Minutes

Otago Local Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday 10 September 2025 **Time:** 10am - 3.00pm

Venue: Dunedin Fire Station

Present:

Megan McPherson	LAC Chair
Helen Algar	LAC Deputy Chair
Hilary McNab	LAC Member
Des Minehan	LAC Member
Vanessa van Uden	LAC Member (joined after 10am)
Neil Gillespie	LAC Member
Mandy Mayhem-Bullock	LAC Member

In Attendance:

Craig Geddes	Acting District Manager, Otago
James Knapp	Community Risk Manager (joined online at 10:32am)
Michelle Bartlett	Senior Advisor, Local Advisory Committees (online)

Apologies:

Phil Marsh	Region Manager, Te Kei
Rachel Cooper	LAC Member

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened with a karakia.

Committee operations

Apologies received from one member and the Region Manager. Register of interests reviewed and updated. The minutes of the LAC meeting on 19 June 2025 were reviewed and confirmed. Actions were reviewed and updated. Correspondence table reviewed completed and updated.

Chair's Update

The LAC Chairs' Hui was held in Wellington in July – there were 14 LACs established at that time and now all 16 are up and running. Each Chair had a chance to reflect on the issues for their region. The Chair was pleased to see Otago LAC's insights coming through loud and clear. Themes from the chair's insight report were shared and discussed

Now that all the LAC's are all up and running there was some focus on what a high performing LAC looks like, which included the following

- Turning up
- Being connected with their communities
- Being outcome focused

- Everybody contributing – equal voice
- Are constructive, can discuss hard messages in respectful way
- Good vibe.

The Chair felt that the Otago LAC was doing a lot of these things well already. An Otago LAC member has been assisting with the: Give volunteer fire fighters the same ACC coverage as paid firefighters with Fire and Emergency's involvement with the select committee process.

Update of EOI for Otago LAC membership: The Chair provided a story which was published in the Otago Daily Times to promote this round of recruitment. The project team have sent emails to both the District team and LAC members to promote, as well as local media channels. The intent is to get as many good applicants as possible, to keep up the momentum and efforts of the LAC.

LAC Engagements – confirming engagement plan for 2025-2026

Proposed Approach: The LAC proposed coordinating engagement with all councils' post-election, taking direction from the District team on priority focus areas including Emergency Management, Welcoming Communities/Community Partnerships, and broader community engagement through council meetings or public workshops.

Resource and Delivery Requirements: The LAC members requested community-friendly presentation materials from the National LAC team. The LAC will target specific organisations and communities including Fellowship New Zealand, REAP Rural Education, multi-ethnic councils, and welcoming/migrant communities. The engagement plan was updated to reflect discussion and planning.

Engagement reports and analysis

Recent Engagements: Members reported attending various local events including brigade recognition ceremonies, fire service AGMs, and community meetings across the region.

Housing and Homelessness Initiatives: Discussion of local housing hui outcomes, including the recent expansion of the warmer kiwi homes program, energy hardship support, and new outreach services for homeless populations. Challenges were noted around declaring uninhabitable housing and increasing numbers of vulnerable people living rough.

Rural Community Developments: Members noted growth in rural communities through property sales and ongoing infrastructure needs, including funding requirements for emergency equipment at community facilities e.g. generator.

Rural Fire Stations: Updates on maintaining rural fire stations and the importance of transparent communication regarding any potential service changes, with consideration for community investments in local facilities.

District Update

Incident Statistics (June-August): The LAC received infographics showing incident activity across the Otago District, with 198 motor vehicle crashes, 193 structure fires, and 45 vegetation fires. Motor vehicle crashes and structure fires were particularly prominent, with ongoing concerns about lithium battery fires in both residential and vehicle incidents.

Regional Strategic Plan Focus: Key priorities discussed included training initiatives, maintaining safe and positive work environments, supporting personnel, building effective community relationships, and continuous improvement processes. Updates covered industrial action matters, ongoing Town Hall sessions, volunteer brigade leader appointments, and technology rollout including device replacements for appliance communications.

Upcoming Initiatives: Next quarter activities include brigade culture training rollout featuring code of conduct modules and values operationalisation, wildfire preparedness programmes, Aviation cohort and the Land Management Forum, as well as stakeholder engagement planning. A major SIMEX exercise is scheduled for October 7-9, 2025.

Organisational Updates: The LAC received copies of the Otago District plan and updates on the finalised leadership structure and strategic implementation plan progress.

Community Risk Manager (CRM) update

Community Engagement: The CRM team engaged with 200 families at Polyfest in Dunedin with planned Home Fire Safety Visit follow-ups. Significant work was undertaken addressing migrant worker housing issues in Central Otago, including engagement with MBIE, MFAT and other CRMs to develop housing guidance. Fire risk workshops were conducted for Queenstown Lakes District Council reserves including Mt Ion and Ben Lomond, focusing on summer usage and council's duty of care responsibilities.

Regulatory Compliance: Strong progress reported with Waitaki District Council licencing and successful restraining order action against a landlord from illegally subdividing bedrooms. Six FENZ advisors achieved NZ certificates in Regulatory Practice, making this the first district to reach this milestone. The local, regional and national CRM training framework is progressing well across natural hazards, built environment, regulatory compliance and fire investigations.

Current Challenges: Service delivery adaptations continue around industrial action. Building regulation complexity remains problematic, particularly regarding worker accommodation conversions and enforcement reliance on territorial authorities. The Building Act lacks boarding house definitions. Unresponsive property owners present ongoing challenges for unwanted alarm management.

Wildfire Preparedness: No major fire zone changes planned this year. QLDC Parks and Reserves fire risk discussions continue constructively, with plans to relaunch seasonal digital campaigns targeting lakes visitors. Increased scrutiny is expected for apparent fire risk control breaches.

General business

- SharePoint & access for committee members: the NLAC team is working to get everyone access to SharePoint. We are currently procuring a new Board Management application. New log in guidance has been distributed, if still having issues please contact IT Support on 0800 374 843
- Communities of Interest: this tool was developed to understand what's important in each region and to assist in the engagement strategies, and recruitment of LACs to ensure members are across key communities and geography in each region.
- Community perceptions report: Senior Advisor gave an overview of the presentation – of note are the four engagement types, challenges and six principles for effective engagement.
- Updates from previous local Insights reporting:
    - 2024/25 Insight – Learnings from operational reviews is not visible to LACs – link to Operational reviews provided in meeting pack.
    - 2023/24 Insight – concern from LACs that carbon forestry is increasing fire risk – Link to information and research on carbon forestry and fire risk provided in meeting pack.
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Insights

- We understand FENZ has funding constraints, however when looking at services and resources to our rural communities there needs to be an open, fair and transparent approach with those communities having opportunity for early input.
- Real value in two-way connection and feedback between LAC and CRM teams into the community
- Mental health support required for younger people coming through in the volunteer space
- Review of capability for rural fire events needed.

2025-26 LAC meeting schedule

- 11 February 2026
- 13 May 2026

Meeting concluded with karakia and farewell to the Chair at 3pm

Action Log

Date	Action	Responsible	Due	Status
10 September 2025	Share letter from FENZ re; ACC coverage for volunteers firefighter	Senior Advisor	11 September 2025	Complete
10 September 2025	National chairs hui paper to be distributed to committee members	Chair	24 September 2025	Complete
10 September 2025	New dates for T2 meeting to be circulated for re-confirmation	Senior Advisor	24 September 2025	In progress
19 September 2025	Draft Annual insights report and share draft with Chair and Deputy Chair	Senior Advisor	23 June 2025	Complete
19 September 2025	Complete Local Insights report and share with NLAC	Chair	25 June 2025	Complete
27 March 2025	CRM to work on a draft for shared messaging around false alarms	CRM	Post meeting	Complete
27 March 2025	Public consultation on wilding conifer control around Bob's Peak in Queenstown – most likely FENZ will make a submission – CRM to advise LAC if they can support the submission	CRM	Post meeting	Complete
27 March 2025	Follow up on members signing petition for ACC and report back.	SA	Immediately post meeting	Completed

19 November 2024	Follow up on information on CDEM website on fire and wildfire – did not appear that FENZ had input into the website	Region and District Manager	Post meeting	Complete