

COMMUNIQUÉ

The State Bushfire Advisory Council (SBAC) convened its first meeting of 2026 to discuss key bushfire risk management issues affecting Western Australia, receive updates from major infrastructure and land management agencies, and appoint a new Deputy Chair.

The Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Paul Papalia CSC MLA and the FES Commissioner, Darren Klemm AFSM addressed SBAC members, thanked them for their service to the Western Australian community, and for their ongoing commitment to improving bushfire management and community safety.

Key Stakeholder updates from Water Corporation and Western Power

Water Corporation outlined its work across more than 500,000 hectares of managed land, including high-priority environmental and drinking water source areas. Key activities include annual mitigation works such as mechanical treatments, firebreak maintenance, and prescribed burning. The Corporation is continuing to address a large number of extreme-risk sites and is working to improve mitigation capability while navigating environmental approval requirements and funding pressures.

Western Power reported strong progress on its summer preparedness program, including vegetation management, pole replacements, insulator upgrades, and improved network sensitivity settings. The utility continues to manage pole-top fire risks and is trialling steel pole and conductor options in selected areas. Collaboration with the Bureau of Meteorology is helping improve predictive modelling and resource deployment, while ongoing vegetation work along private land interfaces remains a priority.

Local Government Grants Scheme Reform

WALGA presented concerns regarding the sustainability and equity of the current Local Government Grants Scheme (LGGS). Many local governments now contribute additional funding to meet essential service requirements, highlighting system-wide pressure and growing volunteer fatigue. A discussion paper outlining the LGGS reform requirements was tabled.

The Council recognised the importance of this reform and has committed to raising this with State Government.

Grain Harvest Fire Risk – Sector Engagement

With more than 170 harvest related fires recorded last season, the Council discussed ongoing work to better understand contributing factors and emerging risks. DFES has engaged Karen Chappell to lead a series of regional discussions with growers to gather insights on contributing factors, machinery issues, maintenance practices, and emerging risk patterns. This forms part of Phase One of a longer-term initiative aimed at improving safer harvest operations and reducing fire risk.

Appointment of Deputy Chair

The Council acknowledged the contribution of outgoing Deputy Chair Will Carmody and, in line with the Instrument of Establishment, supported the appointment of Nicole Matthews as the incoming Deputy Chair.

The next SBAC quarterly meeting is scheduled for June 2026.
For further information, please contact: rfdcommittees@dfes.wa.gov.au