

#### SURVEYORS | PLANNERS | DEVELOPMENT ADVISORS

### **BUSHFIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT REPORT**

250 – 292 Spring Mountain Drive, GREENBANK (Described as Lot 936 on RP124768)

### **BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL ASSESSMENT**



Prepared for:

MTAA Superannuation Fund (Flagstone Creek and Spring Mountain Park)

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Prepared by

Jensen Bowers Group Consultants Pty Ltd PO Box 799 Spring Hill Qld 4004

T (07) 3852 1771

**F** (07) 3252 9818

E admin@jensenbowers.com.au

W www.jensenbowers.com.au

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#### Laura Gannon Senior Planner | Bushfire Planning Specialist

E lauragannon@jensenbowers.com.au

T 07 3319 4909

M 0401 889 094

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#### DISCLAIMER

This report is prepared on the basis the subject land is identified to be 'at risk' of bushfire. Any buildings or structures located on such land subsequently inherit this risk. This report does not seek to remove this risk, but provide detailed siting, layout, building and / or servicing information to assist the ability of the land-owner to manage the threat of this risk.

This assessment is prepared based upon local, State and Federal legislative provisions relating to bushfire protection, as relevant at the time of production. Jensen Bowers Group Consultants Pty Ltd maintains relevant knowledge with regard to planning and development in bushfire prone areas. However, it is important to note that whilst bushfires generally maintain certain scientific attributes, bushfire events vary in intensity, duration, location and 'typical' behavioural characteristics. Bushfires do not always conform to scientific and widely-understood predictabilities and remain subject to variation across fire seasons by virtue of changes in ground fuel loads and vegetation, prevailing weather and wind conditions and topography.

It remains the land owner's responsibility to understand and prepare for the event of bushfire, which requires year-round property maintenance, a proficient understanding of local bushfire knowledge and what do in the event of a bushfire. A personal bushfire safety plan is recommended, and decisions regarding what to do in an event should be made well in advance of any particular bushfire threat. Regular contact with your local fire authority is advised.

Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of this report to advise upon the bushfire risk of the property, it forms no guarantee with respect to the safeguard of life and property.

Jensen Bowers Group Consultants Pty Ltd accepts no responsibility for any damage or loss of life or property as a result of bushfire or any other cause which may in any way be taken to be the subject of this report. This report and the information within it is provided on the understanding that reasonable care will be taken when using it. If there remains any uncertainty regarding the application of the information within the report in a specified circumstance, further professional advice should be sought. Jensen Bowers Group Consultants Pty Ltd does not accept responsibility for how the information within this report is applied or relied upon.

## INTRODUCTION

Jensen Bowers Group Consultants Pty Ltd has been engaged on behalf of MTAA Superannuation Fund (Flagstone Creek and Spring Mountain Park) to undertake a site-based bushfire hazard assessment pertaining to seven recently titled allotments at 250 – 292 Spring Mountain Drive, Greenbank (the subject site).

The site is identified as subject to bushfire hazard as per the current Beaudesert Planning Scheme overlay and the State Government's recently released natural hazards. As the subject site is identified by the current Beaudesert Planning Scheme overlay mapping an assessment of the bushfire hazard profile which exists in this case is required by the Building Code of Australia and in particular, AS3959-2009 – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas.

This assessment report aims to mitigate the risk to life and property from bushfire threat and the impact of bushfire attack which includes:

- direct flame contact
- ember and firebrand attack
- radiant heat
- fire-driven wind.

Building loss is typically associated with one or more forms of bushfire attack, the most common being the combined effects of radiant heat and ember attack. Danger to human life is also associated with these forms of bushfire attack in addition to smoke emission.

This assessment does not seek to remove the threat of bushfire risk, but provide detailed siting, layout, building and / or servicing information to assist the ability of land-owners to manage the threat of this risk. This assessment report is prepared in accordance with best practice industry standards as applicable in Queensland and pursuant to both State and local government bushfire hazard policies and guidelines.



#### 2.1 Executive summary

Site address	250-292 Spring Mountain Drive, GREENBANK		
Local Government	Logan City Council (Beaudesert Planning Scheme)		
Real property description	Lot 936 on SP124768		
Area of Site	Current: 2.8 hectares Proposed: LOT 1 – 4,006m2 LOT 2 – 4,001m2 LOT 3 – 4,000m2 LOT 4 – 4,000m2 LOT 5 – 4.001m2 LOT 6 – 4,006m2 LOT 7 – 4,000m2		
Tenure	Freehold		
Applicant's name	MTAA Superannuation Fund (Flagstone Creek and Spring Mountain Park)		
Fire Authority	Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) RFSQ South Eastern Region (Greenbank RFS Brigade)		
Current Land Use	Vacant (approved subdivision)		
Proposed Land Use	Approved rural residential subdivision (seven lots)		
Adjoining Properties	Freehold and Council-owned road reserve		

#### 2.2 Site locality



Figure 1: Site locality (Source: Queensland Globe, 2014)

The subject site fronts the southern alignment of Spring Mountain Drive and the western alignment of the Tully Connection Road in the Spring Mountain Estate, located in the suburb of Greenbank. The subject site backs on to developed freehold rural residential properties to the immediate south and is also surrounded by rural residential development to the north, east and west.

The site is within proximity to bushland adjoining Oxley Creek to the south-east of the site as well as a vegetated corridor to the immediate east and north-east. It remains this general area of vegetation which presents the potential hazard source in this particular case. The subject site is predominantly clear of vegetation with the exception of a number of individual tree specimens (mostly eucalypt) and the occasional native shrub. The proposed development will likely involve the removal of a number of these specimens in order to site dwellings and associated infrastructure and services, replacing such vegetation with manicured landscaping.

## UNDERSTANDING FIRE WEATHER CHARACTERISTICS

It remains important to understand the influence of fire weather with regard to how it can affect bushfire risk levels on a daily, weekly or seasonal basis.

In South East Queensland, hot-air fire wind is typically generated by north-west and southwesterlies and cool-air fire wind is generated by south-westerlies which are prevalent during Southern Queensland's fire season which extends from August to February, annually. In some situations however, south-easterlies can also drive bushfire behaviour.

Notwithstanding the above, it is noted bushfires do not always confirm to widely-accepted characteristics. Other fire weather conditions must also be contemplated such as preceding weather conditions (such as low rainfall or drought), air temperature and relative humidity. If the area has been subject to drought or low rainfall for a period of time, vegetation health tends to deteriorate with increased leaf drop, curing and drying. This contributes to increased ground fuel loads and general ignition susceptibility. Prolonged dry periods also reduce soil moisture content.

Air temperatures of above 30 degrees Celsius are typically conducive to increased fire weather, as are extended periods of higher than average air temperatures. In conjunction, low relative humidity (i.e low air moisture content) is also a contributing factor to increased fire weather.

In concert, all of the above factors can impact on the ability for fire to propagate, and alter behaviour and intensity characteristics and as such, fire weather is a significant component of bushfire hazard. Whilst an assessment of vegetation types, fuel loads, effective slope and other factors can be readily undertaken, fire weather can fluctuate across days, weeks and seasons and can have a significant impact on the potential for bushfire threat as well as influence bushfire behaviour and intensity.

The Fire Danger Index (FDI) is a commonly used method to readily advise the community of the likely ability of fire suppression based on fire weather, which is used to inform the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) System at Figure 2. It is important to maintain awareness as to the level of local fire danger during the fire season.



Figure 2: Fire Danger Ratings (Source: RFSQ, 2013)

# 4

## APPROVED DEVELOPMENT

The approved development relates to a one into seven lot rural residential subdivision. The subject site currently measures 2.8ha with a 388m frontage to the southern alignment of Spring Mountain Drive and a 140m frontage to the western alignment of the Tully Connection Road. The approved subdivision will provide six allotments with direct frontage to Spring Mountain Drive, with the seventh allotment a rear lot with driveway access from Spring Mountain Drive. Each lot measures between 4,000m2 and 4,006m2. Refer to **Attachment A** for the approved reconfiguration plan.



Figure 3: Approved ROL (Source: Saunders Havill Group, 2014)

## 5 STATUTORY BUSHFIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT

#### 5.1 State Planning Policy

The single State Planning Policy (SPP) was released by the State Government in December 2013 and amended in July 2014 and comprises a range of State-interest requirements for interim development assessment provisions. The SPP mapping identifies the site as subject to the potential impact buffer associated with bushland to the south-east which forms part of the Oxley Creek reserve area. This 'buffer' area represents an area in which the effects of nearby fire may be experienced, particularly with regard to ember attack and radiant heat exposure.

This mapping supports the implementation of the SPP only and is not a trigger for AS3959-2009 – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas pursuant to the Building Code of Australia.



Figure 4: Excerpt from SPP Bushfire Hazard Mapping (Source: Queensland Government, 2014)

As identified by the above mapping the principal hazard is located to the south-east of the site. It is noted that bushland areas are also located to the south-west and north-east. The corridor of vegetation to the north-east is filtered out of the current SPP mapping by virtue of its width and limited ability to sustain an intense fire which is precluded from reaching potential maximum rate of spread. The following requirements relate to all types of development subject to natural hazards, assessed pursuant to the SPP:

For all natural hazards, development:	Assessment	
Avoids natural hazard areas or mitigates the risks of the natural hazard; and	It is understood the development has been previously assessed by Council pursuant to	
Supports and does not unduly burden disaster management response or recovery capacity and capabilities; and	the previous SPP1/03 – Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Flood, Bushfire and Landslide via the existing reconfiguration approval.	
Directly, indirectly and cumulatively avoids an increase in the severity of the natural hazard and the potential for damage on the site or to other properties; and		
Avoids risks to public safety and the environment from the location of hazardous materials and the release of these materials as a result of the natural hazard; and		
Maintains or enhances natural processes and the protective function of landforms and vegetation that can mitigate risks associated with the natural hazard		

#### 5.2 Local Government Provisions

The Beaudesert Planning Scheme remains the applicable local planning instrument in this case, noting that planning approval was obtained in 2013. Thus, assessment against the Bushfire Hazard Overlay Code is not applicable.

Notwithstanding the above, the Bushfire Hazard Overlay mapping under the Beaudesert Planning Scheme remains relevant pursuant to the provisions of the Building Code of Australia (BCA). The BCA nominates local government planning scheme hazard overlay mapping as the relevant trigger for the applicability of AS3959-2009 – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas. On this basis, the overlay mapping is relevant in terms of dwelling construction.

Figure 5 provides an excerpt of the current Bushfire Hazard Overlay map under the Beaudesert Planning Scheme, identifying the entirety of the site as subject to bushfire hazard.



Figure 5: Excerpt from Beaudesert Planning Scheme Bushfire Hazard Overlay Mapping (Source: Logan City Council, 2014)

#### 5.3 Draft Logan Planning Scheme 2014

At the time this report was produced, the public display of the Draft Logan Planning Scheme had closed. It is understood that the Draft Planning Scheme Bushfire Hazard Overlay mapping was not based upon the new mapping methodology adopted by the State Government and to this end, the Draft Overlay mapping will require revision in accordance with the new SPP mapping methodology requirements. It is noted that the Draft Bushfire Hazard Overlay expands upon that area currently identified under the Beaudesert Planning Scheme Bushfire Hazard Overlay expands Overlay and is also more substantial in area than that identified by the State Government's SPP bushfire hazard mapping. In addition, the Draft Overlay mapping does not differentiate between low, medium or high hazard areas as required by the SPP mapping methodology, refer to Figure 6.

To this end, it is understood the Draft Bushfire Hazard Overlay mapping will be amended in accordance with the SPP mapping methodology. However, it is noted Local Government retains the ability to complete its own assessment in accordance with the mapping methodology which may derive different or additional hazard areas than identified by the State Government.

It is possible that not all dwellings yet to be constructed on established allotments will be complete in advance of the adoption of the new Planning Scheme. Irrespective of whether the Beaudesert or finalised Logan Planning Scheme is in place, this report considers both mapping triggers and provides a site-based assessment of the hazard profile relevant to the subject site for the purposes of AS3959-2009.



Figure 6: Excerpt from Draft Logan Planning Scheme Bushfire Hazard Overlay (Source: Logan City Council, 2014)

# **6** BUSHFIRE HAZARD SITE ASSESSMENT

#### 6.1 Vegetation

Vegetation classification is important for a number of reasons, namely it indicates the level of fire intensity and fire behaviour associated with specific stands of vegetation and it also indicates the fuel loads which may exist in certain locations. As the subject site is largely clear of vegetation with the exception of a number of individual eucalypt specimens, the hazard context relating to this site is external to the site. This is reinforced by the potential clearing of some individual species as a result of dwelling siting on individual allotments.

In terms of the classification of vegetation to the south-east and within 100m of the site site, the majority of the area comprises grassy eucalypt environments with tree specimens less than 30m in height with approximately 30% foliage cover and comprising a mostly grassy understory with a only a small number of shrubs. In accordance with Table 2.3 of AS3959-2009, the vegetation in this location is classified as **Woodland**. It is noted the vegetation classifications outlined in AS3059-2009 are derived on the basis of potential fuel load hazard and are not entirely aligned with ecological vegetation classes.

The 100m area of assessment is pursuant to the provisions of AS3959-2009 and relates to that area which may experience effects of ember attack and radiant heat exposure, is based upon research with regard to property loss within 100m of classifiable vegetation.



Figure 7: Vegetation classification (Source: Adapted from Queensland Globe, 2014)



Figure 8: The subject site (viewed from the centre of the site to the east) (Source: Jensen Bowers, 2014)



Figure 9: Vegetation located external to the site to the immediate east (Source: Jensen Bowers, 2014)

#### 6.2 Effective slope

Effective slope relates to the topography of vegetation beneath classified vegetation, as this influences fire speed and fire spread - namely, that the speed of fire doubles for every 10 degrees incline. An on-site effective slope assessment has been conducted via clinometer and rangefinder readings and found a maximum effective slope of approximately 7 degrees downslope to the south-east and an upslope / level land to the north-east. Figure 10 below illustrates the maximum effective slope relevant to this assessment.



Figure 10: Effective slope as relevant to the subject site (Source: Queensland Globe, 2014)

#### 6.3 Landscape and Localised Bushfire Hazard

The subject site is located amongst a previously developed rural residential estate and is largely surrounded by dwellings on larger sized residential allotments which have been historically cleared. In this particular location, the hazard profile is more associated with local bushfire hazard rather than broad-scale landscape hazard with respect to the various corridors of vegetation which permeate the landscape.

The nearest source of landscape bushfire hazard relevant to the subject site is to the southwest however, this source is located over 100m from the subject site which remains the relevant assessment measure pursuant to AS3959-2009. Oxley Creek to the south-east of the site remains the most significant source of hazard relevant to the subject site. As previously identified, fire-driven wind in Queensland is typically associated with North-Westerlies, South-Westerlies and sometimes on South-Easterlies. Both the Tully Connection Road and Spring Mountain Drive provide effective firebreaks with a high level of assurance as to their ongoing use and maintenance as no fuel / low fuel zones. These roads also provide an additional level of separation distance between the subject site and hazard sources to the south-east and north-east. In addition, they provide opportunities along with the surrounding road network, for access to undertake vegetation and fire management (hazard reduction) activities and a good level of accessibility for fire suppression activities and evacuation in the event of possible fire. A number of access tracks area apparent in the area through these areas of bushland.

# **7** BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND AS3959-2009 BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVELS

Bushfire attack levels (BAL) are derived from AS3959-2009 to distinguish the level of attack buildings may experience based on a range of factors, being those addressed in Section 6 of this report. Vegetation typologies, effective slope and separation distances maintain a significant bearing on the likely behaviour and intensity of a bushfire and how these factors may combine to impact upon nearby buildings. In essence, the further away a building is constructed from classifiable vegetation, the lower the bushfire construction level.

The Australian Standard adopts six distinct BAL categories including a 'low' category for areas where bushfire risk is limited, these categories are outlined below. The categories themselves are based upon the level of radiant heat flux which may be experienced during a bushfire event and is generally based upon how close or far a building is from classifiable vegetation. These BAL levels are translated to specific construction requirements to enhance the ability of buildings to withstand bushfire attack.

Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) Classified vegetation within 100 m of the and heat flux expose thresholds		Description of predicted bushfire attack and levels of exposure		
BAL—LOW	See Clause 2.2.3.2	There is insufficient risk to warrant specific construction requirements		
BAL-12.5	≤12.5 kW/m <sup>2</sup>	Ember attack		
BAL—19         >12.5 kW/m <sup>2</sup> $\leq 19 \text{ kW/m^2}$ BAL—29         >19 kW/m <sup>2</sup> $\leq 29 \text{ kW/m^2}$		Increasing levels of ember attack and burning debris ignited by windborne embers together with increasing heat flux		
		Increasing levels of ember attack and burning debris ignited by windborne embers together with increasing heat flux		
BAL-40 $>29 \text{ kW/m}^2 \le 40 \text{ kW/m}^2$		Increasing levels of ember attack and burning debris ignited by windborne embers together with increasing heat flux with the increased likelihood of exposure to flames		
BAL—FZ >40 kW/m <sup>2</sup>		Direct exposure to flames from fire front in addition to heat flux and ember attack		

#### BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVELS AND CORRESPONDING SECTIONS FOR SPECIFIC CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Figure 11: Excerpt from AS3959-2009 (Source: Standards Australia, 2011)

Based on the separation distances sought by the building envelopes provisional BAL categories are provided, refer to **Attachment B**.

Provided dwellings on allotments 6 and 7 are sited at least 8m from the Tully Connection Road boundary, BAL-12.5 building construction provisions will apply to allotments 5, 6 and 7 and possibly allotment 4 depending upon its location. Should a dwelling on allotment 4 be located

outside of the BAL-12.5 area identified at **Attachment B**, BAL-LOW provisions will prevail and AS3959-2009 construction provisions will not apply. Allotments 1, 2 and 3 also constitute BAL-LOW and will not require any particular building construction requirements.

#### 7.1 BAL-12.5 Construction Requirements

For those allotments subject to BAL-12.5 as identified at **Attachment B**, this BAL classification remains the lowest category of bushfire construction and '*is primarily concerned with protection* of ember attack and radiant heat up to and including 12.5 kW/m2 where the site is less than 100m from the source of bushfire attack' (Standards Australia, 2011).

A number of provisions of AS3959-2009 may already be encapsulated by specific dwelling designs and / materials which limits the extent of specific requirements needed to comply. For example, a slab on ground brick dwelling is largely compliant with only a small number of additional building treatments required to comply with AS3959-2009.

It is recommended purchasers liaise with their respective builders and / or certifiers with regard to how to comply with AS3959-2009 BAL-12.5 provisions however, the requirements are identified in summary below:

- no specific requirements for sub-floor support or floor
- external walls where less than 400mm above ground level, or decks, are to be of noncombustible material such as brick, 6mm fibre cement clad or bushfire resistant / naturally fire resistant timber
- windows are protected by bushfire shutters or screened or use 4mm Grade A safety glass within 400mm of the ground or deck with openable portion screened with metal frame or metal reinforced PVC-U or bushfire resisting timber
- external doors protected by bushfire shutters or screened with steel, bronze or aluminium mesh or glazed with 5mm toughened glass and non-combustible or 35mm solid timber for 400mm above ground with naturally fire resistant (high density) timber tight-fitting frame
- roofs with non-combustible covering and roof/wall junction sealed and openings fitted with non-combustible ember guards and fully sarked
- no specific requirements for deck materials with enclosed sub-floor space except within 400mm of ground level. Decking to be non-combustible or bushfire resistant within 300mm horizontally and 400mm vertically from a glazed element.

#### 7.2 Limitations of AS3959-2009

The Australian Standard provides that although its provisions are:

'designed to improve the performance of buildings when subjected to bushfire attack in designated bushfire-prone areas there can be no guarantee that a building will survive a bushfire event on every occasion. This is substantially due to the unpredictable nature and behaviour of fire and extreme weather conditions.'

It is significant to also understand the objective of AS3959-2009, which is to 'prescribe particular construction details for buildings to reduce the risk of ignition from a bushfire, appropriate to the:

- a) potential for ignition caused by burning embers, radiant heat or flame generated by a bushfire; and
- b) intensity of the bushfire attack on the building.'

Further, the FFDI provisions pursuant to AS3959-2009 adopted for Queensland is 40 and as such the design parameters in this context are designed to a maximum of Very High (FDI 25-49). Thus, fire days in excess of this (Severe, Extreme and Catastrophic days) are not accommodated by existing statutory building instruments and is beyond design parameters. As advised by the RFSQ at **Attachment C**, early evacuation on fire danger days above Very High is recommended, even if properties are well-prepared.

Importantly, the enhancement of survival of life and property relies upon a range of mitigation measures, including regular and on-going property and vegetation management as well as BAL construction requirements. Again, whilst all reasonable care and diligence has been applied throughout the preparation of this assessment and the identification of BAL provisions, these provisions in no way form a guarantee against the loss of life or property as a result of bushfire and it remains the responsibility of property owners to investigate, self-educate and understand how best to protect their property and lives in the event of bushfire. A range of helpful resources are listed in Section 9 of this report.

# 8 ADDITIONAL BUSHFIRE MITIGATION RECOMMENTATIONS

#### 8.1 Fencing

Fencing materials can have a considerable impact on the propagation of fire. Likewise, some fencing materials can alleviate exposure to radiant heat which can assist life and property survival. Timber paling fencing is the most common form of fencing in residential areas however, fire resistant and fire retardant materials are considered more appropriate than timber in this case - being less likely to propagate flame. Thus, it is recommended that rural mesh fencing (perhaps with timber frame) provides a more appropriate solution in this case. Colorbond or masonry fencing is also acceptable. The use of these fencing materials offers benefits in terms of reducing the opportunity to fire to propagate along the fence line.

Alternatively, open style metal fencing similar to pool fencing may be used as an alternative to traditional timber fencing which should ideally be avoided if possible.

#### 8.2 Landscaping

All approved allotments must be landscaped so as to reduce opportunity for spot fires via ember attack and so as to maintain adequate defendable space / separation distance around each dwelling.

Fire authorities in other jurisdictions which experience a higher level of bushfire risk have completed significant work in the area of landscaping for bushfire hazard. The CFA has produced a 'Plant Selection Key' to assist in the identification of suitable 'fire-wise' plantings. The Country Fire Service of South Australia, New South Wales Fire Service and the Tasmania Fire Service have all prepared lists of less flammable species which are suitable for landscaping purposes relevant to their respective jurisdictions. The CFA in particular has done much work focusing on the characteristics of 'fire-wise' plants as opposed to specific species. It is recommended a copy of the CFA's 'Landscaping for Bushfire' Guideline be provided to all property purchasers, a copy of this document is included at **Attachment D**.

'Fire-wise' species maintain a number of characteristics which reduce their propensity for ignition. In detail:

- any trees or shrubs must comprise smoother bark or attached tightly on trunks as opposed to loose, stringy or ribbon bark. Avoid species which shed bark on an annual basis
- chose species with a high moisture content, with coarse and broad leaves which are thinly spread such as succulents
- select species with foliage which is less dense and open and loosely branching.

Notwithstanding the above and irrespective of the characteristics of such species, certain weather conditions can impact upon the propensity for ignition and propagation of fire within any vegetation. It must be noted that no vegetation can be considered 'fire proof'.

#### 8.3 Water Supply and Firefighting Infrastructure

It is understood the allotments will be connected to reticulated water supply. In some circumstances, reticulated water (pressure or supply) may not be guaranteed in the event of bushfire. This can be for a number of reasons including power outages to pump stations or damage to pump stations via bushfire or large amounts of water being drawn from the mains by fire services and the wider community. On this basis, it is strongly recommended that the proposed allotments are supplemented by a 5,000 litre water tank or other form of static water supply for personal property firefighting use in the event of ember attack.

Water tanks are not to be constructed of any material which may fail when exposed to excessive heat and must be located on that side of the building which is furthermost away from the hazard source. Access around the entire perimeter of each dwelling should be maintained and any hoses and equipment should likewise be capable of reaching all external areas of the dwelling, including roof valleys. External hose connections both to reticulated water supplies and directly to the storage tank are recommended.

Plastic gas fittings are not acceptable.

#### 8.4 Bushfire Awareness

Landowners are responsible for developing their own knowledge and understanding of the level of bushfire risk specific to their respective properties. A household bushfire plan is required and must take account of matters such as where occupants are during the day (at home, work or school), if any occupants require special assistance (i.e infants, the elderly or the ill), evacuation routes available, evacuation destinations and travel time, property maintenance and preparation and arrangements for pets. Planning ahead of any perceived bushfire event is essential.

Understanding what to do in the event of bushfire emergency is critical, residents may not always receive an extended warning or warning to evacuate and fire appliances may not always be available to render assistance. Thus, prior knowledge as to the steps to take during the lead up to a fire event, during the passage of bushfire and what to do immediately after the fire front has passed is critical.

The RFSQ's 'Bushfire Survival Plan' provides detailed information on how to prepare for the bushfire season and how to take action to survive in the event of bushfire. A copy of this publication is enclosed at **Attachment C**.

## LIST OF REFERENCE MATERIALS

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# **10** CONCLUSION

This report considers the bushfire construction requirements for an approved one into seven lot rural residential subdivision as part of the Spring Mountain Estate at Greenbank.

Based upon observations derived via site inspection and analysis, a range of mitigation measures are identified to aid in the defence against bushfire with respect to areas of classifiable vegetation which surround the development site. The building construction provisions identified in this report must be implemented to ensure the bushfire risk in this location is managed in a reasonable manner.

In addition, it is significant to note that bushfire remains a natural process which is endemic to the Australian bush and it remains subject to a range of contributing factors which are variable almost on a daily basis. As such, it is extremely difficult to predict the behaviour and intensity of a fire event at any given time. On this basis, it remains of the upmost importance that residents within identified bushfire prone areas obtain knowledge and remain aware of their options in the event of a bushfire to ensure the preservation of both life and property.

Laura Gannon BRTP (Hons) GCPM MPIA MFPA MAIES Senior Town Planner | Bushfire Planning Specialist

- E lauragannon@jensenbowers.com.au
- T 07 3319 4909 M 0401 889 094

### AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Laura is a qualified specialist in the area of bushfire planning and management, with extensive knowledge and experience with regard to bushfire hazard planning policy, bushfire responsive strategic planning and planning for development in bushfire hazard areas. Laura has achieved nationally accredited training in the area of risk based land use planning with the Australian Emergency Management Institute as well as development and building in bushfire prone areas with the University of Technology, Sydney in partnership with the Country Fire Authority of Victoria.

Laura is a member of the State Government's Bushfire Risk Advisory Group. Laura is also a Member of the Fire Protection Association of Australia, the Australian Institute of Emergency Services and the Planning Institute of Australia. Laura maintains an honours degree in Regional and Town Planning from the University of Queensland and a Graduate Certificate in Project Management from the University of South Australia.

Attachment A APPROVED RECONFIGURATION PLAN

Attachment B

**BAL ASSESSMENT PLAN** 

Attachment C

Attachment D

**CFA LANDSCAPING FOR BUSHFIRE GUIDELINE** 



File:	88311	4-1
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## APPROVED PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT

Com 25/2013 Application:

Logan City Council RECEIVED
2 0 MAY 2014
CENTRAL INCOMING

Received by Business Performance Unit					
Date:	/	/ 2012			
By:					

LCC\_DOCS-#3243125-v1-BPU\_Cover\_DA\_Approved\_Plan\_of\_Development.DOC

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Internet Ready

Scanned Date



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town planning

Lot 936 on SP124768 Lot Description

Locality of Greenbank Parish of Stapyton County of Stanley Dwg No.

6828 L 01 PP G



# Bushfire Survival Plan PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE.

Tomorrow's Queensland: strong, green, smart, healthy and fair

Queensland Government

Department of Community Safety

RURAL FIRE SERVIC



## **Bushfires in Queensland**

The fire season in Queensland normally commences in the far north of the state in July and progresses through to southern areas as spring approaches. The fire season can extend through to February in southern and far south-western Queensland. These time frames can vary significantly from year to year, depending on the fuel loads, long-term climate and short-term weather conditions in each area.

There are four key considerations for dealing with bushfire:

- The safety of you and your family.
- The resilience of your property.
- The protection of irreplaceable valuables and important documents.
- The maintenance of adequate levels of insurance.

This document will provide you with information about the things you need to consider to prepare yourself and your home for the bushfire season, and how to make your own personal Bushfire Survival Plan.

> It is your responsibility to prepare yourself, your family and your home for the threat of bushfire.

### You must prepare\_ACT\_SURVIVE\_

Your main priority is to ensure that you and your family are safe. During a bushfire you and your family's survival and safety depend on your preparations, and the decisions you make.

The lives of you and your family are more important than any building.

Whether your plan is to leave early or stay, you must prepare your home and property to increase their level of resilience and your chances of survival.

## **Understand your risk**

The first step in planning to survive a bushfire is to understand your own level of risk. By understanding your own level of risk you will be able to make informed decisions that are right for you and your family. Included with this Bushfire Survival Plan is a selfassessment tool that will enable you to assess the risk level associated with your property. If you are still unsure of your level of risk or require assistance contact your local fire station for more information. To book a Bushfire Safety presentation call 1300 369 003.

## Fire danger ratings

The increased frequency of extreme bushfires in Australia in the last 10 years and the recent experience of the Black Saturday fires in Victoria have encouraged fire services throughout Australia to introduce new levels of Fire Danger Rating (FDR). A lift-out chart of the FDR system is contained within this document. Display it in a prominent place in your home or keep it with your Bushfire Survival Plan.



#### Catastrophic fire danger rating

The highest level is catastrophic. On a day of catastrophic FDR leaving early is the only option to ensure your survival. You must relocate early to a safer location, hours or the day before a fire occurs. Under no circumstances will it be safe to stay with your property.

#### Extreme fire danger rating

The second highest level is extreme. Should a fire occur in your area on a day of extreme FDR leaving early will always be the only option. Staying can only be considered for homes that:

- Have been designed and constructed specifically to address the threat of bushfire.
- Have been maintained to those levels and are currently well prepared.
- Can be actively defended by people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to implement a well-rehearsed Bushfire Survival Plan.

#### On days of catastrophic or extreme FDR:

- Fires are likely to be uncontrollable, unpredictable and very fast moving with highly aggressive flames extending high above tree tops and buildings.
- Thousands of embers may be violently blown into and around homes causing other fires to start rapidly and spread quickly up to 20 kilometres ahead of the main fire.
- Fire can threaten suddenly, without warning, and the heat and wind will make it difficult to see, hear and breathe as the fire approaches.
- People in the path of such fires will almost certainly be injured or die and a significant number of homes and businesses will be destroyed or damaged.
- Even well-prepared and constructed homes will not be safe.
- Expect power, water and phone networks to fail as severe winds bring down trees, power lines and blow roofs off buildings well ahead of the fire.

It is vital that you understand on these days that your survival will depend solely on how well you have prepared and how decisively you act. Leaving late can be a deadly option. If you are in any doubt, make the decision to LEAVE EARLY.

## What will you do?

At all times you need to PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE.

When the fire danger rating is **'catastrophic'** leaving early is the safest option.

When the fire danger rating is lower than **'catastrophic'**, one of the most important decisions you need to make is whether you will leave early or stay with a well prepared property. This decision is the basis of your Bushfire Survival Plan.

The following questions may help you make the right decision for whether you will leave early or stay:

- Do you need to consider family members who are young, elderly or infirm?
- Are you physically and emotionally prepared to stay with your property?
- Do you have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to stay with your property?
- Is your home adequately constructed, maintained and prepared to withstand the impact of a fire?
   In other words, is your home prepared to withstand the impact of a bushfire?
- Do you have well-maintained resources and equipment to fight fire, and do you know how to use them?
- Do you have appropriate protective clothing to fight a fire?
- What will you do if a rapid onset fire leaves you with no time to leave? Where will you shelter?



## Leave early

If you plan to leave early then you must leave your home well before a bushfire threatens and travelling by road becomes hazardous. Your leave early preparations include:

**Step 1: Preparation** – your property should be well prepared for bushfire even if you intend to leave early.

**Step 2:** What you will do – make your Bushfire Survival Plan in accordance with your decision to leave early.

**Step 3:** Make a contingency plan – the FDR, the preparedness of your home, a change in household circumstances, a change in your physical preparedness or unexpected visitors are some things that may require you to reconsider your Bushfire Survival Plan.

## Planning to stay

Planning is critical to successfully staying with your home may involve the risk of psychological trauma, injury or death.

**Step 1: Preparation** – your property must be able to withstand the impact of bushfire and well prepared to shelter you and your family.

**Step 2:** What you will do – make your Bushfire Survival Plan in accordance with your decision to stay.

**Step 3:** Make a contingency plan – the FDR, the preparedness of your home, a change in household circumstances, a change in your physical preparedness or unexpected visitors are some things that may require you to reconsider your Bushfire Survival Plan.

In making your decision to stay, here are a few things you need to consider.

- Is your property able to withstand the impact of a bushfire?
- Are you physically and emotionally prepared to stay with your property?
- Do you have well-maintained resources and equipment and do you know how to use them?
- Do you have appropriate protective clothing?
- Will your bushfire survival plan need to be different for weekdays, weekends or if someone is sick at home?
- Do you have a contingency plan?

## Preparing your Bushfire Survival Plan

Preparation is the key to survival. Being involved in a fire will be one of the most traumatic experiences of your life.

- Prepare yourself you need to be both mentally and physically prepared to carry out your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Prepare your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Prepare your Bushfire Survival Kit.
- Prepare your Bushfire Relocation Kit.
- Prepare your property.

When writing your plan you need to consider:

- Have you made the right choice: to leave early or stay?
- Have you discussed your choice with your family, friends and neighbours?
- Who will take charge and lead other family members by carefully communicating the various tasks set out in the plan?
- If you have chosen to stay what will you do to protect your property when the fire arrives?
- What will you put in your Bushfire Survival Kit and where will you store it?
- Do your friends, family and neighbours know the details of your plan?

- What will you do if your Bushfire Survival Plan fails?
- Do you have an alternative option or contingency plan if your plan fails?
- Do you have a Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP) you can go to as a last resort? For more information on NSPs see www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au.
- Is it safe to travel there?

If your decision is to leave early, you must include the following information or action items in your Bushfire Survival Plan:

- Monitor media outlets radio, TV, mobile phone and internet for bushfire alerts.
- When will you leave?
- What will be your trigger for action?
- Will your plan be different for weekdays, weekends, or if someone is at home sick or injured?
- What will you take with you (Relocation Kit)?
- Where will you and your family go when you leave early?
- What route will you take to get there?
- What will you do with your pets?
- What will you do if there are consecutive or multiple
   'catastrophic' or extreme fire danger days?
- Will you go into work on days when the FDR is in the upper levels?
- Will you send your children to school when the FDR is in the upper levels?
- Will all members of your household leave early?
- What will you do to prepare your property?
- What is your contingency plan in the event that it is unsafe to leave?

If your decision is to stay you must include the following information or actions items in your Bushfire Survival Plan:

- Monitor media outlets Radio, TV, mobile phone and internet.
- Locate your Bushfire Survival Kit.
- Put on protective clothing.
- Remain hydrated by drinking lots of water.

- Move any stock to fully grazed paddocks.
- Move cars to a safe location.
- Remove garden furniture, doormats and other items.
- Close windows and doors and shut blinds.
- Take down curtains and move furniture away from windows.
- Seal gaps under doors and window screens with wet towels.
- Place pets inside, restrain them, and provide water.
- Block downpipes and fill gutters with water.
- Wet down the sides of buildings facing the approaching fire front.
- Wet down decks and verandas.
- Wet down fine fuels close to buildings.
- Turn on sprinklers in garden before bushfire arrives.
- Fill containers with water; bath, sinks, buckets, wheelie bins, etc.
- Have ladders ready for roof space access (inside) and against roof (outside).
- Have generator or petrol pump ready.
- Start checking and patrolling for embers outside.

When the fire front arrives:

- Take all fire fighting equipment inside such as hoses and pumps as they may melt during the fire.
- Go inside and shelter away from the fire front.
- Patrol the inside of your home, including the ceiling space, for embers or small fires that may start.
- Drinks lots of water.
- Check family and pets.

After the fire front has passed:

- Wear protective equipment.
- Go outside once it is safe.
- Check for small spot fires and burning embers:
  - inside roof space
  - under floor boards
  - under house space
  - on veranda and decks

- on window ledges and door sills
- in roof lines and gutters
- garden beds and mulch
- wood heaps
- outdoor furniture
- sheds and carports
- Continue to drink lots of water.
- Stay at your property until the surrounding area is clear of fire.
- Monitor media outlets radio, TV, mobile phone and internet.

You need to be both mentally and physically prepared to carry out your Bushfire Survival Plan

There may be other actions to include, depending on your individual property and the level of bushfire risk you are exposed to.

Include the whole family in creating your Bushfire Survival Plan. You and your family should be aware of the actions you will take at the various FDR levels and it is important to ensure this is incorporated into your Bushfire Survival Plan. The FDR for your area can be found on roadside signs and by visiting www.ruralfire. qld.gov.au and following the FDR link.

It is important that your Bushfire Survival Plan does not rely solely on receiving an alert.

Once you have completed your Bushfire Survival Plan, practise it regularly to ensure everyone involved knows exactly what to do in the event of a fire.

## Preparing your Bushfire Survival Kit

It is essential that you have a Bushfire Survival Kit if your choice is to stay with your property. This kit will ensure you and your family have the important equipment you need to stay. For a comprehensive list of equipment needed in a Bushfire Survival Kit see page 14.

## Preparing your Bushfire Relocation Kit

It is equally important to have a relocation kit if your choice is to leave early. This kit will ensure you and your family have important items and equipment required to relocate for the time needed. For a comprehensive list of items and equipment needed in a Bushfire Relocation Kit see page 15.

## Making a contingency plan

No matter whether your decision is to leave early, well before a bush fire threatens or to stay you should still have a contingency plan as part of your Bushfire Survival Plan. There are many scenarios to consider, such as what you will do if a rapid onset fire starts in your local area making roads impassable or travel particularly dangerous. You should have other options if road travel is not safe.

- Is your house well prepared?
- Can it provide you with protection from radiant heat?
- Have you identified a safer location such as an NSP?

Sheltering in a well-prepared property is far safer than being out in the open or in a vehicle

## Preparing your property

An unprepared property is not only at risk itself, but may also present an increased danger for your neighbours and their homes.

Planning is absolutely critical to safely staying with your home. Staying home involves the risk of psychological trauma, injury and death. There are a number of measures you can take to prepare your home and property for bushfire. These include several preparations you must take annually prior to the bushfire season.

Your pre-season property preparations should include:

- Displaying a prominent house number.
- Ensuring there is adequate access for fire trucks to your property – 4 metres wide by 4 metres high with a turn-around area. Reduce vegetation loads along the access path.
- Mowing your grass regularly.
- Removing excess ground fuels and combustible material (long dry grass, dead leaves and branches).
- Clearing of leaves, twigs, bark and other debris from the roof and gutters.
- Purchasing and testing the effectiveness of gutter plugs.
- Trimming low-lying branches 2 metres from the ground surrounding your home.
- Enclosing open areas under your decks and floors.
- Installing fine steel wire mesh screens on all windows, doors, vents and weep holes.
- Pointing LPG cylinder relief valves away from the house.
- Conducting maintenance checks on pumps, generators and water systems.
- Checking that you have sufficient personal protective clothing and equipment.
- Relocating flammable items away from your home including woodpiles, paper, boxes, crates, hanging baskets and garden furniture.
- Sealing all gaps in external roof and wall cladding.
- Checking that the first aid kit is fully stocked.

## **Bushfire Alerts**

If you receive an emergency warning about a bushfire or other emergency, take notice as it could save your life.

There are three types of alert messages to help you make the right safety choices:

**Bushfire Advice Message** – a fire has started – general information to keep you up to date.

**Bushfire Watch and Act Message** – represents a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing, a fire is approaching; lives may come under threat. Take appropriate action.

**Bushfire Emergency Warning** – is the highest level message advising of impending danger. It may be preceded with the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS).

An Emergency Warning means there is a threat to lives and protective action is required immediately.

## When a bushfire strikes

You have made your decision to **PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE.** You have prepared your property before the fire season. You have made your Bushfire Survival Plan. You have practised your Bushfire Survival Plan.

A bushfire is threatening? What do you do?

- Know the FDR for any given day.
- Regularly check the FDR on the Rural Fire Services website at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au.
- Monitor your media outlets for warnings on bushfire activity.
- Seek out information if you have to, and do not assume that you will receive a warning.
- Leave early or stay according to your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Act decisively in accordance with your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Do not adopt the 'wait and see' option.

# Travelling in your vehicle near a bushfire

Sheltering inside a vehicle is a high-risk strategy that can result in death. Whilst sheltering inside a vehicle offers you a slightly higher chance of survival than being caught in the open, having a leave early or stay strategy is a much safer option.

You should never take a journey into areas where the fire danger is catastrophic or extreme. You should consider postponing or finding alternative routes if necessary. If you can smell or see smoke in the distance it is best to u-turn and drive away from the danger.

If you are caught in smoke or flames while on the road:

- Turn on the vehicle's headlights and hazard warning lights.
- If you need to shelter in your vehicle drive your car into a bare, clear area well away from surrounding trees, leaving lights on. Position vehicle to prevent side impact from advancing fire front.
- Close all windows and vents.
- Leave the engine running and turn off the air conditioning system.
- Cover your entire body with woollen or cotton blankets to protect from radiant heat.
- Take shelter below the window level.
- Drink water frequently and stay in the vehicle until the fire front has passed.
- Once the fire front has passed exit the vehicle to inspect the damage and ensure other passengers are safe.

## **Neighbourhood Safer Places**

A Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP) is a place of last resort for people during a bushfire. An NSP may form part of a back-up plan when:

- Your Bushfire Survival Plan has failed.
- Your plan was to stay but the extent of the fire means that your home cannot withstand the impact of the fire and therefore your home is not a safe place to shelter.
- The fire has escalated to an extreme or catastrophic level and relocation is the safest option.

An NSP is an identified building or open space within the community that can provide a level of protection from the immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire. NSPs still entail some risk, both in moving to them and while sheltering in them and cannot be considered completely safe.

They are a place of *last resort* in bushfire emergencies only. The following limitations of NSPs need to be considered within your Bushfire Survival Plan:

- NSPs do not cater for pets.
- Firefighters may not be present as they will be fighting the main fire front elsewhere.
- NSPs do not provide meals or amenities.
- They may not provide shelter from the elements, particularly flying embers.

If you are a person with special needs you should give consideration to what assistance you may require at an NSP.

Although QFRS cannot guarantee an immediate presence during a bushfire, every effort will be made to provide support as soon as resources are available.

If an NSP is part of your contingency plan it should not require extended travel through fire-affected areas to get there.

## FIRE DANGER RATING



The Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is an early indicator of potential danger and should act as your first trigger for action. The higher the rating the greater the need for you to act.

The FDR is an assessment of the potential fire behaviour, the difficulty of suppressing a fire, and the potential impact on the community should a bushfire occur on a given day.

A Fire Danger Index (FDI) of 'low-moderate' means that fire will burn slowly and that it will be easily controlled, whereas a FDI in excess of 'catastrophic 100+' means that fire will burn so fast and so hot that it will be uncontrollable.

#### CATASTROPHIC 100+

A fire with a rating of **'catastrophic'** may be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. The flames will be higher than roof tops. Many people will be injured and many homes and businesses will be destroyed.

During a **'catastrophic'** fire, well-prepared and constructed homes will not be safe. Leaving is the only option for your survival.

#### **EXTREME 75-99**

A fire with an **'extreme'** rating may be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. The flames will be higher than roof tops. During an **'extreme'** fire, people will be injured and homes and businesses will be destroyed.

During an **'extreme'** fire, well-prepared and wellconstructed homes may not be safe. Leaving is the only option for your survival.

#### SEVERE 50-74

A fire with a **'severe'** rating may be uncontrollable and move quickly, with flames that may be higher than roof tops. A **'severe'** fire may cause injuries and some homes or businesses will be destroyed.

During a fire with a **'severe'** rating, leaving is the safest option for your survival. Use your home as a place of safety only if it is well-prepared and well-constructed.

#### VERY HIGH 25-49

A fire with a **'very high'** danger rating is a fire that can be difficult to control with flames that may burn into the tree tops. During a fire of this type some homes and businesses may be damaged or destroyed.

During a fire with a **'very high'** danger rating, you should use your home as a place of safety only if it is well prepared and well-constructed.

#### HIGH 12-24

A fire with a **'high'** danger rating is a fire that can be controlled where loss of life is unlikely and damage to property will be limited.

During a fire with a **'high'** danger rating, you should know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes.

#### LOW-MODERATE 0-11

A fire with a **'low to moderate'** rating can be easily controlled and pose little/or no risk to life or property.

During a fire with a **'low to moderate'** rating, you should know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes.

## **BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**

Complete your personalised Bushfire Survival Plan lift-out.

## Personal details:

Important phone numbers: 000 (Fire, Police and Ambulance)

Family:	Family:	Family:	
Work:	Friends:	Friends:	
School:			

## Important contact details – name and phone number:

Insurer:	Policy Number:	Phone:
Electricity:		Phone:
Water:		Phone:
Gas:		Phone:
Phone Company:		Phone:
Council:	Phone:	

## Leave early:

List all names and contact phone numbers of household members who have decided to leave early then complete Section 1.

#### Names:

Phone:

## Stay:

List all names and contact phone numbers of household members who have decided to stay, then complete Section 2.

Names:

Phone:

## Leave early – Section 1

Pull this Bushfire Survival Plan lift-out from this document and keep in a safe place.

Leaving early will always be the safest option for you and your family. It is extremely important for you to prepare a detailed leave early plan to ensure everyone understands what to do and when. Use the boxes below to list tasks to do.

**When to go** – Think of different triggers that will cause you and your family to leave early. Think about what you will do if you have sent the children to school that day. Think about whether or not you will have to travel from work into the fire zone.

**Where to go** – Identify one or more safer locations. Consider putting on personal protective clothing before you leave home.

**How to get there** – What roads will you take to your destination? Have an alternative route if your first choice is impassable.

**What to take** – Make a list of your most valuable items (e.g. insurance papers, electronic records, photo albums, passports, birth certificates and other important documents).

## Stay – Section 2

Anyone who is not going to leave early must be involved in completing this stay and defend plan to ensure they know what to do. Every stay plan will be different depending on your circumstances. Use the boxes below to list tasks to do.

- Before the fire approaches – Start getting yourself and your property ready for a bushfire.

As the fire approaches – Prepare for ember attack on or near your home. Remember to put on personal protective clothing.

- **As the fire front arrives** - Stay safe by monitoring the fire from inside your home.

- **After the fire has passed** – Patrol your property and extinguish any spot fires or burning embers. You may need to keep this up for several hours.

## Everyone must have a contingency plan

**Have a contingency plan** – what will you do if you can't activate your Bushfire Survival Plan? Remember that leaving late can lead to loss of lives.

Know where your nearest NSP is and how to get there.

## **ACTIVATING YOUR BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**

Once you have prepared your Bushfire Survival Plan and completed your preparations, it is absolutely essential that you regularly practise and review your plan. This will make sure you and your family are well organised in the event of a bushfire. If a bushfire threatens the health and safety of you, your family, home or property, you should follow these steps:



## **BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL KIT**

You need to have a Bushfire Survival Kit stored in an area of the house that is safe and easy to access. It should contain:

- protective clothing
- mop
- gloves
- torch
- hoses

shovel

- towels
- buckets
- safety goggles
- ladder
- medications
- bottled drinking water
- fire extinguishers
- battery operated radio
- spare batteries
- smoke mask
- woollen blankets
- first aid kit
- knapsack sprayer
- protective clothing for the whole family.





## **RELOCATION KIT**

Write a list of all items your family will need before, during and after your relocation. The list below shows items that you might like to put in your relocation kit.

- protective clothing for the whole family
- battery operated radio and spare batteries
- safety goggles
- mobile phone and battery charger
- medications
- wallet or purse and money
- clothing (two sets of clothes for each family member)
- identity information (passports, birth certificates)
- bottled water (enough for each relocated family member)
- family and friends' phone numbers
- items of high importance (e.g. family photos, valuables, important documents)
- blankets (natural fibres)
- children's toys





## **BUSHFIRE RISK SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**



This basic self-assessment checklist is designed to give you a greater understanding of the bushfire risk level relevant to your property. Information provided in this assessment will assist you when completing your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Address:			
		Postcode:	
Property O	wner/Property Name:		

ACCESS/EGRESS	Road/Street/Driveway	PLEA	SE √ A	PPROPRIATE	BOX
Clear of overhanging vegetation		Yes		No	
Unrestricted gate access		Yes		No	
Clear of overhead power lines		Yes		No	
Able to reverse in		Yes		No	
Turning/passing areas		Yes		No	
Heavy vehicle access on cattle grid/brid	lge	Yes		No	
Alternative way out		Yes		No	
Two wheel drive access		Yes		No	
STRUCTURE/S					
Exterior walls – non-combustible		Yes		No	
Roof ridge capping sealed		Yes		No	
Eaves enclosed		Yes		No	
Roofing gutters and valleys clear of leaf	litter and fine fuels	Yes		No	
Underfloor enclosed		Yes		No	
Vents screened		Yes		No	
Windows – non-combustible finishing		Yes		No	
Deck/veranda non-combustible		Yes		No	
WATER SUDDIV					
Reticulated water supply		Yes		No	
Tank supply with OFRS access $-50$ mm	male camlock fitting	Yes		No	
so fire figthers can use water if needed		105		NU	
QFRS accessible external open water su	ıpply (dam/pool)	Yes		No	
Firefighting pump and hose connected	to water supply	Yes		No	

## Other considerations

There are a range of other things to be considered regardless of your decision to leave early or stay:

- Firefighting equipment such as pumps, hoses and sprinkler systems should be tested regularly and maintained in maximum operational working condition.
- Firefighters may need access to your property during a bushfire so it is in your best interests to allow enough space for fire trucks (4 metres wide by 4 metres high).
- Your pets, livestock and other animals require proper care and attention during fires. Consider food, medication, transportation and sleeping arrangements for your animals.

## Myths versus Reality

Myths	Reality
There will always be a fire truck available to fight a bushfire threatening my home.	Firefighters may be required to fight many fronts of a large fire. Fire trucks and firefighters are finite resources so it is important they are deployed in an appropriate manner to best manage the fire.
I know the back streets in town like the back of my hand so it is OK for me to leave at the last minute.	If your decision in your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave early, then you should leave well before the fire front reaches your property. Irrespective of your local area knowledge you must stick to your plan and leave early. Leaving late can be fatal.
Someone from an emergency service will knock on my door when it is time to leave.	Emergency services personnel may not be available to alert the community by door-knocking and encouraging you to leave. You need to monitor the bushfire alerts by listening to the radio, watching TV or checking the rural fire website. You need to be ready to leave early if your life or the people in your care are at risk.
My house will not burn down because there is more than 50 metres between my home and nearby bushland.	Most houses which burn down during bushfires have been attacked by flying embers. Under certain conditions embers can cause ignitions up to 20kms in front of the main fire. A combination of your level of preparation and your home's construction will determine the survivability of your home.
I only have to clean my gutters and mow my lawns to prepare my property for bushfire.	Fire requires fuel, heat and oxygen to occur. This means that flames or embers do not necessarily rely solely on your gutters and lawns for fuel. They might utilise overhanging trees, woodpiles, old building materials under the deck or chemicals in the garden shed to sustain them. Take the time to properly prepare your whole property, which includes yourself, your house and your land.

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# PLANT SELECTION KEY

### About the key

The Plant Selection Key is a practical tool developed to guide you in choosing plants suitable for use in a garden in a high bushfire risk area.

The key comprises a series of questions and information about plant characteristics and their relative flammability. The key provides:

- > an overall flammability rating
- > a firewise rating
- > advice about maintenance
- advice about whether the plant is appropriate for a garden.

An interactive version of this key is available online at **cfa.vic.gov.au/plants** 

Address: Southern Center for Wildland-Urban Interface Research and Information, 408 W. University Ave., Suite 306, USDA Forest Service, Gainesville, FL 32601. Email (ahermansen@fs.fed.us) or fax (1-352-376-4536).

The Plant Selection Key has been customised to better suit Australian conditions and is intended to provide an indication of plant flammability. The flammability of plants is highly variable and in periods of drought or in the path of an oncoming bushfire, plants will dry out and become highly flammable. If there is uncertainty about the results this key produces, seek professional advice from a plant specialist.

This Plant Selection Key is based on Behm AL, Long AJ, Monroe MC, Randall CK, Zipperer WC, Hermansen-Baez LA (2004) *Fire in the Wildland-Urban Interface: Preparing a Firewise Plant List for WUI Residents.* Circular 1453, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida.



## **PLANT SELECTION KEY**

### **USING THE KEY: A THREE STEP PROCESS**

## 1. Make a list of plants to be used in the garden

As a starting point, make an initial list of plants you want to plant in a garden. In doing this, it is important to:

- Choose plants that are suited to the local growing conditions.
- Check with your local council about legislative controls that may apply to your property. These may influence what and where you can plant.
- Check for characteristics that influence flammability. These are outlined in Section 5.
- Identify the plant species, including both the common name and the scientific name. This is important as even closely related plants in the same genus can vary greatly in their flammability.
- Take note of the size and form of the plant at maturity. Plant labels often focus on plant size within five to ten years of planting and may not be reliable for this assessment.
- Note how the plant will look in summer and whether it is susceptible to disease, insects or pests. This information can be obtained from plant websites, books, the local nursery or council.

#### 2. Work through the key

- Begin at *1. What type of plant is it?* and follow the prompts to the next number.
- Record how many 'Less Firewise' or 'Not Firewise' results the plant receives in the record sheet on page 62 at the end of the key.
- > Collate the results in the record sheet.

#### 3. Rate each plant for its suitability in the garden

The table on page 45 outlines four firewise ratings – Not Firewise, At-Risk Firewise, Moderately Firewise and Firewise – and a corresponding flammability rating. The flammability rating of individual plants depends on the number of 'Less' or 'Not Firewise' results you record.

Once you have established the firewise and flammability rating for each plant, you can determine the plant's suitability for use within a garden, where it should be planted (presuming it is suitable) as well as maintenance requirements.

#### FIREWISE AND FLAMMABILITY RATINGS

#### NOT FIREWISE

If you record any **NOT FIREWISE** results, regardless of any **LESS FIREWISE** results, then that plant is **NOT FIREWISE**.

#### > Flammability = Extreme

Where to plant: These plants should not be planted in a garden or used when landscaping for bushfire.

#### **AT-RISK FIREWISE**

If you recorded three or more **LESS FIREWISE** results, then that plant is **AT-RISK FIREWISE**.

#### > Flammability = High

Where to plant: Avoid using these plants in a garden. If you are on a large property, they may be planted outside the defendable space.

#### MODERATELY FIREWISE

If you recorded one or two **LESS FIREWISE** results, then that plant is **MODERATELY FIREWISE**.

#### > Flammability = Moderate

Where to plant: These plants can be used in a garden but they need regular maintenance to keep them in a less flammable condition.

#### FIREWISE

If after finishing the key you had no **LESS FIREWISE** results, then that plant is **FIREWISE**.

#### > Flammability = Low

Where to plant: These plants can be used in a garden as they are not known to be particularly flammable.

## BEGIN PLANT SELECTION KEY

## **PLANT SELECTION KEY**

## **1.** What type of plant is it?



#### Tree

- Has single or multiple woody trunks and grows from 5-30 metres or over at maturity.
- Single-stem trees typically branch well above the ground, while multiple-stemmed trees typically branch close to the ground.
- Foliage is concentrated in the canopy allowing other vegetation to grow underneath.
- Has highly variable leaf and bark types.



#### Palm or palm-like

- Vary greatly in height.
- Generally have a single woody trunk topped by fronds.
- Many species retain dead fronds which can be flammable.
- Australian palm-like plants include tree-ferns, screw-palms, cycads and grass-trees. They can grow several metres tall and also have a 'skirt' of dead fronds or leaves close to the ground. This is an important flammability characteristic as it can act as a ladder fuel.



#### Shrubs

- Are shorter and generally more compact than trees, typically 3-4 metres in height with branching close to the ground.
- Have dense, bushy foliage and woody stems.
- Because of this structure, shrubs can carry fire from the ground to the tree canopy.



### Vines and climbers

- other plants.
- of dead leaves.
- or supporting structures.
- Running Postman or Happy Wanderer.

#### Herbaceous plants

- Often droop when dry.
- Examples include violets and pansies.

### Groundcovers

- - Are generally less than 50 centimetres tall.

#### Grasses or grass-like

- Leaves are usually long, fine or strappy.
- be up to 1 metre in diameter.
- Wallaby Grass and Canary Grass.
- only burn for a short time.

• Have soft or woody stems and are climbing or scrambling plants. Are often grown over fences, pergolas or trellises and can grow over

Can be deciduous or evergreen. Some accumulate large amounts

Can act as ladder fuel and carry flames up into shrubs, trees

• Examples include grapes, Virginia Creeper, Coral pea,

• Have soft and fleshy leaves with non-woody stems.

• Are low-growing, often less than 50 centimetres tall.

• Include most smaller flowering plants grown in gardens.

Can look 'shrubby', form clumps or grow as groundcovers.

• Moisture content is usually higher than most woody shrubs.

• Are woody or herbaceous. Woody groundcovers spread without climbing.

• Vary from a few centimetres to over 2 metres tall. Clump size can

• Most grasses grown in gardens are perennial rather than annual. Many of these form clumps called tussocks. Examples include

Perennial tussock grasses accumulate dead material mixed with the living leaves and are quite flammable, although they usually

• Other grasses grow as a continuous mat, such as lawn grasses.

• Leaves of grass-like plants are often coarse and thick and

may accumulate dead leaves in the living clump. Examples

include Mat rush, New Zealand Flax, Iris and Gladioli.

## 2. What type of tree is it?



#### Eucalypts

- Can have woolly fibrous bark (stringy bark), deeply corrugated and dense bark (iron bark), 'chippy' or platy bark (box bark) or smooth (gum bark).
- All flower and have leaves that hang vertically.
- Their bark can be extremely flammable.
- Examples include trees from the genera *Eucalyptus, Corymbia* (includes Flowering Gums) and *Angophora* (includes Smooth Barked Apple and Dwarf Apple that are similar in appearance to smooth barked gums).

Go to 3



#### Conifer or conifer-like

- Develop woody cones and have needle-like or scale-like leaves.
- Examples include pines, hemlocks, spruces, junipers, cedars and cypress.
- Native Australian examples include Cypress Pine, Cherry Ballart and she-oaks.



#### Other tree types

- This category contains all trees that are not eucalypts, conifers or conifer-like.
- Leaf type can vary greatly. For example:
  - the small leaves and phyllodes (lea-like structures) of wattles such as Blackwood and Silver Wattle
  - the medium-sized leaves of Lilly Pilly and Southern Sassafras
  - the deeply lobed leaves of Silky Oak
  - the wider, broad leaves of Kurrajong and non-native species such as maples, oaks and elms.

## **3.** What type of bark does the tree have?





• Examples include Messmate and Red Stringybark.

Go to 4



#### Sheds large ribbons or sheets of bark annually

- Strips or ribbons of bark are caught and held in the tree.
- Examples include many smooth or gum-barked eucalypts such as Manna Gum and Mountain Grey Gum.

Go to 8



#### **Does not have stringy bark or ribbons of bark**

• Examples include iron bark, some gum-bark species, box bark and peppermint bark eucalypts.

Go to 5

## **4. NOT FIREWISE**

- Trees with this type of bark are extremely flammable.
- This type of bark acts as a ladder carrying fire into the canopy of the tree and produces masses of embers.

For more information, see Section 3: Rules for vegetation clearance around existing houses or Section 5: Choosing suitable plants.

Go to 29 (END)

## **5.** What is the height of the lowest branch?



## **6. LESS FIREWISE**

• Trees must be under-pruned up to 2 metres if possible and dead branches and fronds removed to ensure a more firewise characteristic.

## 7. Does it shed large amounts of leaves or needles?



## 8. LESS FIREWISE

Pine needles need to be periodically removed from roofs, other plants and the ground near structures.
Eucalypt bark and foliage should also be routinely removed from the tree and the ground.

## **9.** What is the height of the lowest branch or frond?



## **10. LESS FIREWISE**

• Trees must be under-pruned to a height of 2 metres if possible and dead branches and fronds removed to ensure a more firewise characteristic.

## **11.** Does it have papery or loose bark?



## **12. LESS FIREWISE**

- Papery bark and fibres may act as ladder fuels.
- Requires appropriate placement in your garden.

## **13.** What is the plant's texture?



- Texture is used to describe the overall appearance of the plant from a distance.
- From a distance of about 3 metres it is not easy to distinguish individual leaves or branches on plants with a fine texture.
- Examples include diosma and some paper barks with thin, narrow leaves. The fineness of foliage (the surface area-to-volume-ratio) is a very important determinant of flammability. Go to

#### **Medium texture**

• This category includes many azalea and holly species as well as the natives Sarsaparilla and Hairpin Banksia.

#### Coarse texture

- It is easy to distinguish each individual leaf or branch from a distance of about 3 metres.
- Examples include hydrangea, cotoneaster, hazel pomaderris and blanket leaf.

## **14. LESS FIREWISE**

- Plants with a fine texture have a higher surface-area-to-volume ratio and tend to dry out more readily than medium- and coarse-textured plants. This makes them generally more flammable.
- Require appropriate placement and routine pruning.

## **15.** How dense is the plant?



#### Very dense

- So dense that it is very difficult to place a hand in the plant and touch the main stem. These plants have dense branches.
- Examples include shrubby grevilleas and junipers.

#### Moderately dense

- Sufficiently dense to not be able to see through the plant, but reasonably easy to place a hand into the plant and touch the main stem.
- Examples include some lavenders, rosemary and some correas.

Go to 20



#### **Sparsely dense**

- May have open branching patterns, making it easy to see through the plant.
- Examples include many wattles, rhododendrons and some hydrangeas.

Go to 20

### **16. LESS FIREWISE**

• Dense plants have a larger amount of fuel packed closely together, which encourages the spread of flames within the plant.

• Require appropriate placement and routine pruning.

## **17. NOT FIREWISE**

 Vines are extremely flammable as they typically add fuel directly to a structure. As such, they act as ladder fuels bridging gaps between surface fuels and canopy fuels.

For more information, see Section 3: Rules for vegetation clearance around existing houses or Section 5: Choosing suitable plants.

Go to 29 (END)

## **18.** Is it a grass greater than 30 centimetres tall?



### **19. NOT FIREWISE**

• Regardless of how many **LESS FIREWISE** results you may get, tall grasses are extremely flammable because they readily dry out and rapidly carry fire.

For more information, see Section 3: Rules for vegetation clearance around existing houses or Section 5: Choosing suitable plants.

Go to 29 (END)

## **20.** Does the plant retain dead leaves or twigs?



## **21. NOT FIREWISE**

- Regardless of how many **LESS FIREWISE** results you receive for this plant, plants that retain dead foliage throughout the year are extremely flammable.
- Dead foliage has very low leaf moisture content and is therefore highly susceptible to ignition.

For more information: see Section 3: Rules for vegetation clearance around existing houses or Section 5: Choosing suitable plants.

Go to 29 (END)

## **22.** Are the leaves waxy or oily?



## **23. LESS FIREWISE**

• Plants with large amounts of oils and waxes are more flammable than those without these chemicals.

• Require appropriate placement and routine pruning.

## **24.** Is the species seriously susceptible to disease, insects or pests?



- Yes Species is known to be seriously susceptible to disease or insect pests.
- Plants seriously susceptible to disease are likely to become stressed and have less vigorous growth.
- When this happens, there is a lower foliage moisture content and a greater number of dead leaves are retained. This in turn makes the plant more flammable. For example, elm trees. Go to 25



No Species is not known to be particularly susceptible to disease or insect pests.

Go to 26

### **25. LESS FIREWISE**

• Routine monitoring and appropriate treatment for the disease or pest is recommended.

## **26.** Is the plant deciduous or evergreen?



## **27.** Are the leaves soft, thick or fleshy?



Yes Plant leaves are soft, thick, succulent or fleshy.

- These types of leaves often have a higher moisture content than hard, thin and needle-like leaves, making them less flammable.
- Moisture can often be seen on the exposed edge of torn leaves.
   Examples include cactus, agave, some myoporums such as Creeping Myoporum, many Lilies, some saltbush species and geraniums.

NO Plant leaves are not obviously succulent; they may have various shapes and vary in thickness.

#### Go to 28

## **28. LESS FIREWISE**

• Require appropriate placement and routine pruning.

<u>Go to 29</u>

## 29. END

How many <b>LESS FIREWISE</b> ratings did your plant score?	Then your plant is:	What does this mean?
None	FIREWISE	Flammability = Low
		Where to plant: These plants can be used in a garden as they are not known to be particularly flammable.
	MODERATELY FIREWISE	> Flammability = Moderate
or C		Where to plant: These plants can be used in a garden but they need regular maintenance to keep them in a less flammable condition.
	AT-RISK FIREWISE	Flammability = High
or more		Where to plant: Avoid using these plants in a garden. If you are on a large property, they may be planted outside the defendable space.
Was your plant	NOT FIREWISE	Flammability = Extreme
NOT FIREWISE?		Where to plant: These plants should not be planted in a garden or used when landscaping for bushfire.

### WHAT TO DO NEXT

- It is important to consider the role that plant selection plays in enhancing defendable space.
- If the plant is 'Firewise' or 'Moderately Firewise', locate it according to the design principles as outlined in Section 4. Remember, the location and arrangement of plants has a significant effect on reducing the bushfire risk within your garden, but during summer as soil dries out, the moisture content of plants will decrease and their flammability will increase.
- If the plant is 'At Risk' or 'Not Firewise' it should not be planted within the defendable space. For further information, see Section 3: Rules for vegetation clearance around existing homes or Section 5: Choosing suitable plants.
- You can also book a free Home Bushfire Advice Service visit where a member of CFA will assess your property and provide a range of options to assist you to develop your Bushfire Survival Plan. Go to cfa.vic.gov.au/hbas for information and bookings.

## **RECORD SHEET**

Use this sheet to record the plant name and how many 'Less Firewise' or 'Not Firewise' results the plant receives as you work through the Plant Selection Key.

Plant name	NOT FIREWISE	LESS FIREWISE	Firewise Rating	Flammability	
	Circle the questions that had a	ircle the Circle the questions questions that had a that had a <b>Circle the questions Circle the questions Circle the questions Circle the questions Circle the questions Questions Questions Circle the questions </b>	<b>NOT FIREWISE</b> (any Not Firewise results)	Extreme	
	outcome		AT-RISK FIREWISE (3 or more Less Firewise results)	High	
			MODERATELY FIREWISE (1 or 2 Less Firewise results	Moderate	
			<b>FIREWISE</b> (no Less Firewise results)	Low	
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			
	4. 17. 19. 21.	6. 8. 10. 12. 14. 16. 23. 25. 28.			



## FURTHER RESOURCES

## CFA

cfa.vic.gov.au

Fire Ready Kit

On the Land: Agricultural Fire Management Guidelines

A guide to retrofit your home for better protection from a bushfire

Fire Service Guidelines:

- Land Use Planning 0002: Requirements for Water Supply and Access in a Bushfire Management Overlay
- Land Use Planning 0003: Assessing Vegetation in a Bushfire Management Overlay

### OTHER

#### dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/bushfire

Fact Sheet: Planning and Building for Bushfire Protection Advisory Note 39: Amendment VC83 Bushfire Protection Vegetation Exemptions Advisory Note 40: Amendment VC83 Bushfire Protection Bushfire Planning Provisions Practice Note 64: Local Planning for Bushfire Protection Practice Note 65: Bushfire Management Overlay and Bushfire Protection: Planning Requirements

#### planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au

Clause 13.05 Bushfire Clause 44.06 Bushfire Management Overlay Clause 52.17 Native vegetation Clause 52.43 Interim Measures for Bushfire Protection Clause 52.47 Bushfire Protection: Planning Requirements Clause 52.48 Bushfire Protection: Exemptions *Planning for Bushfire in Victoria* (CFA and DPCD, forthcoming)

#### Department of Sustainability and Environment

dse.vic.gov.au land.vic.gov.au

#### **Department of Primary Industries**

dpi.vic.gov.au

#### **Municipal Association of Victoria**

Council details can be found at **mav.asn.au/about-local-government/council-details** Ramsay, C and Rudolph, L, 2003 *Landscape and Building Design for Bushfire Areas*, CSIRO, Melbourne. Standards Australia AS 3959-2009: Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas