiting the CEO's discretion to depart from this structure), the Group will consist of:

- up to six (6) organisation and community representatives who belong to any one or more of the following categories (with ideally all three categories being represented); and
- One (1) Council member, appointed by resolution of the Council.

Categories of organisation and community representatives

- Persons currently associated with the South Australian Country Fire Service (the **CFS**) in particular with respect to "Region 1" and "Region 2" (which may include volunteers and/or paid staff members of CFS);
- Members of the Adelaide Hills Community Action Bushfire Network (the **AHCABN**);
- Residents of the Adelaide Hills Council area.

The CEO may seek nominations from the CFS and/or AHCABN with respect to the appointment of organisation and community representatives as and when deemed appropriate by the CEO. The CEO may also seek nominations of proxies from the CFS and/or AHCABN, in the event that the principal nominee(s) of the CFS and/or AHCABN are unable to attend any meeting or otherwise participate in the proceedings of the Group.

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The CEO may utilise an expression of interest process to select residents of the Adelaide Hills Council area as members of the Group. Residents with relevant qualifications and/or experience in bushfire preparedness, response and/or recovery will generally be preferred.

The CEO may require proof of identity or qualifications, and/or a National Police Record Check certificate, from any prospective Group member as a precondition to selection and may impose any other preconditions which the CEO considers reasonable and appropriate.

6. MEMBERSHIP TERM

At the time of appointment, the CEO will indicate to organisation and community representatives the term of their appointment. At the expiry of a term of appointment, the CEO may re-appoint organisation and community representatives for another term to be determined by the CEO.

Notwithstanding the term of appointment, members of the Group serve at the pleasure of the CEO and the CEO may terminate any appointment and/or reconstitute the Group on whatever basis the CEO sees fit from time to time.

The Council member appointed by the Council will be appointed for a two-year term. If the CEO proposes to terminate the appointment of a Council Member or to replace that Council Member with another Council Member, this will be sought by resolution of the Council.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The CEO shall appoint a member of staff as Executive Officer for the Community Bushfire Reference Group and will provide other supporting resources as necessary.

8. PROCEDURE AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS AND OTHER CONSULTATION

The Group will be convened and consulted on ad hoc basis, whenever the CEO, or their delegate, determines that it is appropriate to seek the Group's advice.

The Group may confer by way of meetings held in person or electronically (or a combination of in person and electronically), or by correspondence, as and in the manner directed by the CEO, or their delegate.

The CEO, or their delegate, (with the assistance of the Executive Officer) will give notice of any meetings of the Group and will record the proceedings of the Group in an appropriate manner.

The CEO, or their delegate, will preside at any meeting of the Group. Procedures will be as determined by the CEO and will be characterised by a minimum of formality. Advice and recommendations of the Group may be communicated to the CEO, or their delegate, by any method directed by the CEO.

Meetings will not be open to the public. However, the CEO, or their delegate, may invite any person they see fit to attend any meeting as an observer or to provide any briefing to the Group.

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Without limitation this may include officers of the Council, the Department for Environment and Water, SA Water, or the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board.

9. LEGAL STATUS OF GROUP

The Group is not a committee or subsidiary of the Council and has no delegated power to make decisions on behalf of the Council.

The Group provides advice to the CEO, or their delegate. The CEO may in turn exercise functions of the CEO or direct other staff to exercise functions taking into account that advice. In appropriate cases, the CEO may also communicate the Group's advice to the Council elected body.

The CEO may amend these terms of reference at any time.

10. MEMBERSHIP STATUS

Organisation and community representatives who are members of the Group have status as volunteers of the Council and a condition of their appointment is that they are willing to register as Council volunteers. It is intended that they will be subject to any Volunteer Insurance Policy that may be in place from time to time as part of Council's membership of the LGA Mutual Liability Scheme.

CFS members' involvement in the Group constitutes the exercise of official duties as CFS volunteers and/or staff and as such will work under the policies and procedures of the CFS.

Organisation and community representatives who are members of the Group are not indemnified by the Council against any liability arising as a result of their actions or omissions related to their involvement with the Group or undertaken in connection with their role as a member of the Group.

Council members are protected from civil liability with respect to any honest acts or omission undertaken in their role as a member of the Group, pursuant to section 39 of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

11. CONDUCT OF MEMBERS

Organisation and community representatives who are members of the Group are volunteers of the Council and must abide by any Policy or Procedure in place for Council volunteers (including as amended from time to time).

All members of the Group must disclose any potential conflict of interest they may have in an item of business for discussion and, following such disclosure, must adhere to any direction the CEO may have with respect to that item of business (which may include not participating in discussion regarding the relevant item of business).

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A conflict of interest for the purpose of these Terms of Reference means any circumstances where the member has any involvement in either a personal or business capacity with respect to the item of business, and the member may gain a benefit or suffer a loss if the CEO acts in accordance with the Group's recommendation (whatever it might be) with respect to the item of business.

Members of the Group must not use their position, or information received by reason of their membership, to act dishonestly or gain benefit for themselves, or another, or to cause detriment to the Council, either directly or indirectly.

Members of the Group shall observe principles of confidentiality on all matters, unless otherwise authorised by the CEO, or their delegate, to make any information public. Members of the Group are expected to:

- Attend meetings regularly;
- Prepare for meetings;
- Comply with their obligations in respect of conflicts of interest;
- Maintain confidentiality when it is required; and
- Treat other members of the Group, as well as Council officers, staff and guests, with courtesy and respect at all times.

12. SPOKESPERSON

Members of the Group are not permitted to speak to the media or make representations on social media on behalf of the Group, or the Council, unless specifically authorised to do so by the CEO.

13. REPORTING

The CEO may provide a report to the Council annually at the end of each bushfire season (or at any other interval the CEO sees fit), to inform the Council with respect to the areas of work the Group has contributed to, as well as identifying issues requiring further consideration of the Council.