

# SHIRE OF KOJONUP – BUSHFIRE STRUCTURE

Bushfire is arguably the largest threat to all those who live in the Shire of Kojonup. The Council and residents continue to take a proactive approach to minimising fire risk with our volunteer network. This document describes how we do it.

Long serving residents within the Shire of Kojonup, particularly those living in the rural areas, are very aware of the valuable role played by our Bushfire Volunteers. No doubt they have spent many an hour on the fire ground or providing back up support. However, for newer residents the sight of smoke from December to March may instil a sense of fear, anxiety or conversely apathy that the “System” will take care of the emergency as it always has! Fires within the Kojonup town site are dealt with by the Kojonup Voluntary Fire & Rescue Service (VFRS), who are all local volunteers.

So what is the Bush Fire structure for the Shire of Kojonup?

## **BRIGADES**

Twelve Brigades form the “on ground” bushfire support for the Shire, namely:

- Boilup
- Boscabel
- Changerup
- Cherry Tree Pool
- Jingalup
- Kojonup
- Lumeah
- Moberup
- Muradup
- Orchid Valley
- Qualeup
- Ryan’s Brook

Each Brigade has volunteer member fire fighters (usually all landholders and tenants) who prevent, control and extinguish bushfires. The brigades have an extensive radio network which consists of a “signing in” schedule each morning during the fire season. The radio network provides feedback to the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) from the whole Shire on weather conditions and other factors that may influence firefighting decisions or the declaration of a Harvest & Vehicle Movement (HVMB) Ban (not to be confused with a Total Fire Ban which is enacted by the Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES)). Monitors for the bushfire radio network can be purchased locally. On occasion brigade members may be called upon to assist other community emergencies such as search and rescue, flood clean up or a personal disaster to an individual. The Brigade and its members are independent to a large degree for the area they cover and do not hesitate to provide assistance to other Brigade areas as requested.

The Brigades elect their own office bearers, conduct meetings and training sessions and even maintain their own income/expenditure for items not covered by the Emergency Services Levy or are in addition to minimum standard requirements.

In a wild fire the Brigade(s) will endeavour to provide as many members as the CBFCO and other Captains and Fire Control Officers (FCOs) deem necessary. The members will invariably turn out in their own privately owned and maintained fire units. As a whole, members are very competent fire fighters with a good knowledge of the district and its geography and they are tremendous volunteers in the full sense of the word!

## **ASSOCIATION**

The Kojonup Bush Fire Association comprises the 12 Brigades and its members. The Association meets at least once a year to elect its own office bearers, President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The Association recommends to Council the names of members for consideration to the positions of Chief Bushfire Control Officer (CBFCO or Zulu Base), Deputy Bush Fire Control Officer (DBFCO or Zulu 2), two Senior Bush Fire Control Officers (SBFCO’s or Zulu 3 & Zulu 4) and Brigade Captains following the Association’s AGM. Once officially appointed by Council the CBFCO, DBFCO, SBFCO’s and Association President become representatives on the Kojonup Bush Fire Advisory Committee (also known as BFAC). The Association provides a public forum for the discussion of fire matters at a district level with all members having a right to speak and vote. The Association does not have executive powers however and an executive decision will be presented to the Shire Council of Kojonup for their vote.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Kojonup Bush Fire Advisory Committee is established in accordance with Section 67 of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*. The Committees membership and terms of reference as adopted at the 22 October 2015 Council Meeting are:

The committee terms of reference are:

- a) Advising the Shire regarding all matters relating to the preventing, controlling and extinguishing of bush fires;
- b) The planning of the layout of firebreaks in the district;
- c) Prosecutions for breaches of this Act;
- d) The formation of bush fire brigades and the grouping thereof under group brigade officers (in accordance with any local laws);
- e) Recommendations on Fire Control Officer positions;
- f) Feedback on the Council's Fire Break Notice;
- g) Specific requirements from each brigade with regard to:
  - Protective Personal Equipment;
  - Equipment and vehicles resources required; and
  - Training Requirements;
- h) The ensuring of cooperation and coordination of Bush Fire Brigades in their efforts and activities; and
- i) Any other matter relating to bush fire control whether of the same kind as, or a different kind from, those specified in this subsection.

## **CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER**

The CBFCO heads the operations team and has the legal authority under the *Bushfires Act 1954* to direct resources and personnel to control and extinguish bush fires. The CBFCO makes the determination in consultation with team members how a bush fire may be attacked, how many Brigades to deploy or have on standby, to request other agencies' assistance or Council resources, etc. The CBFCO is ably assisted by fellow Zulu's and this very important position demands a high level of commitment and Bush Fire knowledge and the cooperation of Brigades and members.

## **SHIRE OF KOJONUP (COUNCIL)**

Council is the statutory body with the power and responsibility to administer the various legal requirements regarding the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, *Fire Brigades Act 1942* and *Local Government Act 1995*. As previously indicated, Council appoints members to the Advisory Committee upon receipt of recommendations from the Association.

Council creates Local Laws designed to keep residents safe by mitigating the accumulation of flammable items on residential properties or requiring fire breaks and other safety precautions around rural buildings/equipment, etc.

In the event of a bushfire (wildfire) the Chief Executive Officer has the power to commit Council resources at the request and advice of the CBFCO. Council has the power to impose bans on the lighting of fires or restrict the movement of vehicles such as Harvesters, also at the request and advice of the CBFCO. This type of ban is known as a 'Harvest & Vehicle Movement Ban' (HVMB). It differs to a 'Total Fire Ban' (TFB) which may only be imposed by DFES as previously mentioned.

Tony Fisher  
**Chief Bush Fire Control Officer**

*Updated 18 January 2017*