The Shire of Manjimup Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Campbell opened the meeting at 12.05pm and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting.

Mr Campbell gave an overview of meeting format. The purpose of this operational debrief is to receive feedback and learn from this event for any events in the future, that hopefully don’t happen.

Each agency will give a ten minute overview of events from their point of view and once the agencies are finished, the meeting will be open to the floor.

Her Excellency, Kerry Sanderson AO, the Governor of Western Australia will be joining the meeting at about 1.30pm and would like to address the meeting. Once the meeting is finished Andrew Campbell and the Shire President Wade DeCampo will be taking Her Excellency on a tour of the fire ground including Windy Harbour.

Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) was the controlling agency however DFES handed control over to Dept. of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) as incident control.

**Agency Attendees:**
Andrew Campbell, Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
Wade DeCampo, Shire President, Shire of Manjimup.
Todd Ridley, Community Emergency Service Manager (Shire of Manjimup).
Remo Pessotto, Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.
Gaye Burridge, Corporate Administration Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
John Tillman, Department of Fire and Emergency Services.
Danny Mosconi, Department of Fire and Emergency Services.
John Gillard, Department of Parks and Wildlife.
Neville Blackburn, Emergency Services Officer for Dept Child Protection and Family Services.
Ian Guthridge, Department Food and Agriculture.
Ray Deall, Western Power.
Rachel Couper, Water Corporation.
Harry Arnott, Police, Pemberton.

**John Gillard, (DPaW) – Incident Control Manager.**
- Have map of area will display at the back of the room.
- Intense lightning on the afternoon of 28 January up to 30 January, 12 fires caused by lightning across the Warren region and 6 of those in the Donnelly district.
- Fire 16 was first on 28 January east of Northcliffe with good access track, in 29 year old fuel. With light rain was contained to .2 ha.
- Fire 17 after lunch on 29 January, in 31 year old fuel, Noobijup Nature Reserve and private property east of Manjimup. Good access along fire break and contained to 196ha 30 January.
• Fire 18 afternoon of 29 January, 25 year old fuel, 800m from access road, in Unicup Nature Reserve, contained to 752ha. 31 January.
• Fire 19, 30 January, in 5 year old fuel in inaccessible parts of Shannon National Park with no immediate threat to life and property.
• Fire 20, 30 January, at Tone with immediate threat to Muir Highway and farm land. Good access track in 13 year old fuel contained to 18ha. Good fortune, didn’t think would contain the fire but had a lull in the wind. Water bombers were ineffective at this fire.
• Fire 21, 30 January, 7 year old fuel. Immediate threat to private property. Thanks to VBFB. (Contained means – immediate threat is contained but fire not out or mopped up).
• Todd Ridley advised of another fire at Smith Brook Nature Reserve from a power line. Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade contained this fire. Contained to 3ha
• Since the 24 February there has been 6 further fires, 1 from lightning 3 accidental and 2 from unknown causes. The biggest of those was at Topanup east of Manjimup. Contained to 240ha.
• O’Sullivan fire was started by lightning, at its peak there was 30 – 40m flames rate of spread was around 2km per hour in fuels from 5 to 30 year old. Longest spotting distance was 5km into the south near Fish Creek. Finished 98,700 ha burnt. Perimeter was 295km. 93,230ha is vested in the Conservation Commission National Park and State Forest. 1,000ha of Crown land, road reserve and UCL and private land 4,470ha. 14 days, two 12 hour shifts and 5 days of a single 12 hour shift and rolled into 8-9 hour days for 43 shifts. Still have people mopping up. Still walking and checking fire trails and roads. 1,620 personnel involved in the fire. 326 from DPaW, 250 from other state agencies. 264 from the eastern states. 3 contingents from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. 600 volunteers around 230 contractors. 164 fire appliances, 7 fixed wing water bombers. 2 Helipacs, 1 air crane, 2 large aerial tankers from over east. 86 earth moving machines including low loaders. Support personnel came from 15 different companies and a large number of locals and regional suppliers.
• To manage the 6 fires a group was put together to manage the fires rather than manage the fires individually and on the 30 January was escalated to a level 2 incident. And then elevated again to a level 3 incident on the 31 January.
• The fire was eventually relegated to a level 1 incident on the 18 February.
• Largest fire in the South West. The fact that there was no loss of life and a large number of incredible saves is a credit to the work and dedication of everyone involved in the event.
• The notes found in lunches boxes were a great boost to the fire on the ground.
• There were some challenges with communication between the Incident Management Centre and Incident Control Centre in Pemberton back into the Operations at Northcliffe and we will be looking to improve.
• There were also issues with managing resources both on and off the fire line, and embedding the three interstate contingents within our firefighting effort.
• Local Government, DFES and DPaW will be having a good look at how we manage the vehicles and people in and out of the control points. It created a huge amount of work for the Incident Management team. It also created some angst and imposition for the community.
• Business continuity, particularly the dairy industry in the area, was an issue however it would appear that there was no milk dumped and it was very positive thing to hear.
John Tillman – DFES

- 27 – 28 January there was a significant dry lightning storm across the south west land division and resulted in multiply lightning caused fires. Stats to date confirmed 75+ fires from North Perth, Wheatbelt, through the south west. Massive number of fires and this tested the agencies. 51 fires were detected on 29 January.
- There was a well-coordinated response across all agencies irrespective of tenure or who owned what.
- Most fires were able to be contained. Some did escalate. i.e. Tone River, Waroona, Lower Hotham and Bullsbrook in the metro area.
- Resources were already being committed to these fires and then ultimately these fires escalated. Waroona, Lower Hotham and O’Sullivan/Northcliffe fires were the major events to be managed.
- The Dwellingup fire of 1961 was a very similar event. Lightning event down the escarpment and across the south west. Ultimately there were 800,000 acres burnt.
- Northcliffe fire initially had some rain on it early and was reasonably benign.
- The fires outside Manjimup were a priority initially as they were running very actively and impacting on farmland and potentially the Muir Highway.
- Northcliffe fire had a lot of old fuel between O’Sullivan block and Northcliffe and down Boorara Road and the fire was thus able to escalate under the easterly winds.
- There was a very rapid escalation of resources required for the fire.
- The interagency teams worked out of the Pemberton office.
- Largest fire since Dwellingup fires in 1961.
- 30 January first Incident Support Group was established with representatives from agencies who either own or manage critical infrastructure or support services that need to be involved in managing and supporting and assisting with information for the ICG.
- Support and information for the ICG about critical information.
- The ISG met once or twice a day to keep on top of the information and Andrew Campbell chaired the meetings well.
- Operations Area Support Group was established as well. And meetings included people who sit on Local, Area and State emergency groups.
- A lot of support from agencies including Western Power, Telstra, Main Roads and Water Corp etc. was given to the Local Government and community during the fire and recovery once the fire had passed. They met over 32 times during the fires.
- State Emergency Coordination Group was established and Chaired by Commissioner of Police. Looking at the state level impact across all the fires.
- Business continuity was paramount, as did not want a repeat of the issues that occurred in the Nannup fires where rural properties were isolated, animal welfare issues came up and milk had to be dumped.
- It is understood that animal welfare issues were dealt with quickly and there was no milk dumped as result of the Northcliffe fire.
- Recognise that there were issues with the workers gaining access and exit to businesses within the fire ground.
- Evacuations are often only for a night or two, however because this fire was more than a couple of days it was very complex to manage.
- A lot of forward planning was done, as modelling indicated that the fire could impact Quinninup and Pemberton, Walpole and Tingleview areas if the predicted weather conditions had occurred.
There were 165 buildings within the fire perimeter and to only lose 2 residential buildings was an incredible effort by everyone.

Was a true State and National effort with resources from all over. Once it was recognised that the State had reached its capacity with regard to available resources, a call was put out for resources from the Eastern States. New South Wales/ACT, Queensland/Tasmania and Victoria. Assisted with fatigue management of local and state resources.

Acknowledge Remo’s efforts for rounding up appliances for interstate resources. And the community for its patience under such trying conditions over an extended period.

Harry Arnott – Western Australian Police.

- Police role is different as usually any emergency is owned by the Police. As it was a fire the Police take a support role.
- Key was business continuity for Police and vehicle control points as directed by the ICG also evacuation as directed by the ICG. Police plan and effect the evacuation however the ICG makes the decision regarding the evacuation.
- Evacuation cannot be pre-planned due to the unpredictability of fire particularly in such forested areas and must be done based on the threat at the time of the evacuation.
- Vehicle Control Points are delegated to Police to manage. Issues came about because the ICG was inside the evacuation area of Northcliffe, and this is unusual.
- Harry Arnott is the Local Emergency Coordinator (LEC) as delegated by the Commissioner of Police, who is the State Emergency Coordinator.
- Primary role is to sit on the Local Emergency Management Committee for the Police subregion of Pemberton/Northcliffe.
- ISG is normally chaired by the LEC however was chaired by Andrew Campbell. Feedback was that it was the best run ISG that most have been involved in and a big thank you to Andrew Campbell and Todd Ridley for their efficiency and guidance under very trying circumstances.
- 122 Police staff and in excess of 35 vehicles.
- This fire came in the middle of moving from one emergency model to another to come into line with other Emergency Groups in the Eastern States, so was very testing.
- As soon as we said we needed troops the police enacted the 500 plan.
- Learnt about coordination of housing and feeding troops and how we can improve in the future.
- There was no reported crime in Northcliffe and no looting, no stealing of motor vehicles during the fire and evacuation.

Wade DeCampo – Shire of Manjimup, Shire President.

- Thank you to everyone for coming today.
- This event shows that the tri partisan effort was very effective and shows how well everyone works together.
- The Shire will continue to support the community going forward for the next couple of years.
- Looking to future proof our community from fire.
- Working with Albert Jacob (State Government) closely.
- Encouraging more prescribed burns.
• Royalties for Regions fund with Terry Redman to double the prescribed burns in our area.
• Federal Government on a fuel reduction programme, not based on burning, around our towns.
• Fire risk is still present.

Todd Ridley – Community Emergency Service Manager (Shire of Manjimup).
• Tested the staff and volunteer network.
• Liaison Officer, runner, fire line construction, and maintenance of road networks, fire crews, supervision of vehicle control points, asset identification. Administration of the permit system on behalf of the Incident Controller, animal welfare, supporting rapid response crews with local knowledge. Volunteer support and public information. Manning the relocation centre and recovery centres.
• All members were acutely aware of business continuity and the need for public safety.
• The Shire of Manjimup Emergency Management Plans and recovery documents were introduced early into the system. A number of agencies picked up the plans and used them.
• The Shire of Manjimup volunteer network were stretched from day one. Not only dealing with the Northcliffe fire but maintained a presence throughout the Shire of Manjimup.
• Bush Fire brigades and Fire and Rescue brigades responded to 5 other fires in the first week.
• I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chief Bush Fire Brigade Officer, Remo Pessotto and Senior Bush Fire Brigade Officer Brad Wren and Rod Parkes, Captain of the Northcliffe Bush Fire Brigade.
• The State Emergency Services personnel who came from far and wide and were responsible for reloading water bombers at the airfield on 35 – 40 degree days. They did a fantastic job.
• I would also like to thank DPAW, DFES, Local Police, Western Power, St John’s Ambulance, Telstra, Water Corporation, DCPFS, Dept Food and Agriculture.
• A big thank you to the community.

Andrew Campbell – Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
• One of the key areas the Shire has to work on is the internal fatigue management. The likes of Todd Ridley, Remo Pessotto and myself worked very long hours.
• One other person who must be thanked is Max Lefroy, Airfield Reporting Officer, as a volunteer put in an amazing effort.
• A million litres of jet fuel went through the Manjimup Airfield which is unprecedented.

Neville Blackburn – Emergency Services Officer for Dept Child Protection and Family Services.
• Tasked with providing welfare support for those impacted by emergencies.
• This is the biggest activation in recent history.
• Attended from Albany to the first ISG.
• Was activated on the 1 February.
• Evacuation centre was open for 10 days.
• 233 people registered at the centre
• Up to 40 people stayed overnight at times.
• The Red Cross opened the State Enquiry Centre.
There were 8 enquiries from interstate.
When Pemberton was threatened had to consider opening up an evacuation centre in Manjimup.
Rotating staff helped people feel more settled with staff continuity.
Pemberton Sports Club worked very well as an evacuation centre.
Most evacuation centres are Shire facilities.
Realised early on that to effectively manage the evacuation centre it had to be done on site not from Albany.
Wouldn’t have been able to run the evacuation centre without the support of other agencies. CWA was wonderful.
Shire provided administration staff.
Community Liaison staff from DFES.
Youth Care were involved and provided meet and greet service.
St Johns Ambulance set up first aid centre outside the evacuation centre and was utilised by us a number of times.
Red Cross became involved at the end of the event.
19 staff from the district, Albany and Manjimup learnt a lot as this was their first experience of emergency.
Helped us to strengthen relationships with other agencies.
Manjimup office was impacted.
Used Red Cross to link to our Manjimup Office.
Initially not enough bedding – did solve that issue.
Donations were an issue particularly food which we couldn’t accept food from the public.
Social Media was good and bad. Some information was not always correct so must watch.
We will be looking at improving tracking of people within the evacuation centre.
Need to look at our kits and equipment and improve them.

Remo Pessotto – Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.
With the severity of this fire it was a credit to everyone working so well together.
Volunteers stretched.
212 volunteers from local area.
Interaction between all the agencies was excellent.
Having small group meetings was useful and it was the correct information not rumours.

Ian Guthridge – Dept of Food and Agriculture.
Animal Welfare we were able to call on vets who could come down and help with any animal welfare issues, due to good management very few animals were affected.
Advocating for farmers and if they had any issues regarding access of tankers and so on the controlling agencies listened to our issues and did whatever they could make that happen.
Also involved in the recovery.

Ray Deall - Western Power
126 staff
Replaced 136 power poles, 17 transformers and run 2.5km new conductor.
Pretty good job as everyone was back on the grid by 16 February.
Safety was paramount.
• A big thank you to Hollow Butt Café who started at 3am every morning to make breakfast for 126 people.

Rachel Couper – Water Corporation
• Job was to keep water quality and quantity up to Northcliffe during the incident.
• Brought in a lot of bottled water for the front line.
• And extra tankers to ensure water for ablutions.
• ISG was brilliant. Coordination was excellent.

Gary – St John’s Ambulance.
• Mostly support role.
• Continuity as well.
• Fortunately no major injuries.
• 30 volunteers over the course of 10 days.
• Drawn from all over the south west.

Andrew Campbell – Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
• The amount of work that went on in the background was enormous.

Glen Burston – Maroo Wildlife Refuge and Environment Sub Committee.
• When it moves through private property how do we find out about fires if it’s not on DFES or DPaW land?

Peter – DPAW responded to question:
• As soon as we were aware of the fire, had a discussion with the Shire and it was decided that it was a DPaW fire and information was fed to Perth who put it on our website and DFES website?

Glen Burston – Maroo Wildlife Refuge and Environment Sub Committee.
• What the foam is that the Bush Fire Brigade trucks use.
• The foam that we are using is classified as a hazardous material.
• There is foam that 100% bio-degradable.

John Tillman responded to:
• All foams used are approved and have been investigated by CSIRO, Dept Food and Agriculture.
• The concentration used is 2% so that must be taken into consideration.

Glen Burston – Maroo Wildlife Refuge and Environment Sub Committee.
• Social Media has been commenting on lack of food for the fire fighters on the first evening.
• There should be some sort of long life meal carried on the truck.

John Tillman - DFES.
• Longlife food is kept on our trucks.
Todd Ridley – Community Emergency Service Manager (Shire of Manjimup).
- The rules for fire fighters is first keep them safe and second keep them fed and watered.
- The Bush Fire Brigades don’t currently keep longlife food on their trucks but we are getting better.

John Tillman – DFES.
- In the initial stages of a fire it is sometimes hard to ensure that every fire fighter is fed however every effort is made to ensure that fire fighters receive food.
- The same format is used across Australia for fire alerts. DFES and DPaW both use the same format for fire alerts and they are always shared.

Brian – Audience.
- First would like to commend Remo for the great work he did.
- Two main issues. 1 fuel load and 2 VCP passes.
- Liaise with the volunteers on the ground as they have local knowledge.
- DFES DPaW and Police. There were a number of problems. A water truck was held up and a dozer on a DPaW truck.

Harry Arnott responded.
- If the driver was not registered then he wouldn’t be let into the fire ground as he could very easily get lost and no one would know where he was.

Andrew Campbell – Chief Executive Officer.
- Some findings out of the Armadale-Kelmscott fires recommended that there be a permit system for access to the fire ground. So this fire used the recommended permit system and it is acknowledged that it isn’t perfect.
- It will be looked at and work out how it can be improved.

John Tillman – DFES.
- We recognise that there are issues and we are constantly working to improve access.
- If the fire lasts for a couple of weeks it is very complex to deal with.

Todd Ridley.
- The State brought out a sticker system for Bush Fire Brigades and they were offered to the Brigades however they weren’t taken up.
- Will be reviewing in the future.

John Tillman – DFES.
- In consultation with DPaW and the Shire we had already started to look at which areas should be burnt, slashed or mulched but the fire beat us to it.
- Over time the intention is to put plans in place to identify the risks around the most vulnerable communities’ areas in the region.

Andrew Campbell Chief Executive Officer Shire of Manjimup.
- Would just like to acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency Kerry Sanderson AO Governor of Western Australia.

Marilyn Morgan part owner of Malimup Springs.
- Thank you to everyone for the great job done dealing with such a huge fire.
- I was a Conservation Commissioner for 8 years.
- 100 acres in the National Park, owned for 8 months and operated the property for 7 years.
Off campus for Murdoch University. Bush university and healing centre.
We operate a sort of school camp where people come to learn about bush craft and land management.
Have partners in the National Trust, in DPaw for best practice in land management within a National Park.
Based as an aboriginal group and have people who come to stay for low impact tourism.
According to the ICG there was only a Telstra tower in the area which is incorrect.
On our property we lost two houses and as a consequence we have one homeless family.
Have employees with no business income.
Lost $1m in infrastructure and assets.
Grateful for the support from DPAW and the Shire.
There should be an audit of tourism infrastructure and education infrastructure and other alternative businesses.
There will be huge issues for us to rebuild as access is a major issue.
Roger Anderson had no idea that we had been impacted.

Karen Nickels
- If the old water supply had not been accessed we would have been completely dry.
- All water is currently being trucked in.
- Need to address having water on hand to protect the town assets in the event of a fire.

Rachel Couper – Water Corporation.
- Quality of water is paramount and trucking water in means we don’t have to treat it through a very intense process.
- Water Corporation doesn’t supply sufficient pressure for firefighting in any towns. Water is never designed for firefighting.
- Huge volumes of water from Manjimup and Pemberton for the fire, Northcliffe and the airport. And brought in masses of bottled water as well.
- $330k to $500k to back everyone up.
- Priority was to supply Potable water and we only ever supply potable water.

Andrew Campbell – Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
- The Shire is actively campaigning for an interconnected water supply.

Tom Muir.
- Some of the assets, after the strike teams went through, appeared to be a bit vulnerable. There appeared to be a vacuum. 3 appliances trying to look after about 15 houses.
- The Shire of Manjimup needs to be more vigilant with property in particular how clean they were. There were wild oats and were very messy.

Andrew Campbell – Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
- Accept the comment and we are improving each year however with the size of the Shire and small number of people it is difficult to keep up with it all.
- The only way to resolve the situation is have a dedicated officer and it is something we will look at.
John Tillman – DFES.
- Structural taskforce. Tend to rely on the crews to attack the perimeter of the fires. Would have to draw those guys back. Have done it in some of the fires, Margaret River, Bridgetown.

Danny Mosconi - DFES
- It comes down to resources. We only had so many fire trucks to defend properties. No Fire Brigade has enough trucks to protect everything.
- The expectation is that when people ring for a fire truck that one will sit and defend their property and that is extremely unrealistic.
- We tried to protect the properties at imminent risk first.
- Northcliffe and Windy Harbour were the main priorities.
- Basically a triage exercise.

John Tillman – DFES.
- If people have chosen to leave then even when the fire has gone through they are not allowed back until it is safe. Even when those who have a fire plan and elected to stay and defend their properties are still there when the fire has passed.
- The assessment is always about the safety of yourself, the people around and the firefighters.

Paul Omodei.
- Is there an adequate supply of water close to Northcliffe should there be imminent threat of fire if necessary?

John Tillman – DFES.
- Firies were advised to only draw from the hydrant system when it was critical asset protection otherwise use the dams or whatever is available.
- Recognised some time ago that there was not enough water and a couple of new waterholes were built a few of years ago and we have secured water on private properties.

Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AO Governor of Western Australia.
- Thank you for the invitation to come down and look at the fire impact area.
- It was a huge fire, the biggest since the Dwellingup fires.
- Huge admiration for all of those involved.
- Telstra, Water Corporation and Western Power who worked extremely hard to ensure that services were back up and quickly as possible.
- Adversity sometimes strengthens communities and it is evident.
- I’m here to see the damage and hear the stories and empathise with you.
- The recovery is quite critical.
- I would be pleased to speak to anyone.

Robert Minchin.
- Had to break the law to get into town to pick up the ute and put the fire unit on it. Did get permit to use the vehicle.
• People who offered to come and help family were not allowed in to assist.
• Stickers could help. Would like to get together and discuss these issue during the winter.
• These issues are not isolated to Northcliffe only.

Andrew Campbell.
• Are you a member of a Fire Brigade? If you are there will be a debrief in the near future and it would be a good forum for you to raise these issues as well.

John Tillman – DFES.
• Low fuel certainly make our life easier.

Max Rudd.
• DPaW did a good job.
• Told slip-ons are not allowed to be used. DFES will not recognise the slip-ons.

Andrew Campbell – Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Manjimup.
• Shire supports slipon units and we fund them out of our own money.
• The problem arose from a death where a slipon unit went through the cabin of the truck and killed a person.
• Another incident occurred where a woman ended up in hospital just recently.

John Tillman - DFES.
• ESL is not to be used to fund slipons. Local Governments can still fund slipons.
• The key issue is securing them.
• DPaW uses them but they have a secured in a particular way.

Man who spoke previously.
• With regard to power poles on private property that are Western Power owned where there is a lot of undergrowth underneath them?

Western Power.
• Can go on line and request an inspection of the area.

The chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed meeting at 2.30pm.