



POLICY NO 2/2012

Notified Step for the protection of Neighbourhood Safer Places (pursuant to Section 63(4) of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*)

Preamble & Rationale

Section 63 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* imposes a duty on public authorities, owners and occupiers of land to prevent the occurrence of bush fires on, and to minimise the danger of the spread of a bush fire on or from their land. It also provides for the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) to provide advice as to the steps necessary for the proper performance of that duty.

The *Rural Fires Act 1997* has recently been amended to provide for the designation of Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) by the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS). NSPs are places of last resort for people whose personal bush fire plans are overwhelmed by circumstances. Section 54 now requires that bush fire management committees (BFMCs) must consider NSPs when preparing draft bush fire risk management plans (BFRMPs). This is to ensure that NSPs are identified as assets, and treatment works assigned for their protection.

Until such time as NSPs are incorporated into BFRMPs, there may be a lack of clarity for public authorities, owners and occupiers of land as to works required for the protection of NSPs.

Policy Principle

As an interim arrangement, until NSPs are incorporated into BFRMPs, this notified step is provided to advise public authorities, owners and occupiers of land what is required to minimise the danger to NSPs from bush fire.

Notified Step

Where a neighbourhood safer place has been designated by the RFS, but has not been incorporated into a BFMC bush fire risk management plan, the maintenance of bush fire fuels at or below the level that meets the Essential Selection Criteria specified in the Neighbourhood Safer Places Guidelines prepared by RFS is a 'notified step' for the purposes of section 63(4) of the Rural Fires Act 1997.

Amendments to BFCC Policy 1/2008

In order to implement this Policy the BFCC has approved amendments to BFCC Policy 1/2008 that are set out in Annex A and B.



**Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
Commissioner
NSW Rural Fire Service
Chairman
26 September 2012**

Annexures:

- A. Amendments to the Model Bush Fire Risk Management Plan**
- B. Amendments to the Guidelines for Preparation of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans**

AMENDMENTS TO BFCC POLICY 1/2008 ANNEX A - MODEL PLAN

2.3.1 Assets

Human settlement

Insert text:

A Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP) is defined by the Rural Fires Act 1997 as land or a building designated as a NSP under section 62C. NSPs provide a place of last resort for people during a bush fire. All designated NSP locations for NSW are available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

2.3.2 Assessing the Bush Fire Risk – Consequence

Human settlement

Insert text:

Due to circumstances surrounding NSPs and their use during a bush fire, stricter requirements for vulnerability assessment and rating will also apply to these assets.

2.3.7 Risk Acceptability

Insert text:

All NSPs for a BFMC area will require ongoing treatment by the applicable land owner to ensure that the asset remains viable as a place of last resort for people during a bush fire. Therefore, all NSP assets are allocated specific treatments in this Plan, regardless of the level of bush fire risk identified and the risk acceptability nominated by the *(insert BFMC name)* BFMC.

AMENDMENTS TO BFCC POLICY 1/2008 ANNEX B - GUIDELINES

4.1.1 What are assets?

Insert text:

Neighbourhood Safer Place

4.1.3 What types of assets are identified?

Insert text:

However, it is necessary for a BFMC to identify and assess all Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) within their area. NSPs must be assessed and allocated asset specific treatments, regardless of the level of bush fire risk identified and the risk acceptability nominated by the BFMC. This will ensure that these assets remain viable as a place of last resort for people during a bush fire.

4.1.4 Grouping assets

Insert text:

NSPs must always be identified and assessed as separate individual assets in the BFRMP.

5.1.4 Human Settlement – Neighbourhood Safer Place

Insert new section

Identify and map human settlement – Neighbourhood Safer Place assets within the risk register.

Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP) is defined by the Rural Fires Act 1997 as land or a building designated as a neighbourhood safer place under section 62C. NSPs provide a place of last resort for people during a bush fire. All designated NSP locations for NSW are available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

Data Sources:

- Cadastre;
- Neighbourhood Safer Places and
- Aerial photography/SPOT 5.

5.2.1.2 Vulnerability

Insert text:

Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP)
and NSP

9.3 Risk Acceptability

Insert text:

With regard to NSPs, these assets will require ongoing treatment by the applicable land owner to ensure that they remain viable as a place of last resort for people during a bush fire. Therefore, all NSP assets within a BFMC area are allocated specific treatments in the BFRMP, regardless of the level of bush fire risk identified and the risk acceptability nominated by the BFMC.

10.3.2 Asset Specific Treatments

Insert text:

With regard to Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs), the following asset specific treatment is to be allocated to all NSPs within the BFMC area in each and every case.

Action - Maintain fuels in accordance with Guidelines

Action Description - Maintain bush fire fuels at or below the level that meets the Essential Selection Criteria specified in the Neighbourhood Safer Places Guidelines prepared by the NSW RFS.

Appendix 6 Example Treatment Strategies

Insert text:

With regard to NSPs, the following asset specific treatment is to be allocated to all NSPs within the BFMC area in each and every case.

Action - Maintain fuels in accordance with Guidelines

Action Description - Maintain bush fire fuels at or below the level that meets the Essential Selection Criteria specified in the Neighbourhood Safer Places Guidelines prepared by RFS.