



The NSW Bush Fire Coordinating Committee is a statutory body established by the Rural Fires Act 1997, although it also existed under the Bush Fires Act 1949. Organisations represented on the Committee are:

- NSW Rural Fire Service (the Commissioner as Chair, and a Fire Control Officer)
- NSW Fire Brigades
- Forests NSW
- Parks and Wildlife Division – Department of Environment and Conservation
- NSW Police Force
- Local Government Association of NSW
- Shires Association of NSW
- Nature Conservation Council
- NSW Farmers Association
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Lands, and
- A person nominated by the Minister for the Environment

The Committee provides a forum through which a broad cross-section of Government and non-Government organisations with an interest in the prevention, mitigation and suppression of bushfires can come together regularly to develop and progress policies and procedures aimed at ensuring a coordinated, agreed approach to major issues. The Committee also plays a key role in coordinating the work of District Bush Fire Management Committees in preparing plans of Operations, and Bush Fire Risk Management. This is most important given the responsibility under the Rural Fires Act to ensure that all activities are conducted with regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Many complex issues with the potential to cause conflict have been worked through and agreed at Coordinating Committee level, because the concerns and imperatives of each organisation are able to be explained and explored thus ensuring, as far as possible, agreed outcomes. Perhaps the greatest benefit of the Coordinating Committee is in developing an understanding between the various member organisations of the various roles and concerns held.

The Coordinating Committee does not have an operational role, although it assists the combat agencies by ensuring that a firm basis of operational plans is in place. Additionally the Committee reviews major bushfire suppression operations to identify opportunities for improvement.

Matters of local operational importance should in the first instance be raised at the District Bush Fire Management Committee. If unable to be resolved, issues can be referred to the Coordinating Committee for resolution. However by necessity, the Coordinating Committee must take a statewide view of issues, and the outcome may therefore not accord with local wishes. For this reason the Coordinating Committee encourages all eligible organisations to participate at the District Committee level, and for local issues to be resolved, as far as possible, through this process. It also encourages District Committees to modify statewide policies, after full and proper consultation; to meet local needs (provided the intent of the policy is not offended). Where there are difficulties implementing Coordinating Committee policies, assistance can be sought via the NSW Rural Fire Service Regions or Headquarters.