

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**BUSHFIRE ACT 1936**

**DETERMINATION FOR VARIATION OF THE RURAL FIRE CONTROL MANUAL**

**NO. 146 of 1994**

**EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

The *Bushfire Act 1936* section 5KA provides that there shall be a Rural Fire Control Manual containing particulars of all aspects of the operation and organisation of the Rural Firefighting Service. Subsection 5KA (3) provides that the ACT Bush Fire Council may prepare variations to the Manual.

Further, subsection 5KA (8) provides that the Manual and each variation are disallowable instruments for the purposes of section 10 of the *Subordinate Laws Act 1989*.

Council has prepared a variation to the Manual. This is due to changes in policy relating to Chapter Four of the Manual (Staffing and Organisational Structure).

Chapter Four of the Manual relates to staffing and organisational structure of the Rural Firefighting Service. Council has reviewed the organisational structure and decided to include an additional level, called Group Captain, which would fill the middle management position within the Service, which previously was seen as a gap in the command structure.

The role of the Group Captain is to provide command and infrastructure support to the management of incidents. Volunteer Group Captains would have the additional role of providing administrative support to volunteer brigades within their Group. Volunteer Group Captains would also have a deputy, who would assume the responsibilities and functions of the Group Captain in the absence of the Group Captain.

Removed from this Chapter of the Manual are parts more appropriate in another Chapter as well as any sexist language. Also, the Manual is updated to reflect the 1993 amendment, which changed the name of the legislation to the *Bushfire Act 1936*.

This determination provides for the gazettal and tabling of the variation to the Manual in the ACT Legislative Assembly as a disallowable instrument.

Authorised by the Minister for Urban Services

## 4. STAFFING AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

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## **4. STAFFING AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

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### **4.1 RURAL FIREFIGHTING SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Staffing for the Rural Firefighting Service (RFS) and its organisation builds from the top down with responsibility for performance placed with the Chief Fire Control Officer (CFCO).

The Organisational Structural Chart is shown on the next page.

### **4.2 POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RURAL FIREFIGHTING SERVICE MEMBERS**

The powers, functions and responsibilities of the RFS and its incident control system (see Chapter 10) are designed to be able to cope with the small to very large and complex incidents and emergencies. The powers, functions and responsibilities of each of the office bearers of the Rural Firefighting Service and the Incident Control System are detailed below.

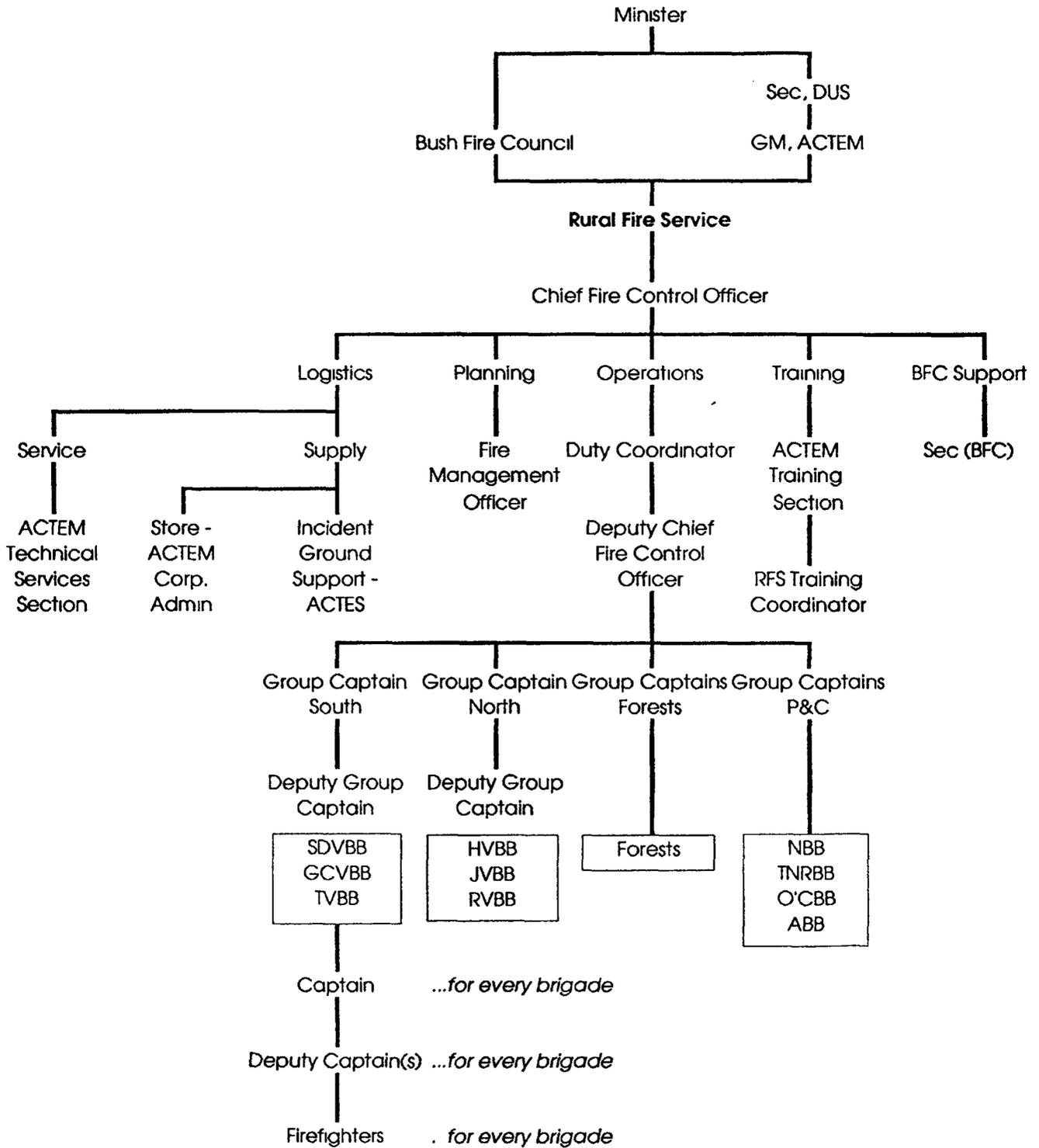
#### **4.2.1 CHIEF FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (CFCO)**

*The CFCO has four primary functions:*

- \* provide executive assistance to the ACT Bush Fire Council (Council) and be responsible for the implementation of policy determined by Council;*
- \* head the RFS and be responsible for coordination, control and direction of the overall management of the Service;*
- \* manage the RFS financial sub-program to ensure efficient and effective financial planning, estimate preparation, administration and budget management;*
- \* under the provisions of the Bushfire Act 1936, co-ordinate, control and direct the overall management of all fire control activities anywhere within the ACT, except the 'built up area', as defined in the ACT Government Gazette, or buildings, when the ACT Fire Brigade is in attendance. This function also includes the approval and issue of permits to burn under the Act, and as a delegate of the Air Pollution Act 1984, approve and issue permits regarding smoke management under conditions prescribed by the Pollution Control Authority.*

*Under all incident control situations, unless otherwise delegated, the CFCO will occupy the position of Incident Controller under the Incident Control System, and will be responsible for overall safety, the development and implementation of strategy, and the ordering and release of resources. Provision for such delegation is to be made by standard operational procedure.*

## Rural Fire Service Organisational Structure



#### 4.2.2 DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE CONTROL OFFICER

*The Deputy CFCO has two primary responsibilities:*

- \* as a senior officer of the RFS assume, in the absences of the CFCO or as delegated by the CFCO, the powers and responsibilities of the CFCO for incident control under the provisions of the Bushfire Act 1936, and this Manual.*
- \* fill the position allocated within the Incident Control System. The positions normally allocated to a Deputy Chief Fire Control Officer are: Incident Controller, Field Controller or Air Operations, but may include Logistics Officer, Assistant to the Incident Controller or Liaison Officer depending on the type of incident.*

There are two Deputy CFCOs within the RFS. These officers, with the CFCO as required, perform the Duty Coordinator role and work a week on, week off roster during the bushfire danger period, and as required outside the bushfire danger period, as the first contact for RFS callout.

#### 4.2.3 GROUP CAPTAIN

Group captains are senior officers of the RFS. The role of group captains is to provide command and infrastructure support to the management of incidents. In the case of volunteer group captains, an additional role is to provide administrative, volunteer management and support to volunteer brigades within their span of control. The operational functions of group captains are to:

- \* Assume control and direct tactical aspects for incident management when assigned to an incident or sector
- \* Activate and participate in the appropriate elements of the incident control system at the incident site
- \* Implement the agreed incident control plan
- \* Control and task all resources allocated to the incident or sector under the control of the Group Captain
- \* Identify and report major changes to operations
- \* Recommend general service and support requirements
- \* Continually monitor safety considerations
- \* Establish effective communication arrangements at the incident site or sector
- \* Participate in de-briefs
- \* Activate CISM practices as necessary
- \* Prepare, as soon as possible after the incident, a full incident report

- \* Assist with training as required
- \* Liaise and maintain continuous contact with all other agencies operating at the incident site or sector
- \* Keep the higher levels of control informed.

#### 4.2.4 DEPUTY GROUP CAPTAIN

Deputy Group Captains only exist in the volunteer parts of the RFS. In the absence of the volunteer Group Captain a volunteer Deputy Group Captain assumes all of the responsibilities and functions of Group Captain for operational procedures, and/or any other senior officer or ICS functions allocated by the Incident Controller.

#### 4.2.5 CAPTAIN

The captain is a bushfire brigade officer within the RFS. The role of the captain is to maintain a high operational efficiency level within the brigade, and command the incident control activities of the brigade. There are currently 14 brigades in the ACT and Jervis Bay made up of 7 departmental and 7 volunteer brigades.

The captain's primary duties are to:

- \* maintain close liaison and co-operation with higher levels of control;
- \* when directed assume field controller or sector leader responsibilities;
- \* command incident control activities of the brigade;
- \* report incident control information to the Incident Controller or to an appointed Field Controller;
- \* be conversant with the location of access trails, water storage facilities, firebreaks, adjoining brigades and other relevant resources within and adjoining the brigade area of operations;
- \* liaise with the CFCO on matters relating to hazard reduction, strategic firebreaks and trails, protection of major hazards, safety matters and other matters that affect the brigade;
- \* ensure that all equipment allocated to the brigade is kept in the best possible order at all times.
- \* ensure that the provisions of the Council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy are enforced.
- \* Other duties for the Captain are as directed by the CFCO and, for volunteer brigades, the brigade committee.

#### 4.2.6 DEPUTY CAPTAIN

Deputy Captains are officers of bushfire brigades within the Rural Firefighting Service. The role of the Deputy Captain is to assist the Captain, be a crew leader and act according to

instructions and directions given by the Captain. In the absence of the Captain the most senior Deputy Captain available is to assume the role and responsibilities of the Captain.

#### 4.2.7 FIREFIGHTER

Firefighters are a part of the RFS and are made up of both departmental and volunteer people. The ACT firefighter is part of a network of trained and dedicated men and women committed to ACT's bushfire safety. Each firefighter belongs to a brigade and undertakes a wide range of tasks under the command of their brigade officers. Firefighters are the vital link to the delivery of bushfire fighting practices to minimise the undesirable impacts of bushfire on the ACT community.

#### 4.2.8 FIRE MANAGEMENT OFFICER

The Fire Management Officer is a part of the RFS management staff and provides support to the operational aspects of the RFS by occupying the position and performing the functions of Planning Officer as part of the ICS. The Fire Management Officer's duties also include:

- \* produce emergency and operational plans and procedures for the RFS
- \* review and make comment on land management plans and liaise with land managers and planners to ensure that fire management is properly considered
- \* assess fire hazard and risk levels on a broad scale over the whole area of the ACT
- \* provide technical support, including computer systems, mapping and fire records to the RFS
- \* maintain and continue to develop applications of Geographic Information Systems relevant to fire management and planning

#### 4.2.9 SECRETARY TO COUNCIL

The Secretary to the Bush Fire Council is part of the RFS management staff.. The duties of the Secretary are to:

- \* carry out administrative tasks associated with Council business
- \* provide research and support services for Council, Council members and all Council committees
- \* negotiate and liaise with government departmental areas, authorities and other organisations as required by Council
- \* provide support functions to RFS operations as requested

#### 4.2.10 RFS TRAINING COORDINATOR

The RFS Training Coordinator is part of the RFS management staff, provide support functions to the RFS operations as requested. The RFS Training Coordinator duties include:

- \* assist the CFCO to develop training programs to cover all aspects of the field activities of the RFS
- \* conduct and coordinate training of all departmental and volunteer bushfire fighters in efficient and effective safe working practices
- \* provide support functions to the RFS operations as requested

#### 4.3 VOLUNTEER AND DEPARTMENTAL BUSHFIRE BRIGADES

There are 14 bushfire brigades in the Rural Firefighting Service with 12 in the ACT and 2 at Jervis Bay. The 12 brigades in the ACT are made up of 6 departmental and 6 volunteer brigades. The 2 brigades at Jervis Bay include 1 departmental and 1 volunteer brigade.

##### 4.3.1 BRIGADES IN THE ACT AND JERVIS BAY

- \* Departmental (ACT)
  - . Athllon
  - . Forests
  - . Headquarters
  - . Namadgi
  - . O'Connor
  - . Tidbinbilla N. R.
- \* Volunteer brigades (ACT)
  - . Guises Creek
  - . Hall
  - . Jerrabomberra
  - . Tidbinbilla
  - . Southern Districts
  - . The Rivers
- \* Departmental (Jervis Bay)
  - . Jervis Bay National Park.
- \* Volunteer (Jervis Bay)
  - . Wreck Bay

##### 4.3.2 FORMATION OF A BUSHFIRE BRIGADE

*Volunteer bushfire brigades are formed by the desire of the community and by resolution of the Council. However, the total number of brigades within the ACT is determined by the Minister and notified in the ACT Government Gazette.*

*Departmental brigades are formed based on equipment deployment and availability of an appropriate human resource in a strategic area. A Council resolution is required and the*

*formation of the brigade must be within the number determined by the Minister and notified in the Gazette.*

#### 4.3.3 MEMBERSHIP OF VOLUNTEER BRIGADES

Membership of volunteer brigades consists of people accepted by and registered with, an approved volunteer bushfire brigade (see section 3.6 of this manual).

#### 4.3.4 MEMBERSHIP OF DEPARTMENTAL BUSHFIRE BRIGADES

The ACT Government directly manages about 80% of the open space areas of the ACT which includes nature conservation areas, pine plantations and other open space areas adjacent to urban and rural development. The land management agencies of the ACT Government have a legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to prevent fire on land under their control. They also have their own land use management goals and objectives that provide for the protection of the resource under their management. As a consequence many of the land management agencies of the ACT Government are committed to bushfire management and control under the direction of the Rural Firefighting Service.

There are currently 7 departmental bushfire brigades in the ACT and Jervis Bay. These brigades are staffed by the relevant land management agency, or combination of agencies; however, the necessary fire control equipment is supplied and owned by the Rural Firefighting Service.

Brigade membership is a matter for the employer, having regard to the person's type of work, availability, industrial award and organisational commitment. In many cases it is part of the duty statement for a position. Individual departments are responsible for training to the standards set by this manual and for the appropriate level of fitness of their brigade members.

The brigade captain is normally the overseer or foreman of a particular work area, while the deputy captain is normally the person who acts in the absence of the overseer or foreman. Brigade functions are divided up depending on industrial award agreements, except during an emergency when no appropriate award person is available. All appointments to operational positions of the brigade are subject to the approval of the Council.

#### 4.4 EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

The Bush Fire Council recognises that there are many people including casual passers-by who may lend assistance to bushfire suppression particularly in its early stages. Where a casual passer-by sees a fire starting he or she should be encouraged to take whatever action within their capabilities to suppress that fire and they therefore should be covered for any injuries sustained by him/her including a loss of wages, unless it can be shown that they did not act in good faith. Council also recognises that there are many people in rural areas who will act in support of volunteer firefighters and while they may not be involved in direct firefighting at the flame front they may also sustain injuries through their role in supporting other firefighters. They too are entitled to compensation.

Council also recognises that when a fire has escaped from initial attack, (which may be defined by escape from the firefighting forces which are first sent to suppress it) then safe firefighting requires a degree of training and co-ordination that casual passers-by do not have and cannot have unless they are members of a bushfire brigade. Therefore, emergency volunteers include all people including passers-by who assist with the initial firefighting.

After an organised brigade or incident controller arrives, he/she may be asked to leave or asked to stay. If asked to stay they remain an emergency volunteer.

Emergency volunteers also include - any person who assists with the support of firefighting provided they are asked to by a field controller or their delegate, or any person who responds to an emergency at the request of the Chief Fire Control Officer.

#### 4.4.1 MEANING OF EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

Members of the public who are not members of a brigade, and who may not be qualified in firefighting or firefighting support, may act in these roles in an emergency, particularly in the early stages of a fire. The BFC recognises three categories of people who may be classified as emergency volunteers. They are:

Category 1. Any person, including nearby residents, local property owners and workers, and passers-by, who is in the vicinity of an outbreak of fire and who takes action to assist in the suppression of that fire, is deemed to be an emergency volunteer.

Category 2. Any person who responds to the request of an incident controller for assistance is deemed to be an emergency volunteer.

Category 3. During incidents which required the organised assistance of volunteers, such volunteers be recruited by official announcement by the Chief Fire Control Officer. Those accepted are deemed to be emergency volunteer recruitment and will be subject to:

- registration of names and addresses at a specified registration point;
- being physically capable to perform the task required;
- preference being given to people who can prove previous training or experience.

#### 4.4.2 CONDITIONS FOR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

People in the above three categories are considered to be volunteer firefighters and are covered by workers' compensation and other provisions which cover volunteer bushfire brigade members.

Emergency volunteers in Category 1 should withdraw from the vicinity of the fire when replaced by brigade members, unless they are requested to remain by the field controller, or unless they have property in the vicinity. Brigade field officers in attendance at an incident must endeavour, either personally or through other firefighters, to make every effort appropriate in the circumstances to contact and register the names of those people attending as emergency volunteers.

The field controller at an incident who accepts emergency volunteers as firefighters under his/her control should allocate duties to each person for which that person is adequately clothed and is believed capable.

As a general rule, people who travel some distance to an obvious fire, who are unqualified, who are not associated with the vicinity of the fire in terms of residence, relationship to residents, employment or property ownership, and who are not responding to an organised call for volunteers by the CFCO or his delegate, are unlikely to be regarded as emergency volunteers.