

Bushcare Network Meeting – Bushfire Recovery

December 4, 2013

Attending: Ivan Jeray, Ray Richardson, Maeve Dunnet, Elly Chatfield, Paul Vale, Rob Agars, Neil Stuart, Peter Christmas (BMCC Bushcare).

Meeting commenced at 6pm.

Apologies from: Elizabeth Mitchell, David King, Margaret and Warwick Tafe.

Note as to procedure: This meeting was held in the shadow of the October bushfire events. As such, it was mooted to be an informal event, as seen in Peter's pencilled Agenda for the night. As it turned out, this informality produced some significant ideas and those are the key things recorded here. Decisions were made and approvals given for actions by individuals and working groups. These notes therefore serve as the written authorities for the actions so taken, which will be reported on at a future ordinary meeting.

Neil Stuart advised a new email address for Bushcare and Network business:

fondonch@bigpond.com

Venue bookings for 2014 meetings. Members to propose dates, schedule to come from that.

Note on dates for the DLEP exhibition. The dates are 4-12-13 to 5-3-14.

Fund raising opportunities. It may be a worthwhile project in 2014 to investigate the opportunities in a co-ordinated approach to supporting Bushcare to do fundraising activities.

Bushfire in the Blue Mountains

Weed blitz

A potential opportunity may exist for Bushcare volunteers from across the program to be involved in organised activities to help maintain vulnerable natural areas post fire. The network may be a natural hub for proposing activities in this regard, and focussing communications, taking into account the already full commitment of the Bushcare team delivering the current program. Some discussion, the best thing to do is first watch the response of the vegetation in fire affected natural areas, identify appropriate areas and situations which would positively benefit from a targeted weed blitz.

Moral support

Suggestions included organising a mechanism for volunteers from the whole Blue Mountains to pitch in and help groups in fire affected areas on their work days, and extending invitations for those volunteers in these fire affected groups to visit in a reciprocal sense. The first principle has to be sensitivity for the fire affected volunteers. It may be some time before it would be an appropriate step to begin consulting with groups to propose this.

Potential for a backlash from the community

During discussion, the issue of a backlash from the community outside of Bushcare was raised. A scenario could be that the active activities to protect and bring back the bushland are a direct threat to

the safety of people and property near the bushland interfaces. An extreme view would see Bushcare activities being in part responsible for what has happened recently. An initial suggestion is community education around the relationship between natural and weed vegetation, and fire risk. For example, a plume of Lantana or Radiata Pine may in fact pose a greater hazard than a natural interface with appropriate and targeted asset protection zones and maintenance.

Strata of issues

The discussion raised that the issues facing the bushland, volunteers and the community sit with different levels of effect and response. Simplified, two main levels are the governance and financial level and the grass roots level where a Bushcare response would fit. The network could form a working group to identify realistic responses which sit with the strengths of the Bushcare community. Initial ideas for responses were community education, weed blitz activities, support for volunteers by the volunteer community, and monitoring of the response of the fire affected natural interface.

Letter to Council, recreational events in Bushcare sites.

Neil Stuart introduced a third letter to Council officers regarding the issue of recreational events in Bushcare sites. He presented a short history of The Gully/McRaes Paddock Plan for Conservation since it was produced in the early 1990's. Neil noted:

Three categories in the Plan, in regards to McRaes Paddock, do not allow for active recreational use. Therefore, to allow for active activities goes against this. Neil feels uncomfortable allowing this to happen without questioning. This is included in Paul Vale's previous letter, suggestion that this be repeated in the new letter.

Vote on the letter

Paul Vale moved that the meeting vote on the letter, seconded by Ray Richardson. The motion was that the letter be sent, including the amendments discussed, as soon as the next meeting date is confirmed. *NOTE* the network meeting subsequently proposed February 12 or 19 for the next meeting.

The motion was carried by the network meeting.

Network Protocol

The subcommittee headed by Ray Richardson had produced a proposed protocol on correspondence. Ray read out to the meeting the six points of the proposed protocol. The meeting discussed the proposal.

Vote on proposed protocol

Neil Stuart moved that the meeting vote to accept the proposed protocol with the amendments discussed. Paul Vale seconded Neil's motion.

The motion was carried unanimously by the meeting. The amended protocol as voted on will be circulated.

Further draft protocols had been developed for discussion. It was considered that these should be circulated prior to further discussion. Ray recommended that Ivan Jeray sends the proposed protocol to Bushcare.

Network Conference outcomes.

Paul Vale suggested that he may be able to come to the Bushcare office in the future to work on an initial sort of the conference working group results. With a view to bringing basic feedback to the network for a de-brief.

Vote on a second conference in 2015

Ray moved that in 2015, a second Bushcare Network Conference be planned. Paul seconded.

The meeting carried the motion.

Tree clearing legislation following bushfire events

Ivan Jeray proposed that the network looks into the legislation which has been hastily proposed to govern the clearing of natural vegetation, and felling of trees. What would be likely outcomes and effects for the bushland interface. Ivan offered to begin investigating.

Making Bushcare accessible to people with disabilities

Maeve Dunnet presented the meeting with a proposal that the Bushcare organisation should investigate opportunities to give people with disabilities the best possible opportunity to participate and enjoy Bushcare in the Blue Mountains. Maeve provided the statistic that people with disabilities represent 20% of the community, yet are not recognised or catered for accordingly. The meeting discussed the issue and the initial suggestions for a way forward in Bushcare in the Blue Mountains include:

Disability training for BCO's

Assessment of Bushcare sites in the Blue Mountains for opportunities constraints and hazards in relation to existing and potential accessibility.

Specific tools and equipment which may be available to broaden opportunity.

Communication outreach to connect with the community, so Bushcare opportunities are known to people with disabilities.

Maeve could work with the Bushcare team to help facilitate the opportunity at Bushcare for people with disabilities.

Meeting dates 2014

The network meeting briefly discussed proposed date for meetings in 2014. The proposed dates from this discussion were February 12 or 19, May14, August 13 and November 12.

The meeting finished at 9pm.