



# **Pilbara Region**

## **Transfer of Bushfire Response Trial**

### **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

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## Introduction

Following the successful three year trial of the transfer of responsibility for bushfire response from local government (LG) to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) in the Kimberly region, the Pilbara Regional Council has approached the Fire and Emergency Services (FES) Commissioner seeking to extend the trial to include the four Pilbara local governments. The FES Commissioner approved this request, along with a further request from the Shire of Exmouth, on 7 December 2015.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), outlining acknowledgements and undertakings by DFES and the five LGs requesting participation in the trial was subsequently developed, approved by the FES Commissioner and forwarded to LG for review and endorsement in late February 2016.

The purpose of this document is to detail how the underpinning intent of the MOU will be applied to daily bush fire management activities within the DFES Pilbara region.

## Scope of Trial

The scope of this trial is limited to DFES assisting the LGs to carry out their responsibilities for the management and control of bush fire brigades and bush fire response within the Pilbara region under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

Pursuant to the intent of the MOU, responsibilities for bushfire prevention, preparation and recovery, as prescribed in the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, will remain with LG<sup>1</sup>. Notwithstanding that, DFES will continue to provide advice and practical assistance to LG in meeting these responsibilities in line with past practice.

## Financial Arrangements

In accordance with item 6.2 of the MOU, DFES will carry out administration and management of bush fire brigades, including reporting and financial activities, on behalf of the local government. This will include:

- Overall management of the brigade's LGGS budget;
- Management of LGGS eligible servicing of vehicles, plant and equipment unless otherwise agreed;
- Management of LGGS eligible maintenance of buildings;
- Payment of LGGS approved accounts for services, utilities and consumables;
- Maintenance of expenditure records;
- Preparation of reports for LGGS acquittal of expenditure; and
- Preparation of LGGS submissions for LG approval.

As detailed in item 5.6 of the MOU, LG will continue to maintain a policy of insurance for bushfire brigade members and for all appliances, equipment, apparatus and facilities in accordance with

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<sup>1</sup> Item 1 (Purpose) of the MOU.

section 37 of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and current practice. The cost of these insurances will be reimbursed to LG from LGGs funds on submission of a LG invoice to DFES.

## Brigade Administration

### Training

The DFES volunteer firefighter pathway will form the basis of all training made available to Pilbara bush fire brigades. A range of training courses will be made available to brigades to enable brigade members to progress through the volunteer fire fighter pathway from VFF1 to VFF6. Specific training courses applicable to bush fire brigades are detailed at table 1.

VFF1	VFF2	VFF3	VFF4	VFF5	VFF6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AIIMS Awareness</li><li>• Introduction to Fire Fighting</li><li>• Bush Fire Fire Fighting</li><li>• Machine Supervision (option)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Structural Fire Fighting</li><li>• On-road Driving (optional)</li><li>• Off-road Driving (option)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advanced Bushfire Fire Fighting</li><li>• Workplace Trainer/ Assessor (option)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crew Leader</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advanced Bush Fire Fire Fighting</li><li>• Sector Commander</li><li>• AIIMS 4</li><li>• Workplace Trainer/ Assessor (option)</li><li>• Leadership (option)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 1 Incident Controller</li><li>• Fire Control Officer (option)</li><li>• Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (option)</li></ul>

Table 1 – DFES Pathway Courses applicable to Pilbara BFBs<sup>2</sup>

At the commencement of the trial, and thereafter twice per annum, DFES will undertake a training needs analysis, in consultation with each bush fire brigade, and develop an annual training calendar to meet the brigade's training needs. The training calendar will be posted on the DFES volunteer portal and will be accessible to all bush fire brigade members.

DFES will liaise with the brigade regarding delivery of training to ensure that current and aspiring volunteer trainer/assessors have the opportunity to deliver training within their brigade if they so desire. Where volunteers are not available to deliver training DFES will provide the trainer/assessor.

DFES will maintain a record of all training undertaken by brigade members.

### Brigade Oversight and Support

In addition to programmed training, DFES will conduct three formal brigade visits per year to undertake drills with the brigade, review the condition of plant and equipment, provide information on emergency services developments and initiatives and seek feedback on the progress of the trial.

These visits will be in addition to regular ongoing communication and dialogue between the DFES CBFCO and the brigade.

<sup>2</sup> Chief Bush Fire Control Officer training is available where applicable to brigade role.

DFES will also assume responsibility for the purchase of all PPC, equipment and consumables required by the brigade.

### Vehicle Maintenance

Arrangements for the servicing and repair of LGGS approved vehicles will be determined through consultation between DFES and the LG. In instances where a LG elects to continue to maintain and repair vehicles through their existing service arrangements this will be accommodated. Payment for any maintenance or repair performed by LG will be made by DFES from LGGS funds on receipt of an invoice from the LG.

If the LG elects to transfer responsibility for vehicle maintenance and repair to DFES, the LGGS approved vehicles will be incorporated in to DFES' fleet maintenance schedule and serviced via DFES service providers.

Where a brigade requires assistance with conveying vehicles to and from the service provider DFES will assist.

### Vehicle Registration

Per item 5.5 of the MOU, all appliances, equipment and apparatus of bush fire brigades will remain the property of the LG. As such, vehicles will continue to be registered by the LG with costs reimbursed from LGGS funds on DFES' receipt of an invoice from LG.

### Property Maintenance

LG retains responsibility for the maintenance and repair to Brigade/unit buildings as ownership is retained by the LG. DFES will be responsible for the payment of costs incurred for all required repairs and maintenance to LGGS approved buildings and structures. All such payments will be made from the approved LGGS budget.

### Incident Reporting

Where a brigade does not have access to computer equipment they may submit a paper incident report form to the DFES CBFCO who will enter the details in the Incident Reporting System (IRS).

## CBFCO, DCBFCO and FCO

### CBFCO

At item 5 of the MOU each LG undertakes to request the FES Commissioner to appoint a DFES employee as CBFCO for the duration of the arrangement.

The duties of the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer include –

- (a) provide leadership to volunteer bush fire brigades;
- (b) monitor bush fire brigades' resourcing, equipment (including protective clothing) and training levels and report thereon with recommendations at least once a year to the local government;
- (c) liaise with the local government concerning fire prevention / suppression matters generally
- (d) ensure that bush fire brigades are registered with the local government and that lists of brigade members are maintained.

## DCBFCO

As part of this process it is proposed that LG appoint all existing CBFCOs as DCBFCOs in order to maintain powers under the *Bush Fires Act 1954* to facilitate the execution of duties related to prevention and preparedness and enforcement.

In order for this trial to fully capitalise on the opportunity to achieve a net enhancement in bush fire response capability across the Pilbara region, it is proposed that existing LG personnel with fire management skills will continue to be made available to support bush fire operations in the region. This would be done in accordance with mobilisation criteria and arrangements to be developed with each LG.

## FCOs

It is also proposed that all currently appointed FCOs are retained for the purposes of bush fire control and issuing of permits within each LG area.

## Bushfire Response Outside of Gazetted Fire Districts

Item 6.4 of the MOU details that the “000 Service Agreement” between DFES and LG will be suspended for the duration of the arrangement with all emergency calls received by the DFES Communications Centre (ComCen) being directed the DFES regional duty coordinator during this time.

In order to maintain efficient response to bush fires during the trial period the mobilisation process detailed at Appendix 1 is proposed.

It is recognised that differences in local risks and brigade capabilities exist across the Pilbara region and as such the establishment of a single criteria to determine whether a report of a remote fire should be assessed prior to mobilising brigades or not will vary from location to location. As such, criteria for dispatching brigades to remote fires will be developed with local government on a brigade by brigade basis with those criteria being used during the trial.

Existing systems for turning out volunteer resources will be retained at each bush fire brigade unless otherwise agreed between the brigade and CBFCO.

## Role of DFES Regional Duty Coordinator

In addition to the duties detailed in Part 5 of the *Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services Manual*, the DFES Regional Duty Coordinator (RDC) will be responsible for the following activities:

- Reviewing satellite remote sensing twice daily to maintain awareness of bushfire activity across the Pilbara region;
- Modelling predicted fire spread utilising Land Gate’s Aurora Fire Watch simulator;
- Liaising with CBFCOs and lease holders or occupiers of land affected by bushfire (where relevant) to determine levels of risk and bushfire management objectives;
- Determining the escalation potential of fires in consultation with CBFCOs and developing trigger points and strategies for further action;
- Reviewing fire weather forecasts each afternoon and informing CBFCOs, DCBFCOs and bush fire brigades of pending fire weather warnings; and

- Applying the process prescribed in DFES Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) 3.5.A for the management of Total Fire Bans in the region.

### **Total Fire Ban Administration**

DFES will continue to administer the Total Fire Ban (TFB) process in accordance with DFES SAP 3.5.A. DCBFCOs who wish to have local input to the TFBs considerations process will continue to be engaged by DFES.

### **Fire Works Permits**

The DFES CBFCO will process Fire Works Applications in accordance with DFES SAP 3.17.B. DCFCOs will be consulted to ensure that current local considerations are taken into account during the approvals process.

### **Managing Issues**

Part 8 of the MOU addresses the dispute resolution process culminating in escalation of the dispute to the FES Commissioner and LG CEO.

In accordance with the MOU, it is expected that endeavors to resolve any issues arising from these arrangements will be made at the local/regional level in the first instance. This will enable expeditious identification of emerging issues and provide the earliest opportunity for resolution.

## Document History

DATE	VERSION	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
14/03/2016	A	Initial issue tabled at DOAC for comment on 16/03/2016.
21/03/2016	B	Incorporate initial feedback from DOAC meeting: Added retention of existing turn out procedures for brigades. Amended Appendix 1 to better reflect role of CBFCO.
22/03/2016	C	Incorporate additional feedback.
07/04/2016	D	Further revision post feedback on amendments suggested by City of Karratha.



## Appendix 1 – Response Process

