

**MINUTES RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE, LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.30 PM**

1. WELCOME

Chairperson, Councillor Michael Kingwill welcomed all present at the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Official apologies were received from Stephen Luff, Kay Whitehead, Ron Blyton, Ian Pratt, David McGruer, Theresa Lonergan, Mayor Gene Vanzella, Cr McKenzie and Alan Tonkin.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1 August 07

Confirmation that the minutes for the previous meeting are a true and accurate record.

Graham Smith / Paul Mullins **CARRIED**

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Chairperson asked for comments or any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

- A Finance Meeting to discuss the previous funding estimates has not been held due to allocation, as yet, not being released
- Question if the program charges for heavy plant hire has come in yet: Advised not directly but if there is considerable excessive plant usage, Councils will be reimbursed for the costs
- Questioned if this would be outside a S44 Fire and what is classed as excessive use. Each circumstances would be considered separately
- Advised that the halfway fire on Lindley's property was expensive for Gundagai Shire
- Comprehensive vehicle insurance: Gundagai Insurance is calculated on number of vehicles, with an average cost of \$285 per vehicle totaling \$8000; Tumbarumba and Tumut are insured on asset value; Tumbarumba costs were \$11,000 and Tumut was \$15,000. Tumut premium costs have gone up due to a total loss last year that was not covered under the S44.
- The bus that tipped over did not belong to the Zone and it is understood that it was repaired

Nothing else was mentioned so moved on.

5. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ZONE BUSINESS PLAN

Since the agenda was prepared the Quarterly Performance Review and Zone Business Plan had been signed off by the Regional Manager.

- The majority of the brigades have accepted the Constitution and also the classification so overall not below performance on any issues
- No 1 in Item 1(Local Zone Website) : The Minutes of zone meetings not on the local web site. It was explained that Peter Jones has been on leave
- Asked if there is a counter on the website: Explained there is and at this point 1219 hits to the site
- Item 2. Cadet Teams in Tumut. Tumba and Gundagai not successful: Gundagai does not have any teacher involvement in the program.
- Tony will be attending the Cadet Championships in Penrith on 5th /6th October. He stated that RFS Region South has sponsored a bus for the Cadets to attend the Championships, therefore no costs associated for the local

**MINUTES RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE, LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.30 PM**

Councils. Accommodation is supplied at St Paul's College with 2 teams totaling 12 students attending

- Item 3: Confirmation that commencing the Bush Fire Season early was the right decision considering current conditions.
- Comments:-
 - Northern side of Gundagai is dry
 - Usually on long weekends people burn blackberries which can get into the bush. At least now it is controlled by Captains with the permits. Last year brigades and Forests were out all weekend attending escaped burns
- Questioned why the drought effects the availability of Volunteers:
 - Tired from last year and volunteers getting older and less of them
 - Drought is causing people on the land a lot of hardship: watering and feeding stock and permanent farmers are now working full time
 - will be hard to find crews to go out of area and last year hard to get crews to go in the local areas
- Water a bigger issue this year compared to last year, with no sign of rain.

Questioned that after holding all AGMs, what is the general feeling from the Volunteers regarding the restructure of RFS from the old days when it was under the Council:

Volunteers have an air of acceptance of the changes in the RFS and a lot of changes in a short period of time. They can see that the RFS is behind them in doing their job and as there have been no comments regarding the change so we can assume that the Volunteers are accepting of them.

Moved: The Quarterly Report be noted - Paul Mullins/ Robert Field. CARRIED

6. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

It was explained that the quarterly Finance report was for July/ August period only:

- Insurance was paid in the first quarter
- Estimates have not been included in the report as they have not been confirmed as yet
- The fire vehicle repair for Gobarralong will be a carry-over
- Tony asked if Gundagai Council has received all reimbursements: Informed they were paid in mid July

Moved: Recommendations on expenses be approved - Paul Luff/John Jervois
CARRIED

7. PREPARATION AND APPROVAL OF 2008/2009 FUNDING ESTIMATES

A full report prepared on Rural Fire Funding Estimate 2008/2009 for each of the Districts

- Comment in regards to the financial circle in that each year the RFS finance is one step behind: 07/08 still not approved as yet and the finance for 08/09 is being discussed today
- The meeting was informed that the Zone Manager is reasonably certain that everything asked for will be approved from 2007/08. There appears to be more money in the "Fund" than what the local Government contribute for (two years ago it was the other way around).

**MINUTES RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE, LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.30 PM**

- Finance sheets presented are draft recommendations for each of the Councils subject to approval at the Liaison meeting.

Questioned on the M&R estimates.

- Applied for a grant for the airport and was not successful so we still have a problem and asked how this was going to be addressed? We will have a hot summer and will have people working in the sun with no facilities for them. Looking at hiring an air conditioned ATCO hut with an annex on the side and supply of a generator. Tony recommended that we apply for the grant again next year.
- Tony explained that the computer budget internet services are figures given by RFS and also explained that the computer Wide Area Network is for the RFS Server at HO
- Group Vehicle donated by SWS will be given back. The two vehicles that were supplied by the Council were not previously available through the funds. Things have changed due to Group Officer meetings at Narrandera where it was made clear that these vehicles are necessary
- For Tumut the bottom line percentage wise is \$413,868 compared to \$601,917 last year with the \$200,000 for the Riverina Highlands Building enhancement: Gundagai is \$284,474 compared to \$275,333 last year and Tumbarumba \$381,551 compared to \$346,129 last year. Special circumstances for Tumbarumba are legal fees for brigade sheds including the Rosewood shed. If these were removed it would be less than last year: The legal fees are for Lands Department, surveys and legal fees with land owners,
- Reimbursable items for FCC rents have gone up to \$40,000 for the year:
- Fire Retardant mixer upgrade is valued at \$15,000 and is to be divided 1/3 each by SF NSW, NPWS and RFS. This will be divided as per the formula: Gundagai and Tumba will pay \$1500 and Tumut \$2500.
- Program charges are an estimate only: \$20,000 for Gundagai & Tumba & \$25,000 for Tumut
- Hazard Reduction is a subsidy of \$1000
- Staff Trainee Subsidy would cost around \$25,000 total, which would supply a trainee with 12 months work and Cert III on completion of the Administration Traineeship. Tumba not happy with the idea and requested a work duty statement for the traineeship which will be supplied to Gundagai and Tumut also.
- Only items that can be changed are the Capital Items and Reimbursable Items.
- PPE is now adequate and we are now starting to supply wet weather gear for volunteers on the highways. The cost to set up a volunteer with complete with gear is around \$800. Safety is not something that can be ignored
- Reminded that the Coolac amenities is \$20,000 of which the Brigade is willing to pay a contribution
- As part of the 5 year tanker replacement plan North Gundagai gets a new CAT 7 and asking for 50% over a two year period with the North Gundagai Cat 1 going to Mundarlo. Another option is to go for a 2nd hand CAT 7.
- Nth Gundagai Captain spoke to Gundagai GM and suggested the Council put in more this year and cut back next year so this can be fast tracked.
- Explained this could be fast tracked if the Council increased the bid for replacement tankers from \$67,000 to \$135,000
- Nth Gundagai Brigade have had spray bars put on their Cat 1 at a cost of \$8000 which is way over the \$2,500 estimate for spray bars. The work completed was a set of spray bars, fitting another hose reel which Nth Gundagai supplied, raising the heavy hose reel up 50 mm and altering the plumbing on the front to

**MINUTES RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE, LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.30 PM**

take a 38mm - believes the cost should be questioned. Asked what the costs were when Nangus and Muttama tanker had this done.

- All new tankers have spray bars as standard equipment and are no longer an option. .
- Questioned what staff vehicles are in the Zone: 4 staff vehicles which includes a Ute; Hilux dual cab; station wagon and a sedan. The replacement costs are set by HO with 2 vehicles a year replaced and any shortfall of costs in the changeover is picked up by HO. Fuel is included in the Staff Vehicle Maintenance.
- It was requested that a duty statement for the Trainee be supplied to each of the Councils along with the estimates as they are presented today, for the next Council meetings.

Moved: Graham Smith/ Paul Luff that the Committee accept the estimates: CARRIED

8. REPORT ON RIVERINA HIGHLANDS BUILDING RENOVATIONS

Chris Adams announced that work is to commence on the renovation for Probation & Parole office very shortly. The other changes in the building will carry on from this and is only a matter of weeks away.

Tony Clee explained that there is \$200,000 funding enhancement for an upgrade of the FCC. The Local Government 13% contribution is \$26,000.

A brief overview of the renovation was given and explained that although RFS will not have use of the former National Park office space. An area will become available which is roughly equivalent to the former parks office area.

It was pointed out that RFS office will be very blocked in and asked if there had been any developments in obtaining the Home Start area. It was explained at this point there was no area to re-locate the service.

Questioned about a stand alone Fire Control Centre:

- \$200,000 was for the renovation work at this location.
- It was explained this is a separate issue but the option for a stand alone FCC would need a contribution for 5 years to get the funds up front. If the renovations cost \$60,000, \$140,000 will be held at HO.
- First decision is what way we go. In the short term something has to be done as the current facilities are not sufficient when a major incident is running
- It was asked will a stand alone FCC have the capacity for NSW SF, NPWS and RFS to operate out of and have the other agencies been approached to contribute.
- It was explained that there is no obligation for the other agencies to pay and that the Fire Fighting fund is 87% funded from State and Insurance.
- Volunteers have suggested taking a lease on Harry Kell and Sons vacant building. The annual rent for those premises would be \$20,000 per year compared to \$40,000 for the current premises
- There was discussion on the responsibilities of landlord and the advantages of relocating: more room for operations during major incidents, training venues and meeting rooms.
- The Billo Fire illustrated the inadequacies of the current location when working with Forest NSW necessitating traffic up and down stairs.

**MINUTES RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE, LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.30 PM**

- Commented that if RFS is serious about Kell's building they need to get the costing to upgrade the building and facilities and the associated relocation costs
- It was asked if the \$200,000 could be spent to upgrade these facilities as RFS are continually moved around and this would provided a stable FCC
- It was questioned whether would there be time to prepare the premises at this time of the year.
- Tony explained that there are offices already there
- Paul Luff said that it is an important decision to be made now and would need discussion on the issue
- The current plan for the renovations would make it hard for people to find RFS.
- Need to investigate Harry Kell's but do not think it possible for this year.
- Roughly 60% of the shire is National Parks and State Forests. As a result of what has happened in the last couple of years in Tumut Shire, the Local Emergency Management Committee has completed an Emergency Risk Management Plan and bushfire came up as the No 1 risk for Tumut Shire. This would probably be similar for Tumbarumba and Gundagai Shires. We are reasonably well equipped with our volunteers and tankers but need to have a FCC to run the fires. We need to make a start to the process now to achieve this in 5 to 6 years
- Some funding could come from Emergency Management Australia to assist with building a stand alone FCC. This would take about 18 months for a EMA decision to be made and we would need to apply in 5 months time.
- Forests and Parks looked at the renovation plan but do not think it is adequate
- Tony suggested that the Liaison Committee go and inspect the Kell premises whilst all committee members are present. He phoned to organise an inspection.

The meeting was adjourned for the committee to inspect the premises.

Comments after the inspection:

- Go ahead with the renovation for this coming season as is a far better facility than Kell's.
- Chris Adams asked what will happen with the remainder of the funds once the renovations are completed as the Tumut Shire is paying 13% on \$200,000. He questioned if the remaining \$140,000 can be put into the Tumut Tanker replacement program to purchase tankers
- Tony said that this may be possible and explained this is called a budget transfer
- It was also explained that as a single budget it is one deal for the Council contribution and how this is split up is between the Councils.

Motion Chris Adams/John Jervois that other agencies be put on the agenda to contribute towards the new FCC as all S44 have involved either NSW SF or NPWS:

9. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION ON FEASIBILITY OF COUNCIL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS STAND ALONE FIRE CONTROL CENTRE (FCC)

- Cr. Smith said he is not keen on the idea of a stand alone FCC but ultimately the Councils will vote on this
- Tumbarumba Council would not consider a stand alone FCC until the costings are done and a decision can be made then.
- Chris Adams commented that the FCC is a good set-up here and can't see a reason to leave but would agree if other councils accept it.
- Mixed feeling on the issue and if it going to happen it will take a few years and must make a start towards this now

**MINUTES RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE, LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.30 PM**

- Paul Mullins suggest that Tony Clee put together a discussion paper with the pros and cons of a stand alone FCC as at this stage there is nothing to take to any of the Councils. Also suggested that a proposal be worked on to involve other agencies
- Tony explained that it would not get in this years budget so there will be another 12 months to work out some form of a strategy and look at all the options for next years budget
- It was decided to go with the short term plan and Tony develops a discussion paper for a stand alone FCC
- It was asked if Home Start can go somewhere else. Chris Adams explained that Home Start has a monthly lease and does provide a valuable service to the community

Motion: Paul Mullins/ Michael Neyland that Tony Clee investigate more fully the possibility of the construction of a stand alone Fire Control Centre and prepare a report.

Meeting closed 4.43