



# Terms of Reference

## Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Enhancement Working Group

August 2022



## Background

In 2020 the Western Australian Government announced changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Legislation which would, amongst other things, broaden the definition of “worker” to include volunteers. The *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* and the accompanying regulations came into effect on 31 March 2022. This has brought to the forefront concerns within the Shire regarding the liability of Volunteer Bushfire Brigades particularly in relation to risk management, safety standards and documentation, training and competency assessment.

In view of this and in preparation for the new legislation and to ensure that the Shire was well positioned to manage the inclusion of the volunteers in new legislation, the decision was made to engage a specialist consultant to undertake an audit of the safety systems, facilities and equipment of the Brigades within the Shire to ensure compliance with the legislation.

The consultancy firm, Perth Workplace Safety Consultants, was engaged to undertake this audit with the key outcomes of:

1. Review of health and safety systems, processes and procedures;
2. Assessment of training provided to ensure safe work for the roles and responsibilities within the brigades;
3. Review of all facilities and equipment to ensure a safe work environment.

The audit was undertaken in October 2021.

A separate Facility Audit was undertaken by LGIS, with the scope of this review to consider each facility from the perspective of being a Shire workplace, taking into account the WHS Legislation and VBFB members as workers.

Both audits outlined a number of areas that will improve the safety and wellbeing of the volunteers which would contribute to the overall operational effectiveness of the brigades.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Enhancement Working Group will be to prepare a five year Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade Enhancement Plan (for Council’s consideration) which incorporates actions to improve the overall operational effectiveness and ensures the Shire meets its obligations under the Work, Health and Safety Legislation.

The enhancement plan needs to be presented to Council at the December 2022 OCM. The development of the plan and preparation for the implementation of the new WHS legislation in March 2023 will be the primary focus of the group until March 2023. Following this time more broader issues will be progressed.

## Roles and responsibilities

To make recommendations to Council via the organisation’s Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committee and where relevant, Bush Fire Advisory Committee (BFAC) and Council’s Audit Risk and Governance Committee.

In doing so the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Enhancement Working Group will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect of enhancement to the working environment of brigades to ensure safety and avoid all risks to health;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect of the enhancement, maintenance and safe use of appliances, equipment, substances and systems of work, to ensure safety and avoid all risks to health;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect of the provision, enhancement and ongoing maintenance of adequate facilities for the welfare of volunteers at work;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect to the enhancement of training and instruction, with a focus on increasing training opportunities, resourcing and safe work practices;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect of health and fatigue management of volunteers, and all associated conditions of the workplace and monitoring of such conditions to prevent injury or illness;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect to the management, retainment and development of the volunteer workforce;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect to enhancing the conduct of operational duties;
- provide input into the creation, review and advice in respect to fostering interagency and community partnerships;
- provide strategic leadership in the development, implementation and sustainability of these programs and strategies;
- provide advice, support and assistance in the implementation of the program;
- monitor identified and emerging risks and advise on their prevention, mitigation and management;
- monitor the program budget and expenditure and provide recommendations on funding needed to implement the enhancement plan;
- contribute to the development of a change and communications plan to support volunteer engagement with the new ways of working.

The role of the individual members of the working group will include:

- attending regular meetings as required and participating in the group's work;
- representing the interests of all volunteers, as appropriate;
- demonstrating a genuine interest in the initiatives and the outcomes being pursued in the program;
- being an advocate for the program's outcomes;
- being committed to, and actively involved in, pursuing the program's outcomes.

## Membership

The Chief Executive Officer will appoint members to the working group in accordance with the following:

- Chief Executive Officer and/or Director Development Services (Chair)
- Manager - People, Development and Wellbeing
- Chief Bushfire Control Officer / Community Emergency Services Manager
- Work Health and Safety Project Officer
- One Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer, as nominated by the Deputy Chiefs
- Chair, Bushfire Advisory Committee (Keysbrook Brigade Captain)
- Chair, Audit Risk and Governance Committee
- One Captain, as nominated by the Captains of the Shire's Brigades
- DFES District Officer
- Representative from Local Government Insurance Services (LGIS)
- One Senior members of a northern SJ BFB Oakford, Byford or Mundijong
- One Senior member of a southern SJ BFB Mundijong, Serpentine or Jarrahdale
- Director Infrastructure (as required)
- Director Corporate Services (as required)
- The Chief Executive Officer may appoint additional members to the group as required.

## Chair

The group will be chaired by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Director Development Services.

Meetings will be convened by the Chair.

Agendas and minutes of the meetings will be prepared by the WHS Project Officer.

## Other attendees

Invitations can be extended by the Chief Executive Officer for internal Shire representatives, external organisations and service providers to guide and advise on specific topics as identified and agreed on by the Working Group.

## Agenda items

All agenda items will be forwarded to the WHS Project Officer by close of business ten working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The agenda, with attached meeting papers, will be distributed at least five working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

## Minutes

Full copies of the minutes, including attachments, will be provided to all members no later than five working days following each meeting.

## Frequency of meetings

The meetings of the working group will occur at least monthly or more frequently as determined by the Chair.

## Quorum requirements

A quorum will be half the regular membership plus one.

## Conduct

Working Group members will be expected to conduct themselves in a manner that supports a positive culture and outcomes for the group including:

- Provide apologies in advance if attendance is not possible;
- Seek to obtain and represent the views of the broader community and / or the specific organisation / group represented;
- Disseminate authorised information with the community in an unbiased manner;
- At all times act in good faith, with honesty, integrity and fairness;
- Respect the ideas and beliefs of all members and endeavour to create a positive working environment;
- Notify the Shire of any potential conflict of interest that may arise with respect to participation in this group;
- Agree not to disseminate confidential information that is discussed at the meeting as advised by the Chair;
- Agree not to make any media comment on behalf of the Working Group without approval.

Failure to adhere to the provisions related to conduct and interest can result in the removal of a member from the Working Group.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for determining appropriate actions related to dispute resolution.

## Decision Making

The Working Group will endeavour to reach any decision by consensus. There may be occasions where decisions are to be decided by a vote. The Chairperson may exercise a casting vote should this be necessary. All members have voting rights, unless they are guests to the meeting such as additional Councillors to the membership of the group.

A Working Group recommendation is not recorded and does not have effect unless it has been made by simple majority. A simple majority is the agreement of not less than half of the members present at the meeting.

### **Cases not provided for in the Terms of Reference**

These Terms of Reference are intended to provide a framework for the efficient and effective operations of the Working Group. In cases not provided for in the Terms of Reference, the Chairperson is to determine the appropriate action to enable the Working Group to perform its functions.

### **Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference may be amended, varied, or modified by the Working Group.

### **Reference Documents**

- 

<b>Reviewed / Modified</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Reviewed By</b>
Adopted			
Modified			
Reviewed			