

## BUSHFIRE POLICY 2024

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for council to reduce bushfire risk within the Clarence Local Government Area (LGA) within the context of council's Bushfire Mitigation Strategy and in alignment with the Tasmanian State Government's bushfire planning framework.

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all bushfire-prone land owned by council or bushfire-prone areas which council has responsibility as the land manager.

This Policy does not apply to private property, National Parks, Crown Land (unless leased to council), and State and Federal lands over which council has no jurisdiction.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this Policy:

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Asset                       | Means anything valued by the community that may be adversely impacted by bushfire. This may include houses, infrastructure, agriculture, production forests, industry, and environmental and heritage sites. |
| Bushfire                    | Means and unplanned vegetation fire, including grass fires, forest fires and scrub fires both with and without a suppression objective.                                                                      |
| Bushfire attack level (BAL) | Scale used within Australian Standard 3959-2018 to determine the level of risk to life and potential for building loss or damage resulting from bushfire.                                                    |

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bushfire-prone area       | Means an area that is subject to, or likely to be subject to, bushfire attack.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Bushfire-prone vegetation | Means contiguous vegetation including grasses and shrubs but not including maintained lawns, parks and gardens, nature strips, plant nurseries, golf courses, vineyards, orchards or vegetation on land that is used for horticultural purposes.                                     |
| Council                   | Means the Clarence City Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Hazard management area    | The area between a building and the bushfire-prone vegetation that provides access to a fire front for firefighting, which is maintained in a minimal fuel condition and in which there are no other hazards present that will significantly contribute to the spread of a bushfire. |
| Planned burn              | Means the process of planning and applying fire to a predetermined area, under specific environmental conditions, to achieve a desired outcome.                                                                                                                                      |

## 4. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy sets out council's approach to effective bushfire risk management and location-based bushfire risk management aiming to protect life and reduce the negative impact of bushfire on property, infrastructure, and the environment.

This policy statement is to be read in conjunction with the council's Bushfire Mitigation Strategy.

The objectives of this Policy are:

1. to minimise the impact of major bushfires on human life, communities, essential and community infrastructure, industries, the economy, and the environment - human life will be prioritised over all other considerations.

2. to maintain or improve the resilience of natural ecosystems and their ability to deliver services such as biodiversity, water, and carbon storage.
3. to continuously improve bushfire risk reduction treatments.
4. to deliver a tenure-blind, integrated approach to reducing bushfire risk, and
5. to ensure council complies with legislative requirements.

## 5. PRINCIPLES

Council recognises that bushfire frequency, duration and intensity is predicted to increase due to climate change, causing significant environmental, economic and social impacts including damage to homes, personal injury, higher insurance premiums, loss of livelihoods and increased pressure on emergency resources.

In applying this policy, council will be guided by the following principles:

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Compliant</i>            | <i>Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, standards, codes and plans including delivering Council's obligations under the regional Fire Management Area Committee.</i>                                                    |
| <i>Planned</i>              | <i>Ensure appropriate planning, implementation, and resourcing of a specific on-ground works program aiming to reduce risk to loss of life, property, and the environment from bushfires.</i>                                       |
|                             | <i>Ensuring that future development appropriately incorporates bushfire protection and risk management requirements that are appropriate to their location whilst considering perpetual maintenance costs to the asset manager.</i> |
| <i>Sustainable</i>          | <i>Ensuring environmental impacts associated with bushfire risk reduction activities are appropriately planned, considered, and mitigated - avoided where possible.</i>                                                             |
| <i>Cultural sensitivity</i> | <i>Ensure fire and associated disturbance are managed so as to protect Aboriginal and Historic cultural heritage.</i>                                                                                                               |
| <i>Community-focussed</i>   | <i>Partnering and engaging with the community to support increased understanding of bushfire risk and risk management, and increasing community resilience to future risk.</i>                                                      |

*Collaborative*

*Supporting emergency services in bushfire prevention, preparation, response and recovery.*

## 6. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

The following Strategic Plan goals are relevant and apply to this Policy:

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### A People Friendly City

- *Supporting our community to build capacity and resilience through partnering with Greater Hobart councils on building community capacity and resilience in responding to bushfires.*

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### A Well-Planned Liveable City

- *Reviewing and continuing to implement our Bicycle Plan and the Tracks and Trails Strategy for the city.*
- *Undertaking an audit and strategic review of council's buildings and community facilities to establish usage, condition, and compliance to standards, and assess to ensure they are fit for purpose to accommodate current and future community needs.*
- *Undertaking best practice land use policy development and active participation in regional planning processes.*
- *Applying land use techniques to identify and protect important natural values within the city.*

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### An Environmentally Responsible City

- *Protecting natural assets within council-managed land through the development and review of strategies in relation to bushfire, weed, land and coastal management.*
- *Working collaboratively with relevant agencies to enhance and protect the natural environment.*
- *Continuing to provide opportunities for involvement and increased awareness for the care of the local environment.*

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## Governance and Leadership

- *Formulating and maintaining a suite of policies to provide a framework for the establishment and implementation of council's plans, strategies, programs, and services.*
- *Establishing strategic partnerships to facilitate greater opportunities.*

## 7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

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### LEGISLATIVE (ACTS, REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS)

- Fire Service Act 1979
  - To nominate a representative to sit on the regional Fire Management Area Committee (Section 18).
  - To take all reasonable precautions to prevent any fire lit on their property from spreading to adjoining land (Section 63).
  - To take diligent steps to extinguish or control any unauthorised fire on their property during a fire permit period, and to report that fire to the TFS, or the Police (Section 64).
  - To “cause the formation in its municipal area of such fire breaks as it considers necessary or desirable to arrest the spread, or to facilitate the suppression of, fires” (Section 56).
  - To contribute towards the operating costs of fire brigades (Sections 77A to 95).
  - To deal with a fire danger which council has been notified of under section 49 within such reasonable period of not less than 30 days as is specified in the notice, as if that fire danger were a nuisance under the *Local Government Act 1993*.
- Local Government Act 1993
  - Under section 93(a) of the Local Government Act 1993, Council can make a service rate on rateable land for the purpose of ‘fire protection’.
- Aboriginal Relics Act 1975
- Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)
- Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality) 2004
- Fire Service Act 1979
- Forest Practices Act 1985
- Historical Cultural Heritage Act 1995

- Land Use and Planning Approvals Act 1993
- Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1993
- Mineral Resources Development Act 1995
- Nature Conservation Act 2002
- Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
- Sustainability Act 2019
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012
- Forest Practices Regulations 2007
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
- AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management — Guidelines
- AS 3959:2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT

As defined in the *Fire Services Act 1979*, all land occupiers have a responsibility to address bushfire hazards and improve the survivability of communities and assets through managing vegetation and associated bushfire risks on land they occupy.

In the Clarence LGA, reducing bushfire risk on council land should be led by Council, but in collaboration with the regional Fire Management Area Committee.

Council will apply the following approaches to risk management:

- employ a risk-based decision-making approach based on research and evidence including climate change, vegetation type, topography, asset vulnerability, capacity, and exposure levels
- prioritise resources to reduce bushfire risk to areas identified at greatest risk within the regional Fire Management Area Bushfire Risk Management Plan
- foster relationships and support the community in understanding bushfire risks, and
- work collectively and collaborate with landowners adjoining council land to reduce bushfire risk to the community and environment.

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## BUSHFIRE RISK REDUCTION

Council will work collaboratively with members of the regional Fire Management Area Committee to provide an integrated approach to bushfire management across the LGA in accordance with relevant plans and strategies, including council's Bushfire Mitigation Strategy.

Council will apply the following approaches:

- Maintain Hazard Management Areas on council managed bushfire-prone areas to the most current Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) guidelines. Council will seek to ensure that the prescribed maximum width of a Hazard Management Area on council managed land is no less than that required for Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) 29 rated development to be achieved on the lot once the owner of the lot has undertaken their best efforts.
- Operational Planned Burn Plans must be prepared and reviewed by separate parties. Those parties must hold the nationally recognised competency *PUAFIR406A/B Develop Prescribed Burning Plans*, and *PUAFIR407A/B Conduct Prescribed Burning*, or equivalent.
- Maintain fire trails on council managed bushland to the most current TFS preferred categories and standards.
- Support the provision of appropriate resources to carry out effective bushfire risk reduction activities/
- Develop, coordinate, implement and maintain a five-year planned burning program.
- Minimise smoke impact to communities resulting from planned burns.
- Maintain an annual planned burning vegetation monitoring program.
- Provide an annual report to council and other stakeholders on bushfire risk reduction treatments planned and undertaken by council.
- Invest in the development and expansion of council's knowledge base and ability to reduce bushfire risk.
- Strengthen understanding of relationships between fire and sensitive environments.

- Acknowledge the effects of climate change and the likelihood that they will increase the risk of bushfire.

## 9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council's community engagement will focus on building a 'shared responsibility' approach to bushfire preparedness through recognising the roles and responsibilities of individuals, communities, and the TFS.

Engagement will aim to build resilience and capacity in bushfire prevention and preparedness within our community for those most at-risk to bushfire through a sustainable community development approach.

Council will apply the following engagement approaches:

- Partnering and engaging with the community to support increased understanding of bushfire risk, how to appropriately manage bushfire risk on their property, and increasing their resilience to future risk
- Work with the TFS to ensure clear and consistent communications.
- Support our regional Fire Management Area Committee partners to facilitate residents' preparation for bushfire impact. Residents who choose to live in bushfire-prone areas shall be encouraged to have a bushfire survival plan and to employ a range of management measures to reduce bushfire risk on their property
- Work with our regional Fire Management Area Committee partners and welfare service providers to identify vulnerable residents living in bushfire-prone areas and provide information and connect them with relevant support and information programs and initiatives.

## 10. REPORTING

Council will be notified of grant and sponsorship decisions outlined in this Policy through the Quarterly and Annual Reports.

## 11. IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Head of Infrastructure and Natural Assets is responsible for the implementation of this Policy. This Policy will be communicated via:

- council's website, and
- council's social media and local advertising.

## 12. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

### TABLE OF AMENDMENTS

| No. | Date | Brief Details |
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| 1   |      |               |

### APPROVAL

|                       |                                        |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| COUNCIL APPROVAL DATE | 8 July 2024                            |
| REVIEW                | Every 5 years                          |
| RESPONSIBLE POSITION  | Head Infrastructure and Natural Assets |
| ECM REFERENCE         | 5340885                                |