



# POLICY NO. 01/2023

## Bush Fire Risk Management

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Owner	Bush Fire Coordinating Committee
Contact	Executive Officer
BFCC Meeting	Meeting no. 104, Decision 104.11
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### 1 Policy Cancellation

- 1.1 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee's Policy 1/2008 is hereby cancelled and replaced with this policy.

### 2 Rationale

- 2.1 The *Rural Fires Act 1997* charges the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) with responsibility for planning in relation to bush fire prevention and for coordinated bush firefighting activities in NSW. The BFCC is also responsible for advising the Commissioner on bush fire prevention, mitigation and coordinated bush fire suppression, as well as other functions under the Act.
- 2.2 Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* requires the preparation of a Bush Fire Risk Management Plan (BFRMP) by a Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC). A BFRMP must include any provisions that the BFCC has advised the Bush Fire Management Committee concerned to include in the plan. This Policy describes the methodology and process for preparing, endorsing, submitting and reviewing a BFRMP.
- 2.3 A range of supporting documents are available as appendices to this Policy to assist BFMCs and agencies in facilitating coordinated and collaborative bush fire risk management planning.

### 3 Aim

- 3.1 The aim of the BFRMP is:  
To reduce the risk of adverse impacts of bush fires on life, property, infrastructure and environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets.

## 4 Objectives

4.1 The objectives of the BFRMP are to:

Objective 1: Reduce the number of human induced bush fire ignitions and their potential to cause damage to life, property, infrastructure and environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets.

Objective 2: Manage fuel to reduce the rate of spread, intensity and impact of bush fires on life and assets while minimising damage to environmental and cultural values.

Objective 3: Increase the community's resilience to bush fires by improving its preparedness, response and recovery.

Objective 4: Provide strategies to plan, prepare and implement activities to effectively contain fires with the potential to cause damage to life, property, infrastructure and environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets.

## 5 Principles

5.1 When preparing a BFRMP for its area, the BFMC must have due regard to the following:

- A tenure blind, cooperative and coordinated approach to bush fire risk assessment and reduction should be adopted;
- The best available quantitative and qualitative data and research findings should be sourced and checked with subject matter experts throughout the process;
- Risk management principles should be consistent with the 'AS/NZS ISO 31000: 2018 Risk management – Principles and guidelines'
- All vulnerable asset classes and values should be incorporated into the BFRMP, prioritising the protection of people;
- The highest priority risks should be treated first. This includes both Focus Areas and parts of the landscape where there is potential for high impact ignitions;
- Treatment strategies should be specific and measureable to ensure auditability;
- A suite of treatments shall be employed to manage the bush fire risk, recognising that risk elimination is not practical; and
- Participation and consultation from a broad range of local stakeholders in all aspects of the planning, implementation and review of the BFRMP.

5.2 Although the methodology for risk assessment is based on the best available science at the time of implementation, risk mitigation measures and treatment strategies are not a guarantee to protect communities from the impacts of a bush fire. A significant number of factors including extreme weather conditions, unpredictable nature and behaviour of fire, construction standards, human behaviours and vegetation management can also play a significant role in the ability of communities to withstand a bush fire event.

5.3 In exercising its functions under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, including the preparation of a draft BFRMP, BFMCs are required to have regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development as described in Section 6 (2) of the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*.

## 6 Process

- 6.1 A BFMC shall prepare a draft BFRMP as per the BFCC approved Model Plan as outlined in Annexure A of this Policy.
- 6.2 In developing a draft BFRMP, the BFMC should adhere to the process outlined by the BFCC in Annexure B of this Policy and the supporting documents.
- 6.3 A BFMC may decide to vary the process or apply a different method to that outlined in this Policy and the supporting guidelines. If a BFMC chooses to do so, they must write to the BFCC with details of the proposed change, and obtain BFCC approval before commencing the alternate process. The BFMC shall justify its reasons for the change and the benefit to the community in undertaking a variation.

## 7 Community Consultation

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of BFMC members to actively engage with their own stakeholders within the community.
- 7.2 As part of the BFRMP development process, early consultation through a targeted campaign must be undertaken to help facilitate input from the community.
- 7.3 In accordance with section 57 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* the BFMC or Commissioner must give public notice of and exhibit a draft BFRMP for the purpose of receiving submissions in accordance with the regulations.
- 7.4 Clause 29 of the *Rural Fires Regulation 2013* requires a draft BFRMP to be publicly exhibited for no less than 42 days.
- 7.5 A draft BFRMP should be made publicly available for viewing electronically and where requested, in printed form.
- 7.6 During the exhibition the current or draft Plan of Operations (excluding the contact names and numbers) should also be made available for viewing.

## 8 Submission

- 8.1 In accordance with the Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* a draft BFRMP must be submitted within the first 12 months of the establishment of the BFMC.
- 8.2 In accordance with the Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* a draft BFRMP must be submitted within every five-year period from the establishment date of the Committee. The BFMC should aim to formally review their BFRMP so that it is always current. A BFRMP remains in force until replaced by another BFRMP approved by the BFCC.
- 8.3 BFMCs must critically evaluate their BFRMP following any major fire event in the area, to determine whether any amendments are required. The post-fire debrief conducted under BFCC Policy for the Management of Bush Fire Operations will assist in this review.
- 8.4 A formal submission of the draft BFRMP must be made electronically from the BFMC Executive Officer to the Executive Officer of the BFCC. The submission requirements are identified in Annexure E.

## 9 Assessment of Draft BFRMP

- 9.1 The NSW RFS will undertake an assessment on behalf of the BFCC to ensure that the draft BFRMP and the process followed is consistent with the BFCC Policy. The criteria for this assessment is outlined in Annexure E.

## 10 Publication

- 10.1 Once approved by the BFCC, the NSW RFS will publish the approved BFRMP on its public website on behalf on the BFMC.
- 10.2 A BFRMP or draft BFRMP must also be available for public inspection at, and be able to be obtained free of charge from, the office of the local authority for the area to which it relates during ordinary office hours.

## 11 Reporting, Monitoring and Review

- 11.1 BFMCs must prepare a tenure blind annual works plan every year on or before 31 May as outlined in Annexure F.
- 11.2 In accordance with Section 51 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* BFMCs must prepare an Annual Report that covers the implementation of their BFRMP and other preparedness activities on or before 31 August as outlined in Annexure F.
- 11.3 BFMCs must regularly review their BFRMP and measure progress against identified strategies at each meeting. Agencies must make available to the BFMC reports on the works scheduled and completed activities prior to meetings so they can be distributed to members with the agenda / papers.
- 11.4 BFMCs should monitor the bush fire risk across their area and where required, update assets and treatment programs to ensure that risks are being identified and adequately managed on an ongoing basis. The process for updates and triggers for BFRMP review are outlined in Annexure F.
- 11.5 The BFCC will report annually on performance of BFMCs in terms of bush fire risk management and preparedness for NSW.
- 11.6 Risk-based performance auditing undertaken by the NSW RFS Commissioner or at the request of the BFCC, will be carried out in accordance with Section 62A of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.

## 12 Annexures

- A. The Model Bush Fire Risk Management Plan
- B. Guidelines for Preparation of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans
- C. Bush Fire Management Zones
- D. Communications
- E. Submission & Approval Guidelines
- F. Reporting & Monitoring

## 13 Related Documents

- Bush Fire Management Committee Charter
- Bush Fire Management Committee Handbook

## 14 Amendments

Amendment date	Version No.	Description
16 March 2023	V3	Review of BFCC Policy 1/2008 involving a complete change to the bush fire risk assessment methodology, process and strategies to be able to quantify risk.



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3/8/23