

## 2.2 WOOROLOO BUSHFIRE INQUIRY - CITY OF SWAN SUBMISSION

**Ward:** (Swan Valley/Gidgegannup Ward) (Chief Executive Office)

**Disclosure of Interest:** Nil

**Authorising Officer:** (Executive Manager Community Wellbeing)

### KEY ISSUES

- The Wooroloo Bushfire started on the 1 February, 2021 and spread rapidly towards the west through northern parts of the Perth Hills.
- The fire impacted communities in the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring, burning through more than 10,000 hectares.
- The State Government has launched an independent review into the devastating Wooroloo Bushfire which destroyed 86 homes.
- The inquiry is being led by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC).
- The independent inquiry will analyse information gathered during the first stage of the review of the Wooroloo Bushfire. It will examine a range of areas including the bushfire response, fuel and management and mitigation activities and communications.
- The City of Swan has been invited to participate in the review and provide a submission. City staff have prepared a submission in line with the enquiries terms of reference.

It is recommended that the Council resolve to endorse the City of Swan submission in response to the State Governments inquiry into the Wooroloo Bushfire.

### BACKGROUND

On February 1, 2021, the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring were impacted by a bushfire that burned through more than 10,000 hectares and destroyed 86 homes.

The State Government has launched an independent inquiry into the Wooroloo bushfire, and an independent review will be undertaken by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council.

## **DETAILS**

The independent inquiry will analyse information gathered during the first stage of the review of the Wooroloo Bushfire. It will examine a range of areas including the bushfire response, fuel and management and mitigation activities and communications.

The review will acknowledge the ongoing action plan for Bushfire Framework Review and will cover the following aspects as relevant to the 2021 Wooroloo Bushfire:

1. Evaluate the first stage of the review of the Wooroloo Bushfire and undertake independent analysis across the range of focus areas examined, including response to the Wooroloo Bushfire, fuel management and processes for access into the fire affected areas.
2. Examine the effectiveness of the use of heavy earthmoving equipment in the fire suppression effort including the systems, processes and capability that supports this.
3. Examine the effectiveness of interagency coordination during the response and initial recovery phases of the incident.
4. Consider the effectiveness of the impact assessment processes employed in informing early and timely recovery efforts and consider the effectiveness of the recovery function post response phase.
5. Consider the extent, geographic range, method, effectiveness and duration of public warnings.
6. Examine the effectiveness of the 'Animal Welfare in Emergencies' program as implemented by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.
7. Consider the meteorological aspects of the fire as examined by the Bureau of Meteorology.
8. Provide a means for members of the public and other interested parties to make submissions to the Review and give these due regard in compiling its report.
9. Consider any other matter that the Review Team identifies in its course of activities.

The City has drafted a submission in response to the independent enquiry, and acknowledges that there is a high level of community interest in this inquiry, and that in any major emergency there are lessons to be learned.

## **CONSULTATION**

Consultation has included the Shire of Mundaring, WA Local Government Association and relevant City of Swan officers.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

City of Swan Submission in response to the State Government's inquiry into the Wooroloo Bushfire

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

## **STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

## **VOTING REQUIREMENTS**

Simple majority

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council resolve to:

- 1) Endorse the City of Swan submission in response to the State Governments inquiry into the Wooroloo Bushfire



# **Response to the Wooroloo Bushfire Inquiry**

**September 2021**



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*This submission is from the City of Swan and was endorsed by the City of Swan Council at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on (insert date). Notwithstanding this, the response to the Wooroloo Bushfire was a joint recovery operation between the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring with collaboration at every stage. Both local governments have consulted on their respective submissions and jointly support their respective submissions.*

## **Terms of Reference Point One**

***Evaluate the first stage of the review of the Wooroloo Bushfire and undertake independent analysis across the range of focus areas examined, including response to the Wooroloo Bushfire, fuel management and processes for access into the fire affected areas.***

### **Response**

During the response to an emergency, only one hazard management authority can be in control. In the case of larger bushfires it is generally the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), which was the case for the Wooroloo Bushfire where the Shire of Mundaring (the Shire) handed over control of the incident to DFES from an early stage. While DFES have conducted an internal review and a number of debrief sessions were held with bushfire brigades following the Wooroloo Bushfire, when appropriate the City of Swan (the City) looks forward to confirming recommendations or learnings from this review and continuing discussions with DFES regarding bushfire response.

### **Fuel Management**

The City of Swan takes the threat of bushfire seriously and has in accordance with State Hazard Plan – Fire implemented a number of strategies to treat bushfire related risk across all land tenures within its municipality. This includes:

- A dedicated Fire & Emergency Management team consisting of three full time City staff, a Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM), who is funded jointly between the City and DFES, alongside the management of more than 250 volunteers through five Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades.
- A Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BRMP) endorsed by the DFES Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) in 2019 and adopted by Council.
- Firebreaks and Fuel load management on all identified City tenure.

- Liaison with State land managers to address bushfire hazards on their tenure.
- Administration and enforcement of the annual Fire Season Guide including the Fire Hazard Reduction Notice (Attachment One).
- Ongoing community fire preparedness through community engagement, education and workshops year round including provision of free on-site advice to residents on how to manage their property's fire risk.

The City takes a 'tenure blind' approach in inspecting, assessing and mitigating bushfire risk. The ability to conduct prescribed burning and enforce mitigation measures is dependent on tenure, legislation and resources.

- Local government is responsible for the management of all freehold and State land with a management order vested to the local Council. Fire mitigation works on land usually have an environmental impact and work must be endorsed by State and/or Local environmental agencies. This can prevent or delay work, but sometimes for good reasons.
- The Bushfires Act (1954) which empowers Local Government to enforce land managers to undertake fire mitigation activities, is not applicable to State and Federal authorities. The City liaises with and assists land managers in bushfire mitigation matters. Most authorities do respond when approached with suggested fire mitigation treatments; however without the authority being legally accountable, this work is conducted through goodwill and personal relationships, this can be time consuming for local government officers. Some authorities are very difficult to engage with and conduct very limited mitigation works.

The Wooroloo fire burnt through predominately private tenure, impacted State tenure was nearly all vested to either the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) or the two impacted Local Governments. The City has 15 natural bush reserves fully or partly within the fire scar, covering 510 hectares. The City is also responsible for 90km of road verge in the area.

A majority of the bushfire prone vegetation resided on private and State tenure therefore not under direct Local Government control. The City supports and recognises the need for a tenure blind approach to fire mitigation. However, for such an approach to be efficiently implemented changes to the legal framework and increased State coordination and financial support are also required.

***Recommendation 1: That the inquiry considers Attachment Two which provides correspondence between the City's Bushfire Advisory Committee (BFAC) and DFES in relation to mitigation.***

## Natural Reserves and Verges

City officers monitor and manage the bushfire risk on City tenure. The City has conducted numerous burns and mechanical works within the fire scar, including a hazard reduction burn conducted in the Noble Falls Reserve at the base of Tilden Park sub division. The larger reserves within the fire scar; Noble Falls, Lillie Road, Hargraves and FR Berry have each had a number of cells burnt over the last 5 years.

Attachment Three provides a map of the burn history within the affected area and surrounds. Additional burns were planned for all these reserves and written 5 year burn plans for Noble Falls and FR Berry reserves are available on request. The City also ensures firefighting services have safe access into City reserves, access to water tanks and has a substantial program for the construction and maintenance of firebreaks. All City managed natural reserves within the Wooroloo fire scar had compliant firebreaks. Maps of firebreaks can be provided on request.

Grassed verges that are accessible are mowed on an annual program, usually 2-4 times a year. Additionally, the City conducts a road tree pruning and verge clearing program to improve the safety for all road users and reduce identified fire hazards. The prioritisation of hazard reduction on verges takes into consideration safety for all road users (visual obstructions), the actual direct fire risk from a verge on a specific asset, not just the visual amenity and considers the valuable environmental habitats which exist, some rural verges contain populations of rare flora and fauna which the City is required to protect.

Most verges in the fire affected area are relatively narrow, however the verges of Reserve, Reen and O'Brien provide natural flora/fauna corridors and are therefore very wide (40-60m), these identified sections have very high fuel loads. All three roads have a predominantly north-south orientation, thus the fire, heading in a westerly direction travelled across them, not along them.

Conducting hazard reduction burns on verges is very resource intensive for the area treated and can only be executed under specific wind directions alongside other specific conditions. Mechanical vegetation removal is more expensive, however is considered a more reliable option for verge management.

The City has conducted a number of verge burns throughout Gidgegannup in recent years and further burns were planned for 2020, however due to the difficulty to burn the identified verges, no contractor approached would commit and volunteer brigades could only address one section of verge.

The City continues to manage fuel load on verges. There are thousands of kilometres of verges within the City and the City invests considerable resources in verge treatment in rural areas. Approximately \$750,000 is spent annually on slashing verges and pruning trees on rural verges which assists with reducing fire risk. Therefore due to the extent of verges within the City, this is done on a risk prioritisation basis with the resources available. It recognises that the resources to manage the tasks of measuring and assessing the risk, identifying and conservation

of environmentally sensitive populations, prescribing treatment, scoping the requirements for internal or contracted works, scheduling and project managing for all verges within the City is beyond the capacity of the City. To assist with verge management residents are also allowed to consider the verge adjacent as part of their overall fire risk management program for their property, the City has provided an information brochure and advice to confirm for residents that works on verges can be performed, as long as they do not impact on the health of native vegetation (through weed management, leaf litter removal, under pruning, whipper snipping etc.)

In recent years, the City has also been able to access the DFES Mitigation Activity Funding (MAF) grants to manage fuel load across its reserves and verges. MAF grants must be acquitted within the year of being awarded. This is not an issue for mechanical work as this can mostly be undertaken independent of weather and fire season; however this limitation presents challenges for planned hazard reduction burning.

The City has previously returned funding for burn treatments which wasn't completed within the MAF grant timeline. Due to the opportunistic nature of planned hazard reduction burning within a short window alongside limited availability of volunteer brigades and contractors, it has proven difficult to ensure burns are conducted within 12 months.

***Recommendation 2: For the DFES Mitigation Activity Funding (MAF) to introduce a mechanism for hazard reduction burning funding, for treatments not yet completed, to rollover for up to three years.***

***Recommendation 3: For the City of Swan to review the verge management program in rural areas and review the information and support provided to residents regarding verge management.***

### **Access into Fire Affected Areas**

The City of Swan is traversed by both railway corridors and major highways with a limited number of crossover points. There was a delayed response to some fires and suppression efforts hampered by the lack of direct access to the fire location. Additionally, these small and few crossover points can become bottlenecks for evacuation of residents and for response vehicles.

In rural zones, there are areas with only one access way, often for many kilometres. Sometimes a long circular or parallel route is the only way to access the fire. Additionally, these rural roads are narrow, winding and dangerous for responders entering while evacuating residents (particularly those evacuating with horses or stock) are leaving.

In response to lack of egress options, unofficial evacuation routes have been developed or planned by residents - usually utilising other landowners (large land

tenure) or reserve firebreaks. These unofficial routes are not managed by the City. These routes are commonly via high fuel areas and are not guaranteed to be safe and easily trafficable for 2WD vehicles or vehicles towing horse floats. These routes could also be being used by firefighting appliances for response causing bottlenecks or an impasse between evacuating residents and operating fire appliances.

A decision was made by the City several years ago to leave open all of the fire breaks within the Tilden Park area, to improve the connectivity of sealed roads and access in the area, this was due partly to ongoing damage to gates which were historically preventing access to strategic firebreaks, however also with the understanding that during a fire faster evacuation of residents and access of emergency services could occur.

Traffic management, property access and the permit system all generated significant frustration from community members, both during the incident and ongoing during recovery. There was significant frustration at the traffic management approach and mixed information provided at road blocks, in particular when traffic management contractors were managing the road blocks as opposed to WA Police. As the incident was prolonged (six days), property access also became a point of contention. While it was generally understood that some roads were closed for safety reasons at the peak of the fire, people who had stayed to defend and left their properties to obtain supplies were refused entry back to their properties, families and livestock. People wishing to stay and defend, who were outside of the area, could not return to do so due to the road blocks.

There was discussion regarding permits for at least three days prior to permits being issued which also led to frustration from affected community members. When the permit system was opened, this resulted in long lines of impacted residents waiting for a permit on a Saturday afternoon. Most roads were then reopened on Sunday morning.

***Recommendation 4: For traffic management contractors to receive training specific to emergency management traffic management requirements and for those deployed at roadblocks to receive regular and accurate updates on what is occurring in the incident. Further consideration should also be given to utilising other agencies to support traffic management such as SES or Army Reserve for prolonged incidents (3+ days). For residents who choose to stay and defend, provision of supplies after three days and a process for safe passage for basic provisions should be considered.***

***Recommendation 5: That the administration of a permit system for impacted residents be streamlined, either using digital means or providing permits prior to the all-clear for access being given.***



## Terms of Reference Point Two

***Examine the effectiveness of the use of heavy earthmoving equipment in the fire suppression effort including the systems, processes and capability that supports this.***

The City is of the understanding that DFES are reviewing the systems, processes and capability in relation to heavy earth moving equipment. During the recovery, several property owners approached the City regarding emergency works which had occurred on their property. Residents were concerned that there was unnecessary damage caused to their properties. This was raised with DFES and these reported incidents were investigated and rectified by DFES when deemed appropriate. There were also instances identified during the fire that 'spontaneous volunteers' had also carried out earthmoving activities under their own discretion.

### Terms of Reference Point Three

***Examine the effectiveness of interagency coordination during the response and initial recovery phases of the incident.***

It should be noted that the WA State Government announced a five-day lockdown for the Perth metropolitan area, Peel and the South-West regions to stop the spread of COVID-19 from 6pm, 31 January (the day before the fire) until 6pm Friday, February 5, 2021. This presented both challenges and benefits in regards to managing both the response and recovery. For example, as the City's services including leisure centres were already closed to the public, it was easier to access and delegate staff to provide support to the evacuation centres. Similarly, as the City's administration centre was empty with staff working from home, this allowed agencies to effectively coordinate the notification process of residents who had lost property in a private and sensitive manner. A larger number of vets than may be expected normally also volunteered to assist with animal welfare matters.

The City has a frequent and ongoing relationship with both surrounding local governments and various state and federal government departments in relation to emergency management. These relationships are formally facilitated through the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), District Emergency Management Committee (DEMC) and Bushfire Advisory Committee (BFAC). The City is also part of a partnering agreement between eight local governments known as the Metropolitan North & East Recovery Group. This partnership identifies opportunities for provision of mutual aid for recovery during emergencies, and all of these pre-existing relationships helped greatly during the response and initial recovery.

The City's CESM was mobilised by DFES very early to assist with the Incident Management Team (IMT) and performed various IMT roles during the entire response phase. City Fire and Emergency Management staff attended incident control at approximately 14:30hrs. The City's Fire and Emergency Management staff remained at incident control 24hrs a day for the first five days of the response. Having an on-site presence was very important when working with the various stakeholders, as it meant most issues could be addressed in a timely manner, and at times resolved before they escalated.

City officers worked very closely with the IMT both in attendance at some IMT meetings and through DFES' appointment of a Deputy IC, and were dedicated to liaising with the main stakeholders.

***Recommendation 6: The early appointment of a liaison Deputy IC was pivotal to the efficient resolution of many issues and should be considered for any future major incident.***

City officers also attended all Incident Support Group (ISG) meetings throughout the incident, which was beneficial for the City to report on actions, raise any concerns with other agencies and for ensuring information was shared effectively.

The City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring Fire and Emergency Management teams have previously worked closely together. This pre-existing relationship ensured an understanding of processes and approach to both local governments working collaboratively throughout the response and into recovery. The experience of the Shire of Mundaring from the Perth Hills bushfire (2014) was of great help to both local governments in responding to the Wooroloo bushfire.

Following the DFES Urban Search and Rescue and other DFES staff conducting three inspections of affected roads, private properties and other City assets, DFES then made request for Local Government teams to conduct final clearance inspections with limited notice and little time for completion, due to pressure to allow residents back in impacted areas. This made resourcing the inspections (in terms of personnel and vehicles) much more difficult than it needed to be. The City's liaison officer, despite trying, was unable to get timely information regarding the intent and scope of these inspections, this resulted in large areas being 'handed over' to the local government with little notice.

***Recommendation 7: For the safety inspection and hand over of asset process to local governments to be formalised, timely and considered earlier in the response.***

### **Recovery Structure and Priorities**

On the first evening of the fire commencing February 1, the City appointed a Local Recovery Coordinator (LRC) and formed an initial Local Recovery Coordination Group (LRCG). The LRC was also part of the ISG and the LRCG was expanded and formalised throughout the week. To progress recovery efforts, a joint recovery group was also established with the Shire together with various sub-committees focused on key recovery issues. The recovery structure and priorities are described in the Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery Plan 2021 (Attachment 4).

The early instigation of the City's recovery arrangements and the appointment of a LRC were critical to the City's response, even though it was a week before the response phase was completed. This enabled a far more timely and seamless transition to recovery.

The resourcing impacts of the City's recovery arrangements were considerable. Notwithstanding the City's size and capacity, every department within the City was called upon to assist and the City was significantly diverted from normal operations for six months plus. It is difficult to see how a smaller local government could provide such support.

### **Evacuation Centres**

In Western Australia, the Department of Communities is primarily responsible for evacuation centres, with local governments providing secondary assistance, predominantly through the use of their facilities. Generally this arrangement has

worked well locally, and the City has Evacuation Centre Kits which means that these centres can be established rapidly.

The City supported the Department of Communities in operating three evacuation centres at Swan Active Midland, Beechboro Community Hub (City facilities) and Brown Park Oval (Shire facility), with City staff in attendance 24 hours a day for the six days that the evacuation centres were open. The requirement to assist in the management of three evacuation centres, primarily due to COVID-19 restrictions, resulted in a significant stretch of agency resources and support.

A peak of 230 people slept overnight in the welfare centres during this time. 1,128 people voluntarily registered (906 at welfare centres, 222 online). The Red Cross and DFES also provided support at these centres with DFES community updates provided to community members.

### **Community Bushfire Recovery Centre**

On the following day after the last evacuation centre closed on February 7, the Percy Cullen Pavilion and Oval was activated by the City to be used as a Community Bushfire Recovery Centre. This centre became a hub for more than 25 support agencies including not-for-profit agencies, insurance and banking companies alongside other local, state and federal government agencies. The following are some of those key agencies and not for profits in attendance.

- Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
- Country Women's Association (CWA)
- Department of Communities (DoC)
- Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER)
- Donations Volunteers
- Disaster Relief Australia (DRA)
- Gidgegannup Recreation Club (GRC)
- Legal Aid
- Major insurance companies
- Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service (Midlas)
- Minderoo Foundation
- Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Services Australia – Centrelink
- Telstra
- Western Power

The City and Shire provided experienced customer service and community engagement staff to support the affected community and agencies at the centre. These officers assisted by triaging residents' immediate support and welfare needs, assisting with funding and state government clean-up applications, general advice,

dissemination of information and liaison with support groups. This was a highly effective one-stop-shop at a facility that was fit for purpose and able to host indoor and outdoor events. There were also areas for private conversations and an office for the more confidential matters and counselling.

The City installed a computer network and hardware to enable accurate and timely information being disseminated and funding applications and requests for service generally being processed in an expedient manner.

This facility was operational seven days a week in the early stages and as demand decreased, so did the opening times. On 7 April, 2021 the centre was relocated to the City of Swan Gidgegannup Office where it is still functioning with City, Department of Communities and Red Cross officers, who have been funded via the Category C Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFAWA) funding until June 2023.

***Recommendation 8: State-wide recovery planning should consider the capacity of Local Governments in different areas to manage recovery. A one-size fits all approach appears to be not sustainable for larger events. Key stakeholder such as WALGA should be also consulted on this subject.***

### **Grant Management**

Grant funding provided a significant support mechanism for the community. The City was responsible for administering and assessing two separate grants, the Premier's Bushfire Relief Grant (funded by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet) and the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund (via the City of Perth).

The application process, criteria and requirements for both programs were unclear in the early stages of implementation, which placed additional pressure on the City who was the first point of contact with impacted residents. There was often a delay in clarifying criteria with the funding bodies and a lack of consultation with the local governments, that resulted in delays in providing this funding to impacted members of the community. In many situations, criteria developed in isolation necessitated the City to then revisit damaged properties multiple times to assess against these criteria. This caused frustration for the grantor agencies, the City and the impacted community.

An added complexity was that different funding agencies had different criteria and application forms. This caused confusion for all parties involved and complicated the application and assessment process, requiring residents to supply the same information multiple times.

Due to the high volume of enquiries and applications received, resourcing was also an issue. Impacted residents expected to receive funding immediately, however due to limited resources and delays described above, this meant that funding was not administered as quickly as the community expected, causing some frustration.

***Recommendation 9: Criteria for grants should either be pre-determined (to enable eligibility to be determined as part of the initial impact assessment) or consultation with the relevant local government should occur in determining the eligibility criteria.***

***Recommendation 10: Develop a joined up on-line application process where the applicant makes a single submission that the funding bodies can then apply their own criteria to.***

***Recommendation 11: The Premiers Bushfire Relief Grant process should be reviewed to simplify and ensure that funding for emergency relief can be provided within a few days maximum.***

### **Private Sector Emergency Recovery Support**

The City noticed for the first time in its experience, extra support being provided by significant private sector and philanthropic entities. These agencies were involved in the State Recovery Coordination Group from the first meeting and brought significant resources and support to the recovery process. This was widely welcomed by the City and the community and provided solutions to many issues such as heavy machinery, specialised equipment, targeted solutions such as fencing replacement and temporary accommodation. The challenge is that such philanthropic action is dependent on external factors such as economy, business success, perhaps even COVID fostering a 'goodwill' urge and is therefore difficult to predict.

If such agencies will now be a regular contributor to such larger emergency events in WA, local government needs to be prepared as to how best to integrate them quickly and make it as simple as possible for them to deliver the support and solutions they can provide notwithstanding local government has to operate within a strict legislated environment.

## Terms of Reference Point Four

***Consider the effectiveness of the impact assessment processes employed in informing early and timely recovery efforts and consider the effectiveness of the recovery function post response phase.***

### Impact Assessments

The final version of the Wooroloo Bushfire Impact Statement was signed by DFES on 19 February, 2021 and the City on 22 February 2021. The document provides a good snapshot of the identified issues for recovery at a point in time (15th February, 2021).

The development of the Impact Statement generated a significant workload for DFES, the City and other agencies. It also required refinement in discussions between DFES and City officers before all parties were comfortable signing the document. Ideally the process of the Impact Statement development could have been further streamlined and the intent of the document made clearer to all parties who were required to provide input.

Prior to the Impact Statement being finalised on 15 February, various methods were used to identify the exact nature of property damage with numerous agencies inspecting properties. Some agencies included;

- DFES – (Urban Search and Rescue, IMT)
- City Building and Health Officers
- Animal Welfare Teams (DPIRD/City/Shire/Vets)
- Western Power
- Other service providers (Telstra, NBN, Red Cross etc.)

While all of these agencies had the best intentions, each had their own objectives when visiting properties. This resulted in multiple visits and sometimes conflicting information being gained by different agencies. There was also significant additional work generated when very specific property damage information was requested later in recovery from insurers and grant providers as the focus of initial property assessments was on personal safety of residents, welfare of animals and known risks from live power, asbestos, environmental and other fire damaged equipment. It was also identified that some agencies attended properties in hire vehicles which grew suspicion of looting when the 'White Utes' were actually legitimate support agencies.

***Recommendation 12: A more coordinated response in impact assessment and understanding of how this information/data will be used throughout the recovery process in areas such as insurance and grants management would avoid duplication of agency effort.***

## Effectiveness of the recovery function

It was identified in the very early response phase that a 'Community Led Recovery' would be essential due to the strong nature of the Gidgegannup community and this strength was amplified in the Tilden Park area (where the majority of losses occurred) with a very large and connected equestrian community.

Through the City's Place Management and Place Stakeholder Engagement approaches, City staff including the Executive, Local Recovery Coordinator, Local Recovery Officer and supporting staff had pre-existing and positive stakeholder relationships with many community leaders and community groups in the Gidgegannup area and surrounds. This contributed to the recovery effort in a positive manner and the following examples demonstrate the effectiveness of community led recovery, fully supported by the City and key recovery agencies.

The recovery structure and priorities are described in the Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery Plan 2021 (Attachment 4) while the key agencies who provided support with a brief summary of their actions are provided in Attachment 5.

It was unclear to the City in the early phases of recovery as to the role of the State Recovery Coordinator Group. There was a large number of attendees and some duplication of effort. Refining the purpose of this group may assist future recovery efforts.

The City and Gidgegannup community are very grateful for the significant support provided by the many individuals, community and not-for-profit organisations alongside other local, state and federal agencies who provided support during the first six months of recovery from this incident.



## Terms of Reference Point Five

### ***Consider the extent, geographic range, method, effectiveness and duration of public warnings.***

During the response to an emergency, only one hazard management authority can be in control. As such, all decisions, responses and public communications can only come from the Incident Controller including community advice. This public information and advice is then relayed via specific selected channels, in particular the Emergency WA website [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au) and other channels such as radio broadcasts on ABC Perth (720).

The City's role is to relay this authorised information during larger incidents, via the City website and social media and these communication methods were all used during this incident. During incidents where lives or property are under threat, the Incident Controller may also request that the Police door-knock to inform people to evacuate and to where.

The City is aware of the 'digital divide' within its community and how all communities can be notified of an emergency within their proximity. In particular, if an incident is occurring late at night, any capability to improve rapid but targeted notifications to the community would be of value.

The City has also seen evidence of DFES SMS messaging directing residents into the fire. The message was sent approx. 4pm on day one, during the most intense time of the fire. The message was sent to a resident that was at their home 13km west of the fire directing them to 'leave now East on Toodyay Road'. This is the same time Toodyay Road was being impacted and would have led the resident into danger. It is of the City's opinion that warning messages which urge specific actions for residents for a specific location must use very clear wording that the message only applies to people in that specific area, or geo fenced to phones in a highly targeted area. In this case, the message did not specify a target area, nor was it appropriately geo fenced.

On the night of 2 February, residents in the Ellenbrook area and surrounds received a similar SMS emergency warning as the one above. The message prompted the recipient to leave now in a westerly direction. This message caused a lot of confusion and anxiety, especially since most of the recipients live in highly built up urban areas and had never considered a bushfire emergency. It was also in conflict with directions provided by the State Government under the COVID-19 lock down, with residents debating what was the greater risk - bushfire or the spread of coronavirus. It is also the City's view that such messaging should also advise of suitable evacuation centres for people to attend, if there is nowhere else to go for residents.

While the City supported the broadcast of this message, the timing and wording for the target area (which was predominately urban with very little or no bushfire vegetation nearby) could have been clearer for those living in the proximity of natural vegetation.

Both of these examples directed recipients to escape in a compass direction i.e. east and west. Residents in highly stressful situations, such as this, may be unable to have the ability to correctly apply compass directions.

During the 2020/2021 bushfire season, there was sufficient access to the resources listed within the City's LEMA. There are however ongoing concerns regarding mobile phone reception and NBN access within both rural and urban parts of the City, which are exacerbated during a local emergency, in particular when power fails. Improvement to telecommunication networks and the ability to boost mobile phone tower and internet capacity quickly during emergencies when local networks can become overwhelmed is a critical issue for local residents.

***Recommendation 13: Any opportunities to provide more detailed and accurate information within the first hours of an emergency to the community and key stakeholders would be of benefit. Generally, communication with all parties improves over the length of an incident and is limited while responders themselves are trying to assess the situation.***

***Recommendation 14: Communities that do not normally see themselves as under threat of bushfire need to be better prepared, especially if they are captured by emergency warnings.***

## Terms of Reference Point Six

### ***Examine the effectiveness of the 'Animal Welfare in Emergencies' program as implemented by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.***

On the evening of day one of the bushfires, the City identified that the area impacted by the fire combined semi-rural hobby farms, horse properties, larger commercial farms and bushland meaning that companion animals, livestock and native animals had been affected. The City acknowledges that in an emergency, animal welfare directly impacts on human life as some people will not evacuate or try and re-enter dangerous areas for the sake of animals, noting that this applies to either companion animals or when they are a livelihood.

COVID restrictions provided additional challenges for all aspects of emergency response and supporting staff for this incident. However, in this case, it worked to our advantage as a large number of people being at home during lockdown meant that many had self-evacuated their animals; reducing the number of unattended animals within the impacted area.

The City formally activated its Animal Welfare Plan on the morning of day two (Tuesday 2 February), however City staff were providing support to animals and their owners at Evacuation Centres the evening before. This support was either provided on site or in transportation and housing of animals.

Due to the scale and complexity of this incident, the City's capacity and resources to deliver the local Animal Welfare Plan were quickly overrun. The City asked DPIRD for assistance; however, DPIRD advised that this needed to be requested formally via the IC. This was organised with the IC to activate the State Animal Welfare Plan around 12:53hrs of day two. Once activated, DPIRD commenced the coordination of animal welfare which released City staff to address other responsibilities of incident response. DPIRD coordinated the animal welfare response for six days, which returned control to the City on the afternoon of 8 February, 2021.

The current State emergency animal welfare plan had never previously been activated and there were many positive outcomes which eventuated from the activation and implementation of the plan. The interaction between the different stakeholders was for the most part excellent due to shared goals and strong motivation to provide assistance to injured and dying animals. There were a diverse number of involved groups including DPIRD, DPAW, DFES, City of Swan, Shire of Mundaring, Native ARC, Volunteer veterinarians, Red Cross, CWA, WAPOL, EASE and other volunteer groups and individuals.

***The following observations or recommendations are grouped under broad headings. The rationale behind these points can be supported / expanded upon if requested.***

### **DPIRD Coordination**

Logistics, planning and coordination roles appeared to be managed by volunteer Veterinary staff. If DPIRD supplied more resources to perform these functions, more veterinary staff could be released for the hands-on requirements of animal welfare.

There was a perception that some DPIRD officers did not have an understanding of semi-rural communities, the number or impact of injured and unsupported animals or a sense of urgency to take action and focussed more on processes than practical action.

***Recommendation 15: The completion and handing back of animal welfare to the City was not obvious with little information formally transferred. An impact statement could have been agreed upon between DPIRD and the local government for transfer to be effectively completed.***

### **Feed management**

Strategic feed distribution points need to be quickly yet carefully selected to include a large amount of space, protected from the elements, secure and located close to the impacted area and easy access. Spontaneous donations (often truck loads) that arrive at the incident need to be redirected to the appropriate location.

Animal support volunteers and property owners were unable to access the fire ground to deliver feed/water as they were not allowed past road blocks.

***Recommendation 16: A pass for animal support personnel should be considered either escorted or when safe to enter.***

As a result of animal owners losing pasture, feed stores and feed storage facilities (sheds), the need for animal welfare went over three months. This created ongoing challenges for coordination, resourcing, disruption of normal community activities at their location, along with the provision of weather protection, security, onsite lifting equipment, advertising and staffing at the distribution points.

The City was extremely fortunate that most of this work was provided by volunteers - in some cases to their personal detriment. It is recommended that dedicated staff be made available for this role and volunteers only relied upon as additional support.

The donation and sourcing of feed outside of the impacted area also affected the livelihood of the two local stock feeders for a brief time, who not only had been personally affected by the event but also lost business as their normal sales were

being outsourced or covered by donations, once this issue was identified it was addressed by the recovery team.

***Recommendation 17: Using local suppliers for response/recovery efforts should be prioritised while ensuring that donated goods are not impacting the local economy.***

## **Euthanasia**

It was known that livestock in the affected area were suffering significant injuries that they would not recover from and animal owners were not on the property or easily contactable. It was anticipated that once the State plan was activated, these animals would be euthanised.

During the incident, it was discovered that under the State plan, all animal support staff fall under DPIRD. DPIRD euthanasia can only be performed by an animal welfare officer. Hence, volunteer vet staff that could usually make this decision was no longer empowered to do so. Additionally, City officers are not licenced to euthanise animals.

***Recommendation 18: Review the euthanasia process for future incidents to provide more timely action to animals in distress.***

## **Animal Welfare Contact and Volunteers**

During the incident, the City assisted DPIRD by utilising our 24-hour customer service number as a single point of contact for all residents (City & Shire) for animal welfare issues. Specific animal concerns and locations were collated by the City and emailed to the DPIRD contact regularly. There was no information available that could then be provided back to animal owners as to their animal's condition.

***Recommendation 19: For DPIRD and local governments to consider processes to provide 24- hour receipt of, and customer feedback, to animal concerns.***

***Recommendation 20: There should be one central point (possibly the DPIRD or Emergency WA website) to easily and clearly communicate actions for animal welfare, the IC and local governments can then refer or share this information. This may help better manage community concerns and enquiries.***

## **Unplanned volunteers**

The City received many offers of help and donations from self-mobilising volunteers for animal support, which were referred through to DPIRD. It is recommended that preformed messages be developed by DPIRD for utilisation in relation to animal concerns, donations of feed and vet supplies.

Some voluntary groups were eventually integrated into the State Animal Welfare Plan (EASEWA, Volunteer Vets, Pony Club, CWA etc.) and operated under the umbrella of DPIRD. It would have been beneficial for their good work to have been publically acknowledged more broadly.

Many individuals spontaneously contacted the City and DPIRD or self-mobilised to the incident to provide animal welfare. Having not being planned for, these well-meaning volunteers were not given appropriate direction, would make their own plans - including inappropriately accessing the active incident area endangering themselves, residents and emergency responders. A small number then became disgruntled either with each other or government bodies and spread inaccurate messages throughout the community.

***Recommendation 21: For the State Animal Welfare Plan to better support and acknowledge volunteer actions, both through organisations and individuals as they form an important asset as part of community response and recovery.***

### **Equine Evacuation**

The horse community is well connected at a 'village level' and during this incident, managed the evacuation and stabling of several hundred horses themselves. This was very well managed through this network. The first evacuation location was identified on the evening of day 1 by the City contacting these networks. The location identified was the State Equestrian Centre which was then determined to be in the predicted path of the fire. As the City was unable to provide an alternate location when relocation was recommended, the horse community themselves negotiated the use of the Magic Millions facility in Middle Swan. This evacuation of horses generated essentially a fourth evacuation centre with additional human and animal welfare issues including drinking water (human), masks and food/stock supplies. While both people and animals required support, the designated (human) evacuation centre was the only location most agencies would provide support to.

***Recommendation 22: The roles of DPIRD, Department of Communities and Local Government needs to be considered in regard to providing welfare to horse (or other stock) owners and carers at animal evacuation locations.***

### **Taskforce**

On the morning of the third day (Wednesday, 3 February), DPIRD coordinated and formed a taskforce made up of volunteer veterinary staff, City and Shire Officers. This taskforce remained at the ICC all day and were not actively tasked by DPIRD until the next day. The City liaison officer had sought and received a verbal understanding from the IC on the morning of day three to deploy 12 veterinary staff under the escort of LG staff. This was communicated to DPIRD by City officers, however, DPIRD declined to act on this information citing their processes were incomplete at this time and preferring to seek permission themselves at the next

scheduled ISG meeting which was not until six hours later. This resulted in no veterinary staff being deployed to the field until the next day (City and Shire animal management staff were in the field). The consequences of this delay were:

- Animals remained unsupported and suffered for another day
- Taskforce team members and City and Shire staff were frustrated as their time and skills were not being utilised effectively
- Voluntary staff that had taken time off their normal work were not easily available the next day
- Tensions were palpable and working relationships between parties were strained.

***Recommendation 23: For animal management agencies who respond in an emergency situation to continue to pre-plan and coordinate operational structures and triggers for action prior to events, to allow for better agility and reactivity to animal management requirements.***

The effectiveness of the taskforce, once they were deployed from day four was commendable and a significant amount of animal welfare matters were addressed. The combination of staff and volunteers from local, state, vets and not-for-profit agencies was an effective model. Attachment Six provides some additional operational improvement recommendations.

## **Terms of Reference Point Seven**

***Consider the meteorological aspects of the fire as examined by the Bureau of Meteorology.***

The City provides no comment on this point.

DRAFT



## Terms of Reference Point Eight

***Provide a means for members of the public and other interested parties to make submissions to the Review and give these due regard in compiling its report.***

The City issued a Media Release post the announcement of the inquiry, encouraging any interested community members or organisations to complete a submission before the deadline. The City has also promoted the opportunity to provide feedback via the LRCG and associated sub-committees, social media channels and BFAC.

DRAFT

## Terms of Reference Point Nine

***Consider any other matter that the Review Team identifies in the course of activities.***

### Planning

The Tilden Park subdivision (and other Gidgegannup subdivisions) was created under bushfire management plans, prescribing networks of shared firebreaks in lieu of individual firebreaks. A typical example would be a firebreak running at the back of 4-10 properties between two public roads, but did not require any breaks on other property boundaries.

A 2018 review of several sub divisions in Gidgegannup including the Tilden subdivision area and other similar areas (Strawberry Hill, Barbarich and Askrigg) clearly showed the shared cell networks were compromised. In response, the City commenced a program to replace the shared firebreak networks with standard individual breaks on all properties within those subdivisions. Based on a higher risk profile and low compliance, this enforcement started with Strawberry Hill in 2018.

To enforce this approach, the City relies on the fire hazard reduction notice (Attachment One) under the Bush Fires Act (1954) to address these historical issues allowed by planning decisions, as the associated bushfire management plans are listed on the titles of a property changing these requirements more formally is a complex process. This means historical planning decisions related to bushfire management cannot be updated or changed easily when improved methods of fire mitigation are identified.

City officers' experiences in the Strawberry Hills sub division were that while some property owners were compliant with the requests for change and current fire hazard reduction requirements, others were not and lobbied political members and required significant individual site meetings and engagement.

***Recommendation 24: For legislative changes to be considered in relation to historical bushfire management plans under a planning approval, to enable improved methods of fire mitigation to be implemented easily when identified.***

### Case Management System

Impacted residents and staff from the various agencies dealing with applications for funding, accommodation and donations would all benefit from a shared system, if there was a case management system in place whereby on initial contact the persons full contact details and relevant information are registered in a multi-agency shared system and the person is provided with a unique case number that they can refer to for all future applications and requests. This would reduce duplication of effort and

assist residents by not having to repeatedly provide the same information under stressful conditions.

***Recommendation 25: That the relevant agencies work together to develop a multi-agency system for emergency management, with a unique case number as a minimum.***

### **Donations Management**

Due to the time consuming nature, volume, multiple handling and management complexities of physical and virtual donations, additional pressure was placed on the City. This expended a lot of energy that could have been better utilised on other recovery priorities. The City had GIVIT WA identified for management of physical donations only to confirm, once in recovery mode, that the organisation was no longer funded in Western Australia.

***Recommendation 26: That local governments have a pre-arranged agreement with a suitably experienced organisation to manage all physical donations and pledges.***

### **Clean Up Process**

The City is very grateful for the State Government leading the clean-up process of effective properties. A task of this scale and size is beyond most local government's means. While there was frustration from the community in relation to perceived delays in getting the clean-up process started, once this process gained momentum it was well received and an important milestone in recovery.

***Recommendation 27: That pre-arranged contractual frameworks and binding agreements should be in place annually to expedite emergency clean-up processes.***

### **Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFAWA)**

The City has found the DRFAWA claims process to be complex. Communications regarding eligible or ineligible items has caused confusion and information has not always been readily available. The range of fact sheets and templates that local governments are required to interpret and complete is overwhelming and the amount of evidence required to claim back expenses, has presented challenges in terms of resourcing and staff capacity. However, the DRFAWA have been very accommodating and have addressed these challenges as best as possible, always offering support and advice to the City when required.

***Recommendation 28: Develop a more streamlined claims process, by simplifying the information and templates provided to local government. Have one template which can be used for all claims, instead of separate templates for each Category and provide this information upfront.***

## ***Acknowledgement***

The City of Swan would like to acknowledge the Shire of Mundaring, DFES, Department of Communities, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, City of Perth and all other relevant State and Local Government Agencies alongside the community and private organisations who have worked so hard to provide the response and recovery to the Wooroloo Bushfire.

Most importantly, the City wishes to acknowledge the community impacted by this fire, the impacts upon them, their patience, resilience and guidance in the face of this tragedy. The response to this event would not have been possible without the extraordinary collaboration across all these sectors and the goodwill shown by all involved.

# Fire Season Guide

## 2020/21

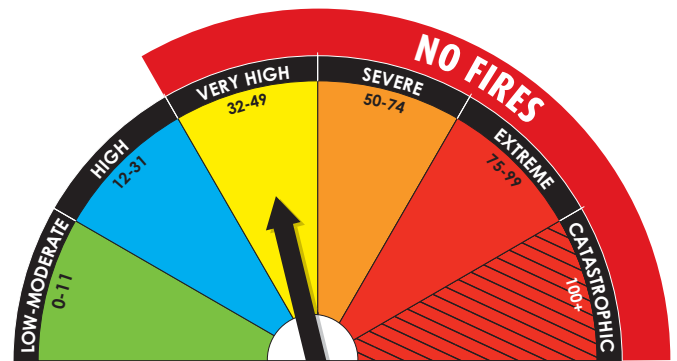


## Fire season quick guide

BURNING RESTRICTIONS					
RESTRICTED BURNING PERIOD		PROHIBITED BURNING PERIOD		RESTRICTED BURNING PERIOD	
Permits Required to Burn		Burning Prohibited		Permits Required to Burn	
From Oct 1	Until Nov 30	From Dec 1	Until Mar 31	From Apr 1	Until May 31
Dates may be altered according to seasonal conditions. Any changes will be advertised at <a href="http://www.swan.wa.gov.au/fire">www.swan.wa.gov.au/fire</a>					
All burning is prohibited on days where:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above or;</li><li>• a Total Fire Ban is declared or;</li><li>• a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is declared.</li></ul>					
FIREBREAKS AND HAZARD REDUCTION REQUIREMENT PERIOD					
INSTALL BY NOVEMBER 1			MAINTAIN UNTIL APRIL 30		
Burning is prohibited on land less than 2000m <sup>2</sup> . Exemptions are listed on page 8.					

**Call 000 for all fires and life threatening emergencies.**

## Important contacts



Current Fire Danger Rating is provided daily on the Bureau of Meteorology's Perth forecast at [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) and at [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)

### City of Swan

Fire Information - **9267 9326**  
 General enquiries - **9267 9267**  
 or visit [www.swan.wa.gov.au](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au)

### Department of Fire & Emergency Services

Emergency information line (alerts and warnings):  
**13 33 37** or [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)

Total Fire Ban information line:  
**1800 709 355** or [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)

General fire safety information:  
[www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)



## City of Swan Bushfire Hazard Regulations

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Property owners are advised to read and familiarise themselves with the Annual Fire Hazard Reduction Notice contained on pages 11-23 of this booklet and ensure that requirements contained within the notice are carried out and maintained during the regulated firebreak periods. Property owners who are unsure of their responsibilities may contact the City of Swan for further information.

### This booklet includes information on:

- Fire safety on your property
- Asset protection zone
- Bushfire management plans
- Firebreaks and fire service access (strategic firebreaks)
- Burning restrictions
- Fire safety bans
- Fire hazard reduction notice (firebreak notice)

## Fire Safety on your Property

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Property owners are annually required to reduce fire hazards and install firebreaks prior to **November 1** and maintain their property in that condition until **April 30**. The bushfire hazard reduction strategies outlined below are legal requirements to reduce the likelihood and impact a bushfire may have on life, property and the environment.

### Land up to 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (0.5 hectares or 1.2 acres)

- Install and maintain an asset protection zone.
- Maintain all grass to or under 10cm height.
- If your land predominantly consists of dense native vegetation, firebreaks or additional understory maintenance may be required.
- Native vegetation should be maintained at or below eight tonnes per hectare.

### Land between 5,000m<sup>2</sup> and 25,000m<sup>2</sup> (0.5 - 2.5 hectares) or (1.2 - 6.2 acres)

- Install and maintain an asset protection zone.
- Install firebreaks immediately inside and adjacent to all external property boundaries. Firebreaks need to be three metres wide with a four metre vertical (height) clearance free from flammable materials and overhanging branches.
- Maintain all grass to a height of no greater than 10cm. If the land is stocked the grass must be reduced and maintained to a height of no greater than 10cm by December 1.
- Natural vegetation within 100 metres of buildings including attached and adjacent structures and essential infrastructure shall be maintained at or below eight tonnes per hectare.
- Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in this notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

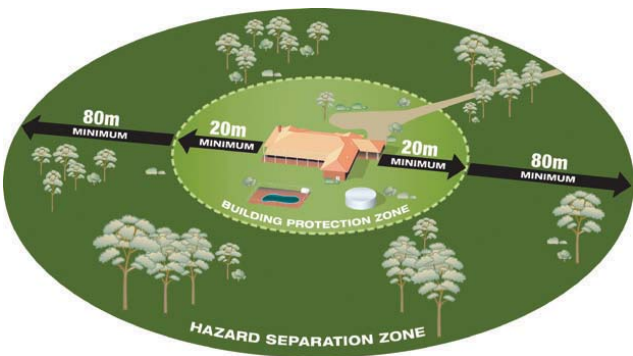
### Land with an area greater than 25,000m<sup>2</sup> (2.5 hectares or 6.2 acres)

- Install and maintain an asset protection zone.
- Install firebreaks immediately inside and adjacent to all external property boundaries. Firebreaks need to be three metres wide with a four metre vertical (height) clearance free from flammable materials and overhanging branches.
- Properties over 100 hectares require additional firebreaks to divide the land into areas not exceeding 100 hectares.
- Slash or mow grass to a height no greater than 10cm immediately adjacent to firebreaks to a minimum width of three metres. If the land is stocked, this grass must be reduced and maintained to a height of no greater than 10cm by December 1.
- Natural vegetation within 100 metres of buildings including attached and adjacent structures and essential infrastructure shall be maintained at or below eight tonnes per hectare.
- Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in this notice and with any additional requirements within that plan.

## Asset Protection Zone

Asset protection zone (APZ) is a fuel-reduced area that surrounds habitable buildings and other assets. A well maintained APZ can minimise the likelihood and impact that direct flame contact, radiant heat and ember attack have on buildings in the event of a bushfire. flammable material, dry grass, stubble or bush.

The APZ extends out 20m from the external walls of an asset or building.



### APZ requirements include:

- Maintain fuel loads at two tonnes per hectare or lower.
- Maintain grass at 10cm or under.
- Keep tree crowns or branches clear from overhanging buildings.
- Maintain clear separation between tree crowns.
- Under prune trees to two metres from the ground.
- Ensure shrubs taller than two metres are not located within two metres of the building.
- On sloping ground the distance is increased by one metre for every degree of downslope from the building.

APZ requirements only apply within the boundaries of the lot on which the asset is located and cannot be enforced across boundaries.

Refer to the Fire Hazard Reduction Notice on pages 18-19 of this booklet for the complete list of APZ requirements. Permanent clearing of vegetation beyond the requirements of the Fire Hazard Reduction Notice is not permitted and requires approval from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the City of Swan.

## Fire Management Plans

Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements of the Annual Fire Hazard Reduction Notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

### Firebreaks, Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks) and Emergency Access Ways

Firebreaks, Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks) and Emergency Access Ways must be constructed and maintained to the standard specified in the City of Swan Fire Hazard Reduction Notice (see pages 11-23 of this booklet for details).

Type	Dimensions	Trafficable surface
Firebreak	3m wide 4m height	3m Suitable for 4 x 4 vehicles
Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreak)	6m wide 4m height	4m Suitable for 4 x 4 vehicles
Emergency Access Way	6m wide 4m height	6m Suitable for all types of vehicles in all weather



Firebreaks, including corners, must be constructed to accomodate this vehicle.



## Engaging Contractors

Landowners, including absentee landowners, must make efforts to verify contractor work is being completed to the standard required and not rely on their contractor's word; ultimately it is the land owner's responsibility to ensure their property complies with the annual Fire Hazard Reduction Notice.

## Precautions when Slashing

Slashing and mowing can cause fires. These activities should not be undertaken in hot or windy weather. It is recommended that a suitable fire extinguisher is fitted to any machinery undertaking these activities.

## Restricted and Prohibited Burning Times

Note: dates may be altered according to seasonal conditions. These changes will be advertised on the City of Swan's website.

**All burning, including exemptions, is prohibited on days when the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above, or a Total Fire Ban or a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is declared** (see fire safety bans on pages 8-10 of this booklet for details).

### Prohibited period

#### December 1 to March 31.

All burning, including garden refuse and camping fires are prohibited. Cooking fires are exempt subject to the conditions listed on page 7. Other exemptions are listed on page 8

### Restricted periods

#### October 1 to November 30 and April 1 to May 31.

During this period you are not permitted to burn without a burning permit. You may request a permit from your local Permit Issuing Officer – see details on the inside back cover of this booklet or on the City of Swan website. Garden refuse and cooking fires are exempt subject to the conditions listed on page 7. Other exemptions are listed on page 8.

## Burning a pile of garden refuse in a restricted period

- The fire must not be lit if the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above, or if a Total Fire Ban or a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is declared.
- The pile being burnt does not exceed one cubic metre in size and only one pile is alight at any time.
- No flammable material within five metres of the fire.
- The fire is only lit between 6 pm and 11 pm and completely extinguished by midnight.
- At least one person capable of controlling the fire is in attendance at all times with adequate means of extinguishing the fire (e.g. garden hose that easily reaches the fire).
- You notify your neighbours of your intention to burn and the smoke from your fire does not cause a nuisance to neighbours or obscure the vision of motorists.
- You do not burn household or commercial waste, any noxious materials or any damp, wet or green material which could cause excessive smoke at any time.
- Consider registering your burn with DFES on 9395 9209 to avoid unnecessary 000 calls.

## Cooking fires

Fires for the purpose of cooking are exempt from burning period restrictions subject to the following conditions:

- The fire must not be lit if the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above, or if a Total Fire Ban or a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is declared.
- The fire is contained in a purpose built appliance and:
  - at a person's home; or
  - an area is set aside for that purpose by the State Authority or City of Swan
- No flammable material within five metres of the fire.
- At least one person capable of controlling the fire is in attendance at all times with adequate means of extinguishing the fire.

## Burning Prohibited on Land less than 2000m<sup>2</sup>

As per Consolidated Local Law 2005; due to the impact smoke may have on densely built-up areas, burning is not permitted any time on land with an area less than 2,000m<sup>2</sup> (1/2 acre). Exemptions are listed below.

### Exemptions

Exemptions include operations of a barbeque, a heater, water heater, space heater, stove, oven or incinerator. These must be fully enclosed and fired with dry wood, dry paper, synthetic char or charcoal type fuel. Suitable precautions must be taken so that no nuisance smoke arises. Causing excessive smoke is a prosecutable offence under the City's Health Local Laws.

### Alternatives to Burning

Consider the environment and the impact smoke may have on the surrounding community, and whenever practical use alternative methods of fuel reduction like composting, mulching, slashing or the application of herbicides. Green waste can be disposed of at Red Hill and Bullsbrook waste transfer stations or by utilising the City's curb side collection service.

## Fire Safety Bans

When a Total Fire Ban or a Harvest or Vehicle Movement Ban is declared it is illegal to light a fire or carry out any activity that is likely to cause a fire.

The responsibility remains on the individual to ensure that the activity undertaken will not cause a fire, and if a ban is currently in place.

**Total Fire Bans** are declared by the Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES) during times of extreme weather conditions or when the possibility of widespread bushfires may impact heavily on resources.

**Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans** are declared by the Local Authority and limits the operation of vehicles, machinery and plant equipment near flammable material, dry grass, stubble or bush.

Similarly, conducting 'hot works' like operating abrasive cutters, welders or any other activity in the open air that may cause sparks and ignite vegetation are also not permitted during a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban.

## When a ban has been declared **you must not:**



- Light a fire in the open air.
- Cook outside in the open air using an open fire (this includes under verandas and patios).
- Move vehicles or plant equipment in bushland or paddocks (see necessary agricultural activities\*).
- Harvesting (see necessary agricultural activities\*).
- Undertake 'hot works' such as welding, grinding or activity that may cause a spark or ignition (see page 10 for exemptions for prescribed activities).
- Use fireworks or hot air balloons.

## When a ban has been declared **you may:**



- Use a gas cooker or barbeque with an enclosed flame on your own property or in a public recreational area designated for that purpose.
- Undertake essential feeding and watering of stock.
- Use mowers, chainsaws, line and hedge trimmers and similar machinery in built up urban environments which are clear of flammable materials or surrounded by green grass etc.
- Conduct any work that has been approved by a current Total Fire Ban exemption.

\*Necessary Agricultural Activities are exempt during

- Total Fire Ban if the activities cannot be postponed until after the ban ends without consequence to livestock or crops.
- Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban if the activities cannot be postponed without an immediate or serious risk to a person or livestock. Harvesting of crops is not permitted.

## Total Fire Ban Additional Information

Activation and additional information is available on the DFES websites [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au) and [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au) or by calling the Total Fire Ban information line **1800 709 355**.

Information is also broadcast on ABC local Radio frequency 720AM and other media outlets.

Subject to stringent conditions, business and public authorities may continue to carry out specifically prescribed activities. Prescribed activities and conditions are available on the DFES website. These amendments mean that there is no longer a need to obtain a specific exemption from DFES to carry out these prescribed activities during a Total Fire Ban.

Exemptions for other non-prescribed activities must be obtained from DFES in writing.

## Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban Additional information

Activations and additional information is available by calling the City's Fire & Emergency Information Line on 9267 9326 and on the City of Swan website [www.swan.wa.gov.au](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au)

Information is also broadcast on ABC local Radio frequency 720AM and other media outlets.

During a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban, vehicles may be used or operated on or across a paddock only if it is for the prevention of an immediate or serious risk to a person or livestock, and only if reasonable precautions have been taken for that activity to prevent causing a bushfire.

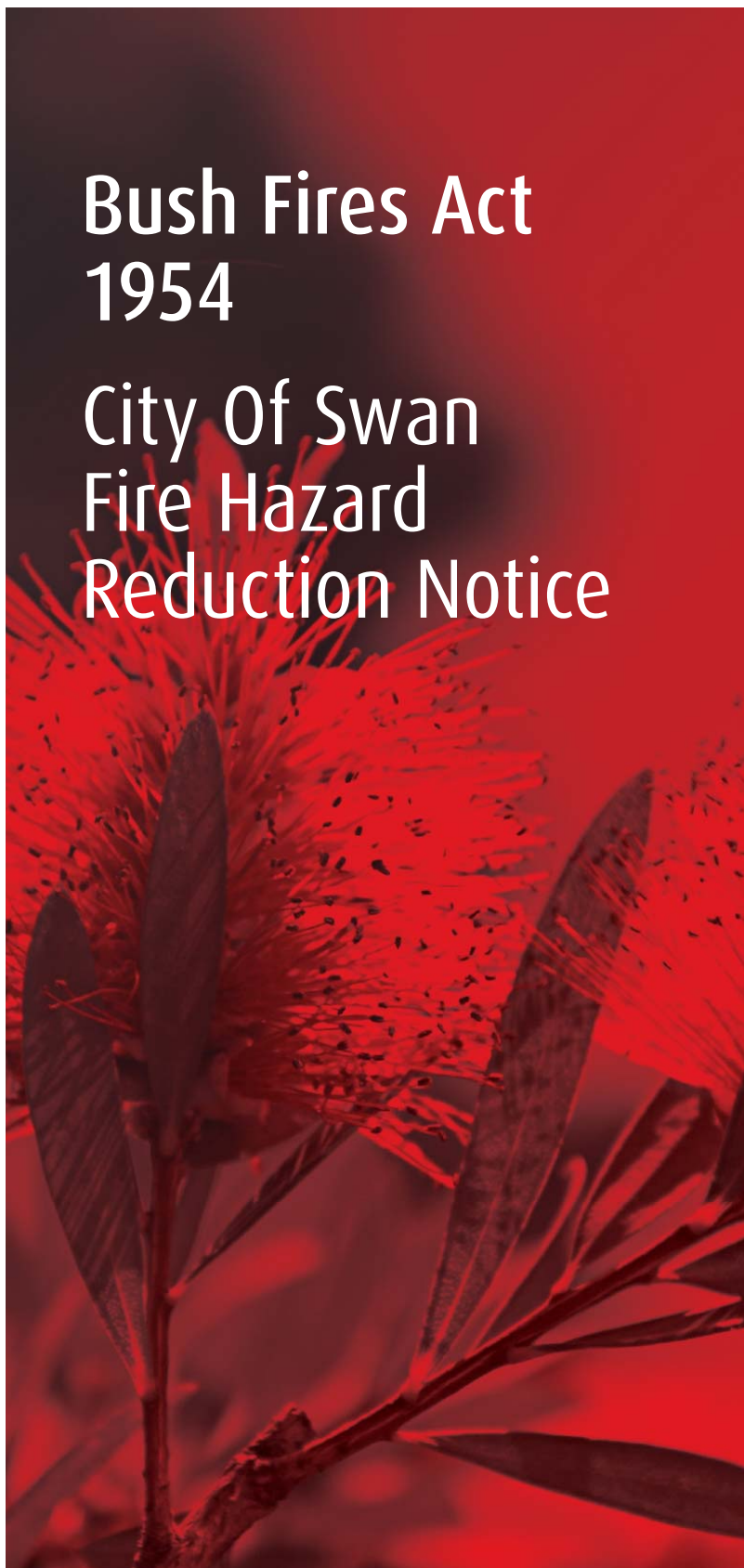
## Penalties Apply

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You could be fined up to \$25,000 or imprisoned for 12 months, or both, if you ignore or commit an offence in relation to Total Fire Bans or Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans.

# Bush Fires Act 1954

## City Of Swan Fire Hazard Reduction Notice



## BUSH FIRES ACT 1954

### City of Swan

### Fire Hazard Reduction Notice (Firebreak Notice)

To assist in the control of bush fires, and pursuant to Section 33 of the Bush Fires Act 1954, all owners and occupiers of land within the City of Swan are required on or before the first day of November, 2020, or within 14 days of becoming an owner or occupier of land after that date, must meet the fire hazard reduction conditions described in this notice and maintain these conditions up to and including the 30th day of April, 2021.

#### 1. All land up to 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (0.5 hectares or 1.2 acres)

- 1) Install and maintain an asset protection zone in accordance with the requirements specified in clause 13 of this notice.
- 2) Maintain all grass to a height of no greater than 10cm.
- 3) Areas of natural vegetation to be maintained at or below eight tonnes per hectare.
- 4) Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in this notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

#### 2. All land between 5,000m<sup>2</sup> and 25,000m<sup>2</sup> (0.5 - 2.5 hectares) or (1.2 - 6.2 acres)

- 1) Install and maintain an asset protection zone in accordance with the requirements specified in clause 13 of this notice.
- 2) Install firebreaks immediately inside and adjacent to all external property boundaries. Firebreaks need to be three metres wide with a four metre vertical height clearance free from flammable materials and overhanging branches (see section 10 in this notice for further details).
- 3) Maintain all grass to a height of no greater than 10cm.
  - a) If the land is stocked, the grass must be reduced and maintained to a height of no greater than 10cm by December 1.

- 4) Natural vegetation within 100 metres of buildings including attached and adjacent structures and essential infrastructure shall be maintained at or below eight tonnes per hectare, by passive methods of fuel reduction that does not permanently remove or reduce the quantity or occurrence of the native plants, shrubs and trees within the subject area.
- 5) Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in this notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

#### 3. All land with an area greater than 25,000m<sup>2</sup> (2.5 hectares or 6.2 acres)

- 1) Install and maintain an asset protection zone in accordance with the requirements specified in clause 13 of this notice.
- 2) Install firebreaks immediately inside and adjacent to all external property boundaries. Firebreaks need to be three metres wide with a four metre vertical height clearance free from flammable materials and overhanging branches (see section 10 in this notice for further details).
  - a) Properties over 100 hectares require additional firebreaks to divide the land into areas not exceeding 100 hectares.
- 3) Slash or mow grass to a height no greater than 10cm immediately adjacent to firebreaks to a minimum width of 3 metres.
  - a) If the land is stocked, this grass must be reduced and maintained to a height of no greater than 10cm by December 1.
- 4) Natural vegetation within 100 metres of buildings including attached and adjacent structures and essential infrastructure shall be maintained at or below eight tonnes per hectare, by passive methods of fuel reduction that does not permanently remove or reduce the quantity or occurrence of the native plants, shrubs and trees within the subject area.

- 5) Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in this notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

#### 4. Plantations

- 1) Install and maintain external and internal firebreaks, firebreaks that form compartments (cells), firebreaks and hazard reduction measures that protect neighbouring communities and essential infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of a fire management plan approved in writing by the City; or
- 2) Where no such approved fire management plan exists,
  - a) Unless the City approves an alternative plan in writing in accordance with clause 4(2)(b), install and maintain external and internal firebreaks and firebreaks that form compartments (cells), and carry out all other firebreaks and hazard reduction measures which are required in accordance with the requirements and specifications within the Department of Fire & Emergency Services 'Guidelines for Plantation Fire Protection' 2011 publication; or
  - b) If it is considered impractical for any reason to carry out the plantation requirements outlined above in clause 4 (2)(a), plantation owners and managers may apply in writing to the City to implement an alternative plan or measures in accordance with clause 4 of this notice. A Fire Management Plan may be required to be developed and submitted as part of the application.

#### 5. Application to vary Firebreak and Hazard Reduction Requirements

- 1) If it is considered impractical for any reason to clear firebreaks in a manner or location required by this notice, or to carry out on the land any fire hazard reduction work or measures required by this notice, you may apply in writing on or before the 15th day of October, 2018 for approval to provide firebreaks in alternative positions or to take alternative measures to abate fire hazards on the land. Alternative firebreak application forms can be downloaded from the City of Swan website.

- 2) If permission is not granted in writing by the City prior to the 1st day of November, 2018 you shall comply with the requirements of this notice.
- 3) When permission to provide alternative firebreaks or fire hazard reduction measures has been granted, you shall comply with all conditions on the endorsed permit and maintain the land to the required standard throughout the period specified by this notice.
  - a) Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must comply with any additional requirements and responsibilities outlined within that plan.

#### 6. Fuel dumps and depots

Remove all flammable material within 10 metres of fuel dumps, fuel ramps or where fuel drums, whether containing fuel or not, are stored.

#### 7. Hay stacks

Clear and maintain a firebreak completely surrounding any haystack on the land, within 60 metres of the haystack.

#### 8. Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks)

- 1) Where under a written agreement with the City, or where depicted on an approved bushfire management plan Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks) are required on the land, you are required to clear and maintain the Fire Service.  
Access (Strategic Firebreaks) a minimum of six metres wide along the agreed alignment to provide restricted vehicular access to emergency services and authorised vehicles.
- 2) Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks) must be free from flammable material and unimpeded by obstructions including boundary fences and gates unless approved in writing by the City.
- 3) Gates may only be secured with City of Swan Fire Service padlock.



- 4) Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks) shall be graded to provide a continuous four wheel drive trafficable surface a minimum of four metres wide with a one metre shoulder on either side.
- 5) All branches must be pruned and obstacles removed to maintain a four metre vertical height clearance above the full six metre width of the trafficable surface.

## 9. Emergency Access Ways

- 1) Where under a written agreement with the City, or where depicted on an approved bushfire management plan, Emergency Access Ways are required on private land, you are required to clear and maintain a vehicular access way to a minimum of six metres wide along the agreed alignment.
- 2) Emergency access ways must be free from flammable material and unimpeded by obstructions including boundary fences and gates unless approved in writing by the City.
- 3) Gates on Emergency Access Ways must remain unlocked at all times.
- 4) Emergency Access Ways shall be graded and have suitable drainage to provide a minimum six metre wide continuous trafficable surface suitable for all types of two wheel drive vehicles.
- 5) All branches must be pruned and obstacles removed to maintain a four metre vertical height clearance above the full six metre width of the trafficable surface.

## 10. Firebreak Construction

- 1) Firebreaks are to be developed and maintained clear of all obstacles and flammable materials to create a minimum of three metres wide trafficable surface suitable for four wheel drive vehicles.
- 2) Overhanging branches must be pruned to provide a four metre vertical clearance above the full width of the firebreak surface.
- 3) Boundary firebreaks must be aligned immediately inside and adjacent to the external property boundaries.
- 4) Alternative firebreaks that are approved in writing by the City, or as depicted within a bushfire management plan approved in writing by the City, are

to be constructed to the same standard as general firebreaks and must be constructed along the specified alignment.

- 5) Firebreaks must not terminate in a dead end.
- 6) Firebreaks may be constructed by ploughing, grading, raking, burning, chemical spraying or any other approved method that achieves the required standard.

## 11. Driveways

Where building sites are situated more than 50 metres from a public road,

- 1) Driveways must be maintained clear of all permanent obstacles and flammable materials to create a minimum 3 metre wide trafficable surface suitable for all types of 2 wheel drive vehicles.
- 2) Overhanging branches must be pruned to provide a 4 metre vertical clearance above a minimum 3 metre width over the driveway.

## 12. Fuel Reduction – Natural Vegetation

- 1) Available bushfire fuels must be maintained at or below:
  - a) Asset Protection Zones - two tonnes per hectare
  - b) Hazard separation zones - eight tonnes per hectare
 

*\*This requirement only applies where HSZs are depicted within a Fire Management Plan approved in writing by the City.*
  - c) Natural vegetation - eight tonnes per hectare for areas of natural vegetation within 100 metres of buildings, attached and adjacent structures and essential infrastructure.
- 2) Passive fuel reduction within natural vegetation may be achieved by burning, raking, pruning, weed management, removal of dead materials and any other approved method.
- 3) Permanent removal or partial clearing of natural vegetation including individual or groups of native grasses, shrubs or trees may only be carried out to meet the minimum requirements of this notice.

- 4) Permanent clearing of natural vegetation structures including individual plants, shrubs or trees, that exceeds the requirements of this notice or the specifications outlined within a bushfire management plan approved in writing by the City, is only permitted in accordance with the provisions and exemptions outlined within the Environmental Protection Act 1986, or with the approval of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the City of Swan.

Note: Advice and resources on how to measure and manage native vegetation fuel loads are available from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services or the City of Swan.

### 13. Asset Protection Zones Specification

Asset protection zones for habitable buildings and other assets must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Asset protection zones for habitable buildings must extend a minimum of 20 metres out from any external walls of the building, attached structures, or adjacent structures within six metres of the habitable building, unless varied under an approved bushfire management plan.
- 2) On sloping ground the asset protection zone distance shall increase with one metre for every degree in slope on the sides of the building/ structure that are exposed to down slope natural vegetation.
- 3) Asset protection zone requirements only apply within the boundaries of the lot on which the asset is located and cannot be enforced across boundaries.
- 4) Recommendation only - asset protection zones predominantly consist of non-flammable managed vegetation, reticulated lawns and gardens and other non-flammable features.
- 5) All grass is maintained to or under 10cm.
- 6) Fuel loads must be reduced and maintained at two tonnes per hectare or lower.
- 7) The crowns of trees are to be separated where possible to create a clear separation distance between adjoining or nearby tree crowns. The

separation distance between tree crowns is not required to exceed 10 metres. Clearing or thinning existing trees to create distances greater than 10 metres separation between tree crowns within an asset protection zone is not required or supported by this notice and requires approval from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the City of Swan.

- 8) A small group of trees within close proximity to one another may be treated as one crown provided the combined crowns do not exceed the area of a large or mature crown size for that species.
- 9) Trees are to be low pruned (or under pruned) to at least a height of two metres from ground.
- 10) No tree, or shrub over two metres high is planted within two metres of a building, especially adjacent to windows.
- 11) There are no tree crowns or branches hanging over buildings.
- 12) Clear and prune scrub to reduce to a sparse density (able to walk through vegetation with relative ease with minimal deviation around trees and shrubs).
- 13) Install paths or clear flammable or dry vegetation, debris and materials immediately adjacent to the building.
- 14) Wood piles and flammable materials stored a safe distance from buildings.

### 14. Burning

All burning must be carried out in accordance with the relevant provisions of this notice and the Bush Fires Act 1954, Health Act 1911 and the City's Consolidated Local Laws 2005.

**Prohibited period:** all burning, including garden refuse and camping fires are prohibited.

**Restricted period:** All burning requires a permit except for the burning of garden refuse and camping fires which are subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The fire must not be lit if the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above, or if a Total Fire Ban or a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is declared.
- 2) Only one fire is allowed at any time and it does not exceed one cubic metre in size.
- 3) No flammable material within 5m of the fire.
- 4) The fire is only lit between 6 pm and 11 pm and completely extinguished by midnight.
- 5) At least one person capable of controlling the fire is in attendance at all times with adequate means of extinguishing the fire.

#### 15. Cooking Fires

Fires for the purpose of cooking are exempt from burning period restrictions subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The fire must not be lit if the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above, or if a Total Fire Ban or a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is declared.
- 2) The fire is contained in a purpose built appliance and;
  - a) at a person's home; or
  - b) an area is set aside for that purpose by the State Authority or City of Swan.
- 3) No flammable material within 5m of the fire.
- 4) At least one person capable of controlling the fire is in attendance at all times with adequate means of extinguishing the fire.

#### 16. Compliance

- 1) In addition to the requirements of this notice, further works which are considered necessary by an Authorised Officer of the City may be required as specified in writing in a subsequent notice addressed to the land owner.
- 2) Where the owner or occupier of the land fails or neglects to comply with the requirements of this notice or a subsequent notice addressed to the land owner, the City of Swan may enter onto the land with workers,

contractors, vehicles and machinery to carry out the requisitions of the notice at the expense of the land owner.

- 3) Failure to comply with this notice and subsequent written notices may result in a penalty not exceeding \$5,000, or the issue of a \$250 infringement notice and liability for any costs incurred by the City in relation to works undertaken on behalf of the land owner.
- 4) Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in this notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

#### 17. Definitions

**'Alternative Firebreak'** is a firebreak that is in an alternative position or alignment to the external boundaries of a property.

**'Alternative Firebreak Application'** is an application that may be made by a land owner to install firebreaks in an alternative position, or to carry out an alternative measures in lieu of general firebreaks.

**'Available Fuel'** is the bush fuel consisting of live and dead vegetation such as stubble, mulch, leaf litter, twigs, trash, scrub and other vegetation less than 6mm in diameter capable of carrying a running fire and will actually burn under prevailing conditions.

**'City'** means the City of Swan.

**'Buildings, Attached and Adjacent Structures'** means habitable buildings that are used as a dwelling, workplace, place of gathering or assembly, a building that is a car park, or a building used for the storage or display of goods or produce for sale by whole sale in accordance with classes 1-9 of the Building Code of Australia. The term building includes attached and adjacent structures like garages, carports verandas or similar roofed structure(s) that are attached to, or within six metres of the dwelling or primary building.

**'Asset Protection Zone (APZ)'** is a low fuel area that is reduced of flammable vegetation and materials



surrounding buildings and essential infrastructure to minimise the likelihood and impact that direct flame contact, radiant heat or ember attack may have on buildings and assets in the event of a bushfire. This area must extend 20 metres out from the external walls of a building or asset.

**‘Bushfire Management Plan’ or ‘Fire Management Plan’** is a comprehensive plan that may be placed on the certificate of title(s) of land that has been developed as a condition of development or subdivision. Bushfire Management Plans may become out dated and it’s the responsibility of the property owner to review and keep them current. Where a property is affected by an approved bushfire management plan, property owners must still comply with all requirements in the Annual Fire Hazard Reduction Notice and with any additional requirements outlined within that plan.

**‘Emergency Access Way’** is a two wheel drive trafficable, six metre wide access route to provide local residents, general public and emergency services alternative links to road networks at the end of cul- de-sacs or areas where access is limited during an emergency incident.

**‘Essential Infrastructure’ or ‘Critical Infrastructure’** means assets, infrastructure, systems and networks that provide essential services necessary for social and economic wellbeing and is typically public infrastructure. Assets and infrastructure, usually of a public nature, that generate or distribute electricity, water supply, telecommunications, gas and dams are typical assets that are essential to society and are often located in, or traverse areas that are prone to bushfires.

**‘Firebreak’** is an area of land cleared of flammable material (see available fuel above) to minimise the spread or extension of a bushfire. For the purpose of this notice the term firebreak is a strip of land at minimum three metres with a four metres vertical clearance, constructed to provide a 4x4 trafficable surface for emergency and authorised vehicle access. Boundary firebreaks are installed immediately adjacent the external boundaries of a property.

**‘Fire Hazard’** means accumulated fuel (living or dead) such as leaf litter, twigs, trash, bush, dead trees and scrub capable of carrying a running fire, but excludes standing living trees and isolated shrubs.

**‘Hazard Separation Zone (HSZ)’** if required by this notice and in accordance with a Fire Management Plan, means an area extending out from an asset protection zone a distance of 80 metres unless otherwise specified, to create a graduated fuel reduction and separation from natural vegetation.

**‘Natural Vegetation’** means natural areas of forest, woodland, shrubland, scrub, mallee or mulga.

**‘Passive Fuel Reduction’** means lowering the amount of available fuel that will burn under prevailing conditions by means that will not permanently reduce or modify the structure or life cycle of plant, shrub, scrub or tree communities within an treated area. This is typically achieved by undertaking a cool, controlled burn of an area during cooler, damper months, or by physical removal of built up leaf litter, dead materials, weeds and slashing long dry grasses without damaging live native plants within the area.

**‘Plantation’** is any area of native or exotic planted trees that exceeds three hectares in a gazetted town site, or elsewhere a stand of trees of 10 hectares or larger that has been planted and managed intensively for their commercial and environmental value. A plantation includes roads, firebreaks and small areas of native vegetation.

**‘Fire Service Access (Strategic Firebreaks)’** is a firebreak that is six metres wide established to provide strategic access and links to road networks whilst providing a wider control/ containment line to protect town sites, estates and similar exposures during bushfire operations.

**By order of the Council,**

**MJ Foley**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**City of Swan**

## Permit Issuing Officers

Brigade officers are volunteers and their availability may vary in some instances.

Please plan your permit requirements early; a minimum of four days' notice is required prior to burning. Please visit [www.swan.wa.gov.au/fire](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au/fire) for an electronic permit application or visit your local fire brigade to apply in person.

### METRO

Permits are issued by Community Safety Advocates, subject to a site inspection **9267 9267**

### GIDGEGANNUP EAST

Brigade enquiries **9574 6000**  
Saturday 8.30 – 10am  
Fire Station, Toodyay Road, Gidgegannup

### GIDGEGANNUP WEST

Brigade enquiries: **9574 6536**  
Saturday 8.30 – 10am  
Fire Station, Toodyay Road x O'Brien Road, Gidgegannup

### EAST SWAN

Brigade enquiries: **9296 1288**  
Sunday 9 – 11am  
Fire Station, Cathedral Avenue, Brigadoon

### BULLSBROOK

Brigade enquiries: **9571 2099**  
Sunday 9 – 11am  
Fire Station, Chittering Road, Bullsbrook

### WEST SWAN

Membership and controlled burn enquiries only: **9296 4431**  
Permits within the Metropolitan Fire District are issued by the City of Swan (see Metro).

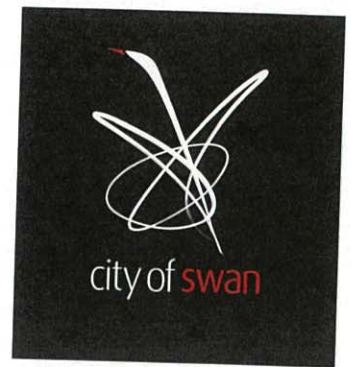
[www.swan.wa.gov.au](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au)



2 Midland Square Midland  
PO Box 196 Midland WA 6936  
9267 9267  
[swan@swan.wa.gov.au](mailto:swan@swan.wa.gov.au)

0002CS-2020

Enquiries: Community Safety 9267 9022  
E-Mail: [swan@swan.wa.gov.au](mailto:swan@swan.wa.gov.au)



April 15, 2021

Mr Darren Klemm  
Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner  
Department of Fire & Emergency Services  
PO BOX P1147  
PERTH WA 6844

Enquiries (08) 9267 9267  
2 Midland Square, Midland  
PO Box 196, Midland WA 6936

 cityofswan  
 cityofswanwa  
[www.swan.wa.gov.au](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Klemm,

### **Wooroloo Bush Fire Incident – Highlight of Issues and Improvement Opportunities**

As the Chairman of the City of Swan's Bush Fire Advisory Committee (BFAC) I would like to bring to your attention issues that have been highlighted due to the recent Wooroloo Bush Fire incident in February 2021 and possible suggestions for improvement.

#### **1. Inadequate Emergency Communication Networks - North East Metropolitan region**

The City of Swan and surrounds has significant hilly areas and valley systems where the Western Australian Emergency Radio Network (WAERN) and mobile phone coverage can be poor to non-existent. The recent Wooroloo bush fire incident demonstrated these inadequacies in emergency communication networks and serious risks were posed to both emergency personnel and the community during this incident, due to limited ability for the effective communication of urgent messages as networks were severely congested and unable to support the volume of communications.

The areas impacted by these inadequacies include, but are not limited to, Wooroloo Brook, Chittering and Avon Valleys. The issue stems from there not being enough fixed repeaters to provide coverage over this large geographical area or support an incident with a significant number of resources. As such, mobile radio repeaters are often required to support incident operations and these have their own issues which include significant time to deploy, selection of suitable location(s) and constant management; thus it is the Committee's opinion these should not be relied upon to fill the gaps in the existing network.

When radio networks are congested and/or overwhelmed, the mobile phone network will often be relied upon by emergency personnel to fill the gap from insufficient radio communications. The mobile phone network is often used for mobilisation of resources as well as relaying important and/or sensitive intelligence and critical safety information



for an incident. Similar to the radio network, the mobile phone network in these areas also does not have the resilience, capacity or coverage to be utilised during an incident of large scale.

As was experienced at the Wooroloo incident, the mobile network was degraded heavily due to infrastructure damage and/or loss of power supply. Adding to these factors was the increased usage of the network (including community members, emergency messaging, etc.) which further exacerbated the degradation of the mobile network. It is noted that the 2020 Royal Commission has made recommendations regarding upgrades to these systems, however it is acknowledged that it will take significant time to implement these recommendations.

In summary, the effectiveness of communications requires improvement to address the serious risks posed to emergency personnel and the community during an incident. Recommendations to improve communications for consideration include:

- Increasing the number of fixed repeaters used by emergency services to ensure effective coverage and redundancy;
- Implementing alternative temporary repeater technology, such as drones or aircraft; and
- Making satellite communications/phones and associated equipment readily available to those who are likely to act in a management/intelligence role (including volunteers).

## **2. Tenure Blind Bush Fire Hazard Mitigation**

Our global climate system is warming, resulting in a myriad of changes to local weather systems. There has also been an increase in extreme fire weather and longer fire seasons across large parts of Australia. This has led to an increased loss of life as well as impacting on built, natural, economic and social environments.

The current controls to mitigate bush fire risk within Western Australia require further review considering the change of climate and historic devastation caused. Existing controls include planning and building standards, community education and empowerment, response enhancement and physical mitigation. As part of a holistic risk management approach, the Committee considers physical mitigation works (fuel management) to be the most underutilised however due to differing capabilities of landholders (public or private) an effective tenure blind mitigation approach is not achievable.

It is acknowledged that the responsibility lies with each individual landowner to mitigate the risk appropriately on their land, however due to the differing capabilities of landowners across tenures (including State and Local Government), physical mitigation works are often undertaken to an inconsistent and inadequate standard.

This issue is further compounded in higher density rural areas due to increased fragmentation and the resources required to conduct mitigation works safely. Local Governments have the added responsibility of administering requirements of the **Bush Fires Act 1954** for private landowners to reduce their bush fire risk, however enforcement of these requirements is often resource intensive and ultimately, is limited by the capability of the respective landowner.

Capability through appropriate resourcing and a truly tenure blind approach should be implemented so that destructive bushfires, such as the recent Wooroloo bush fire, do not continue to have devastating impacts on Western Australian communities. A recommendation for consideration is the provision of appropriate physical/financial support to ensure truly tenure blind bush fire risk mitigation is achieved on all landholdings whether public or private.

This capability could be achieved by:

- Investigating models in other jurisdictions which achieve this outcome and then implementing a similar model;
- Establishing a separate and appropriately resourced WA Government employed workforce to carry out mitigation on all tenures of land; or
- Expanding the resourcing and responsibility of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to the scale required to be able to conduct appropriate levels of mitigation on all tenures of land.

A copy of this correspondence has also been forwarded to the WA Local Government Association (WALGA) seeking their coordination and support for these issues which are impacting Brigades across multiple local government areas.

Should you require any additional information in regards to these suggestions, I can be contacted via the City's Community Safety unit on the details listed above.

Yours sincerely



John Mangini  
**Chairperson - Bush Fire Advisory Committee**  
**City of Swan**

cc WA Local Government Association  
PO BOX 1544  
WEST PERTH WA 6872





Our Ref: D09721; 21/091152

Mr John Mangini  
Chairperson – Bush Fire Advisory Committee  
City of Swan  
PO Box 196  
MIDLAND WA 6936

Dear Mr Mangini

**WOOROLOO BUSHFIRE INCIDENT –  
ISSUES AND IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Thank you for your correspondence dated 15 April 2021 regarding the Wooroloo Bushfire Incident and the City of Swan's Bushfire Advisory Committee suggestions of issues and improvement opportunities.

With specific regard to a formal inquiry into the Wooroloo Bushfire, please note that the Government is currently considering a draft framework for this review. Your comments have been noted and will be given consideration in the review design process.

*Emergency Communication Networks – North East Metropolitan Region*

It is normal procedure after all level 2 and level 3 incidents for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to conduct reviews at varying levels into operations and support functions performance, and for completeness, the matters raised will also be included in our review.

Coverage by radio networks, ground-based cellular networks and satellite-based networks over the State is not perfect as you note, with these services being hampered by terrain, availability and capacity, atmospheric conditions such as smoke and cloud cover and power supply. In addition to the issues that presents for responders, DFES also provides communities with information using predominantly the cellular network to allow emergency alert messaging and phone calls, and to provide alerts and warnings advice information via Emergency WA. Community members also experience significant stress when cellular networks fail forcing them to rely solely on public information broadcast by ABC radio. The vehicle tracking system and the duress system established by DFES in all firefighting appliances and incident control vehicles also relies predominantly on the cellular network with failover to satellite services.



I can advise that the radio communications post the Wooroloo Bushfire have been reviewed in detail by DFES and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). I understand that none of the fixed repeater sites were threatened by the fire and operated throughout the incident and no outages of the radio network occurred. Coverage of the fixed repeater sites at Millendon and Wooroloo also both effectively covered the incident area (coverage maps attached). There were nine mobile repeaters deployed across the incident. Two trailer-mounted and two portable repeater units were deployed in response to capacity issues with fire ground communications.

The capacity issues were as a result of the current DFES radio network being based on older analogue technology that allows only one conversation per channel. DFES is currently working in conjunction with the WA Police Force on the Emergency Services Radio Network project, which over the next few years will improve capacity of both radio networks through upgrades and digital technology implementations. It should be noted that radio communications issues were exasperated during the incident where communication plans developed by the Incident Management Team (IMT) and approved by the Incident Controller were not followed.

DFES operational staff review radio coverage annually and include risk-based network expansion recommendations for budgeting purposes. Provision of additional mobile repeaters is also considered in this planning process and your recommendation is noted. The suggestion to implement drone communications has been captured in the City of Swan Volunteer Wooroloo Incident Workshop and will be provided for consideration in the after-action review.

There were mobile phone communications issues encountered throughout the incident with Telstra infrastructure ceasing to function as a result of power loss. The Incident review has determined that a high number of responders utilised personal mobile phones for communications outside of the agreed communication plans.

DFES is coordinating the allocation of limited Commonwealth funding for cellular communications base station battery upgrades (from 3 to 12 hours) as part of the Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND) program. The objective of this program is to address high bushfire and cyclone risk base stations that rely solely on mains power so that in the event of transmission line damage, service can be maintained for longer periods. A working group comprising WALGA, Western Power, Horizon Power, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Telstra, Vodafone, NBN and Optus has been established to develop the prioritised listing of the States 4,000+ towers for treatment. Current approved funding is anticipated to address approximately 200 of these towers and I can advise that all towers in bushfire prone areas of the City of Swan will be considered.

A separate funding package referred to as the Peri Urban Mobile Program has just been announced by the Commonwealth to address existing coverage quality and black spots in the peri-urban areas around national capital cities. The areas noted in your submission will be included in the working group's review. Note that both these Commonwealth programs require co-contribution funding from the State and the carriers. The working group is also assimilating the plans for delivery of 1,000 standalone power systems by Western Power and Horizon Power over the next five years into the programs noted above. Where standalone power improvements will not address the needs of towers



supporting both cellular and/or radio communications, these gaps are to be identified for standby and standalone power solutions that will be developed and trialled this year. Telstra is trialling a new standalone service in NSW in response to the Black Summer fires which will be included in our assessment process.

DFES is also coordinating the provision of fixed and portable satellite communications capability funded by the Commonwealth's STAND program. The City of Swan was invited to apply for fixed emergency satellite WiFi installations. The City's request for services to be established at Gidgegannup and Bullsbrook is being assessed by NBN and, assuming approval, will be installed by NBN and operational before the next fire season.

DFES has also applied for additional mobile and portable satellite communications devices for the State. An additional NBN SkyMuster truck was delivered to Perth early this year and was deployed to Geraldton to provide emergency communications at incident control centres in Geraldton and Kalbarri, as well as being deployed to Gingin when the network became congested. Portable flyaway satellite WiFi services have also been requested for all DFES regional offices for use during emergencies.

DFES retains a cache of satellite phones which are made available through Chain of Command approval at major incidents. You will be aware that rapid technology improvements over the past two years are now seeing satellite capability being provided in cellular phones which operate even in extreme atmospheric conditions, which has previously been a challenge for satellite phones. The attraction of this development is that should this technology be proven and robust, it can be accessed using latest generation cell phones at a significantly reduced cost. This capability is being assessed.

I can assure the Committee that DFES takes communications very seriously and, as demonstrated, has established resourcing and a plan to deliver improvement. Recommendations of the Committee will be included in post-incident reviews as noted.

#### *Tenure Blind Bush Fire Hazard Mitigation*

Regarding your second point, please be advised that DFES shares your views on the importance of a tenure-blind approach to bushfire hazard mitigation, and has introduced a number of measures to enhance levels of physical, on-the-ground reduction of bushfire risk to communities across the State. As you note, the management of physical bushfire risk is a shared responsibility with State Government agencies, local governments, organisations and private landholders all having important roles to play.

To support this sharing of responsibility, DFES recently introduced new Bush Fire Risk Treatment Standards in Western Australia to make it easier for people to protect their properties from bushfire. The new Standards reduce red tape for landowners and occupiers within bushfire prone areas, allowing them to make their properties safer by clearing vegetation within 20 metres of residential and public buildings without breaching other State or local government laws. Providing residents comply with the new Standards, they now have the legal authority to create a defensible space around their property, which research shows is one of the most effective methods of protecting properties from bushfires. The Standards apply to all bushfire-prone areas of Western Australia with the exception of areas with significant environmental or heritage



value. You can access the Standards, their exclusions, and the guide for applying them, from the DFES website, <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/bushfire/prepare/>.

In addition, DFES continues to expand and mature its Bushfire Risk Management (BRM) Planning Program, a state-wide initiative to support local governments across Western Australia to develop a contextualised BRM Plan to identify the bushfire risk to all key community assets, regardless of land tenure. There are currently 85 local governments participating in the BRM program, 51 of which have achieved a DFES Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) endorsed plan. I understand that the City of Swan has developed a BRM Plan, and is working toward achieving OBRM endorsement. To enhance support to translate BRM Plans to on-the-ground action, DFES will conduct a trial in 2021-22 to determine the benefits of utilising Bushfire Risk Mitigation Coordinators to assist in managing local government mitigation programs. The trial will involve 10 local governments from around the State and is expected to provide valuable insight into how local government BRM Plans can be effectively implemented in the future.

Additionally, as you may be aware, DFES administers the Mitigation Activity Fund Grants Program (MAFGP), which supports and incentivises the proactive treatment of extreme, very high and high bushfire risks on Crown Land vested in local governments. Since 2017, the MAFGP has allocated a total of \$23 million to 43 Local Governments to undertake 3161 mitigation treatments. This program has been instrumental in building greater local bushfire management capacity and reducing dangerous fuel loads on State-owned lands. DFES also manages a program of mitigation works on Unallocated Crown Land (UCL) and Unmanaged Reserves (UMR) within gazetted town sites on behalf of Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH).

I am also aware however, that tenure restrictions complicate and, sometimes limit, the implementation of effective landscape-scale bushfire risk management treatments. This is an issue that DFES continues to explore and is undertaking reviews of guidelines, standards and programs in this regard. Of specific note, the BRM Planning Guidelines are currently being reviewed to identify where improvements can be made. This will include looking at whether the current processes adequately identify priority areas for mitigation work and support their implementation. The points you raise regarding tenure-inclusive mitigation will be included in that review. The review team are also considering approaches used in other jurisdictions, and more broadly described in scientific literature, to see what lessons can be learned and approaches adopted for use in Western Australia. An Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) group has been established to aid the sharing of knowledge on bushfire risk management between jurisdictions, and DFES is represented on it.

Further, please be advised that a review of s33 Firebreak Notices is also being undertaken to identify shortcomings in notices and ensure consistent use of terminology. It is hoped this will lead to notices that are easier for land owners to understand and implement. In addition, there will also be the opportunity during the development of the consolidated Emergency Services Act to ensure that legislation to support contemporary mitigation measures is put in place. Stakeholders will be able to provide feedback on the consolidated Emergency Services Act when the Exposure Draft Bill is released for public consultation.

Thank you for sharing your views, and for your commitment to enhanced bushfire safety in Western Australia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C Waters', is written above the printed name.

**CRAIG WATERS AFSM  
ACTING COMMISSIONER**

*19* May 2021

*Attachments:*

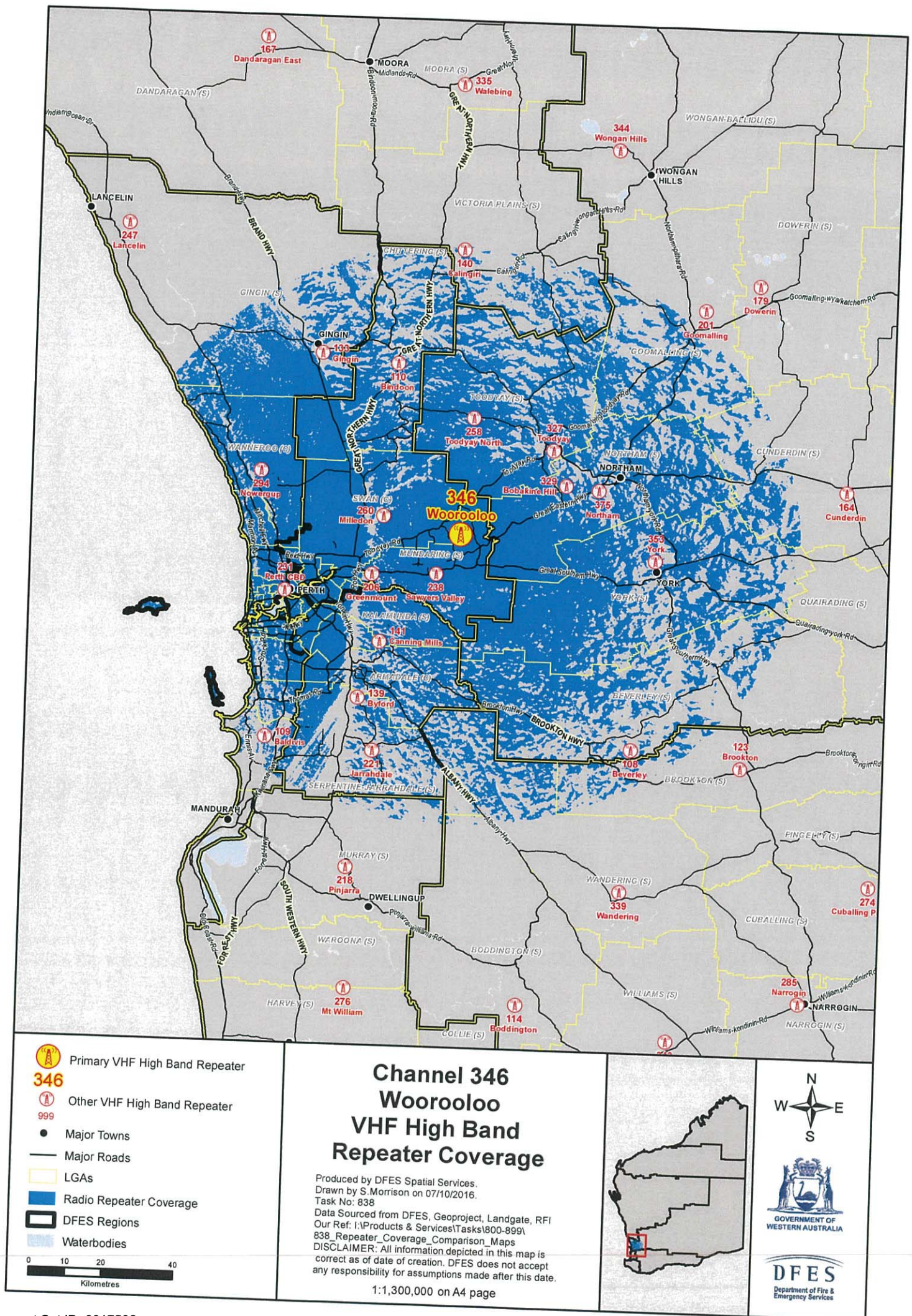
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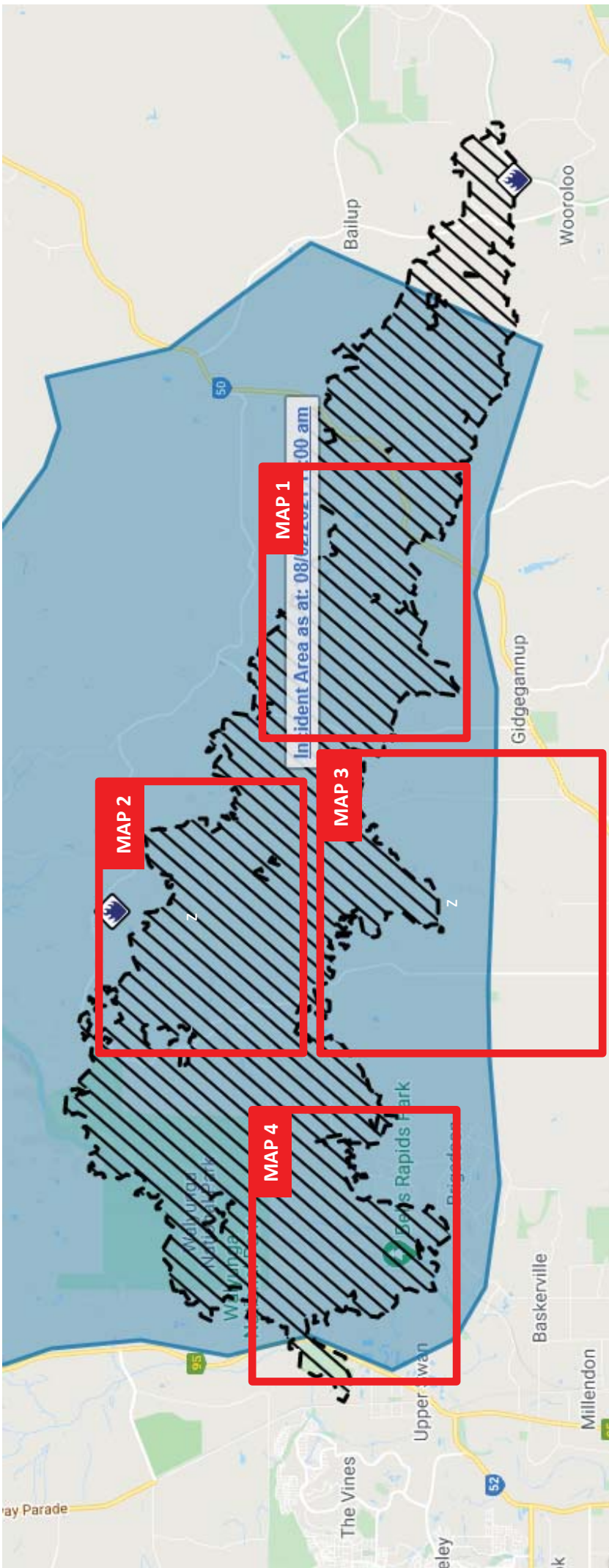




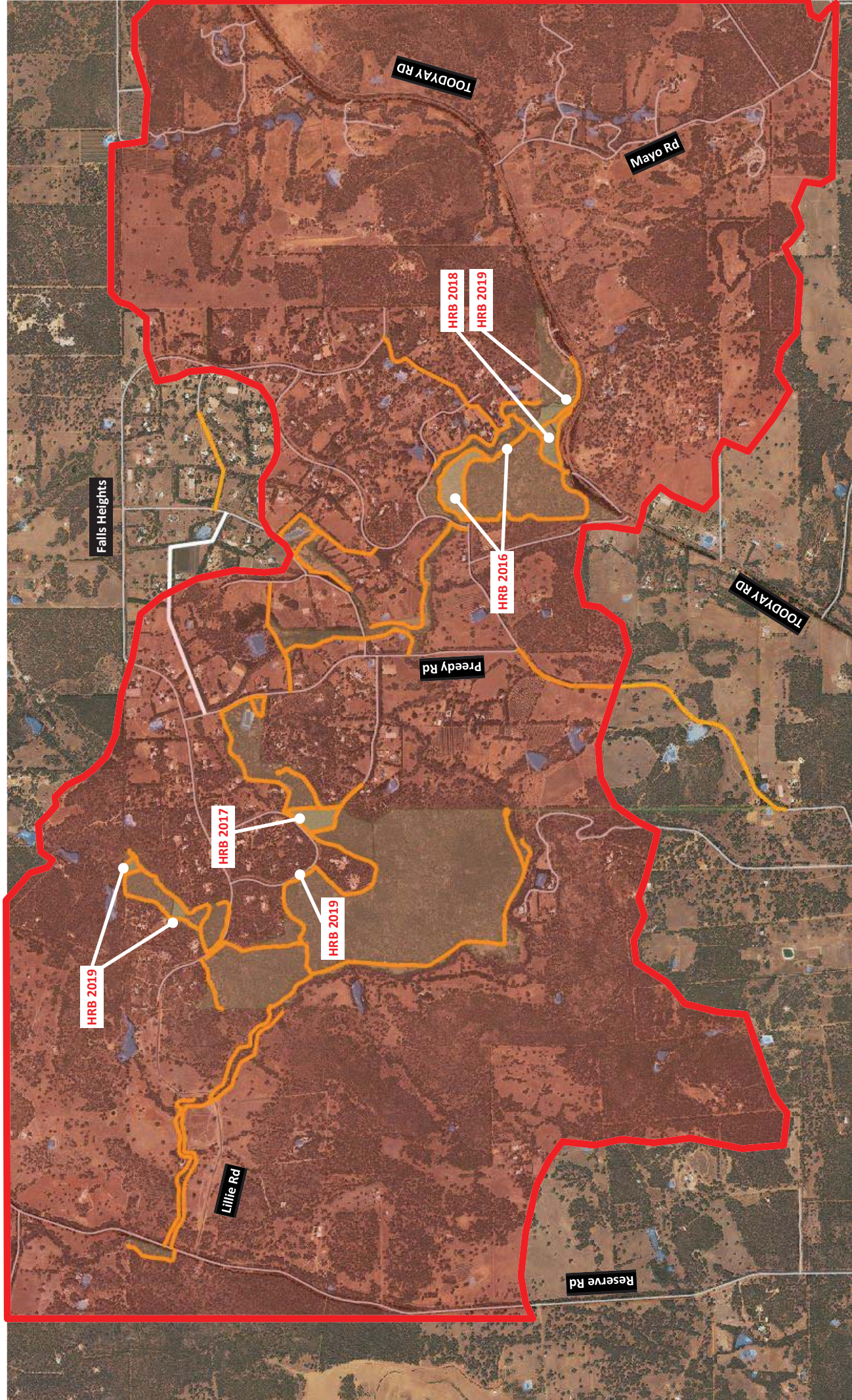




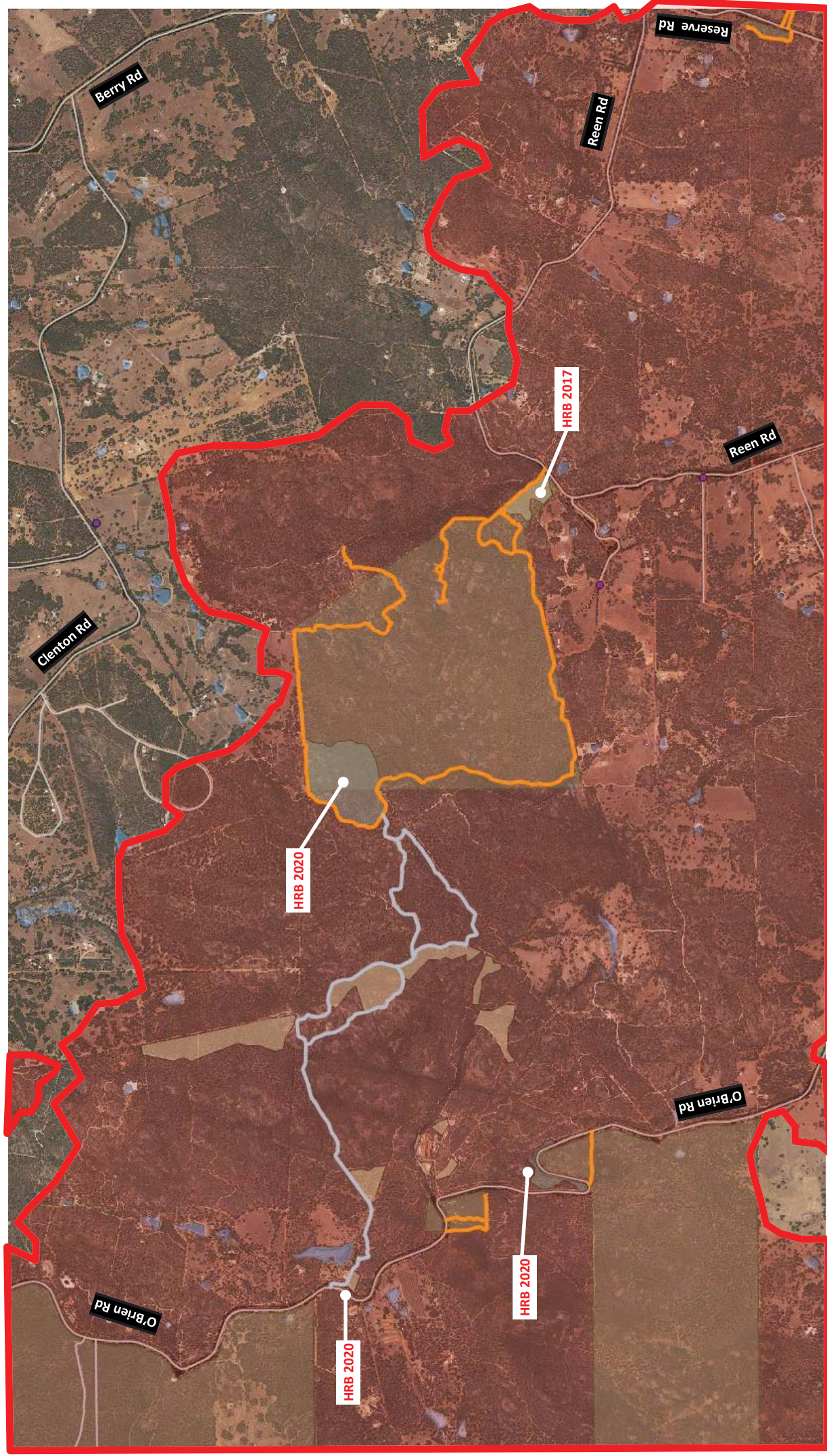




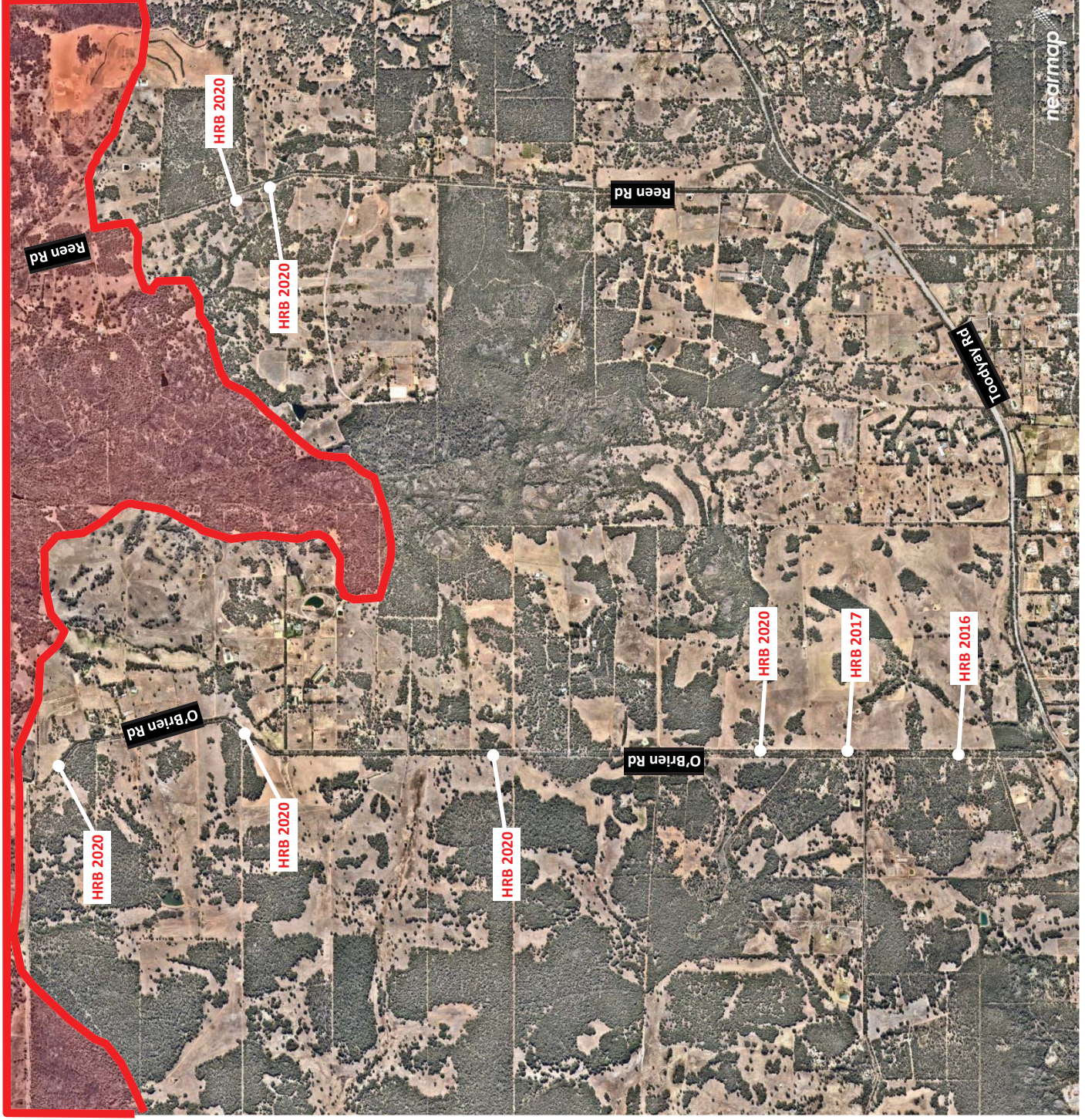




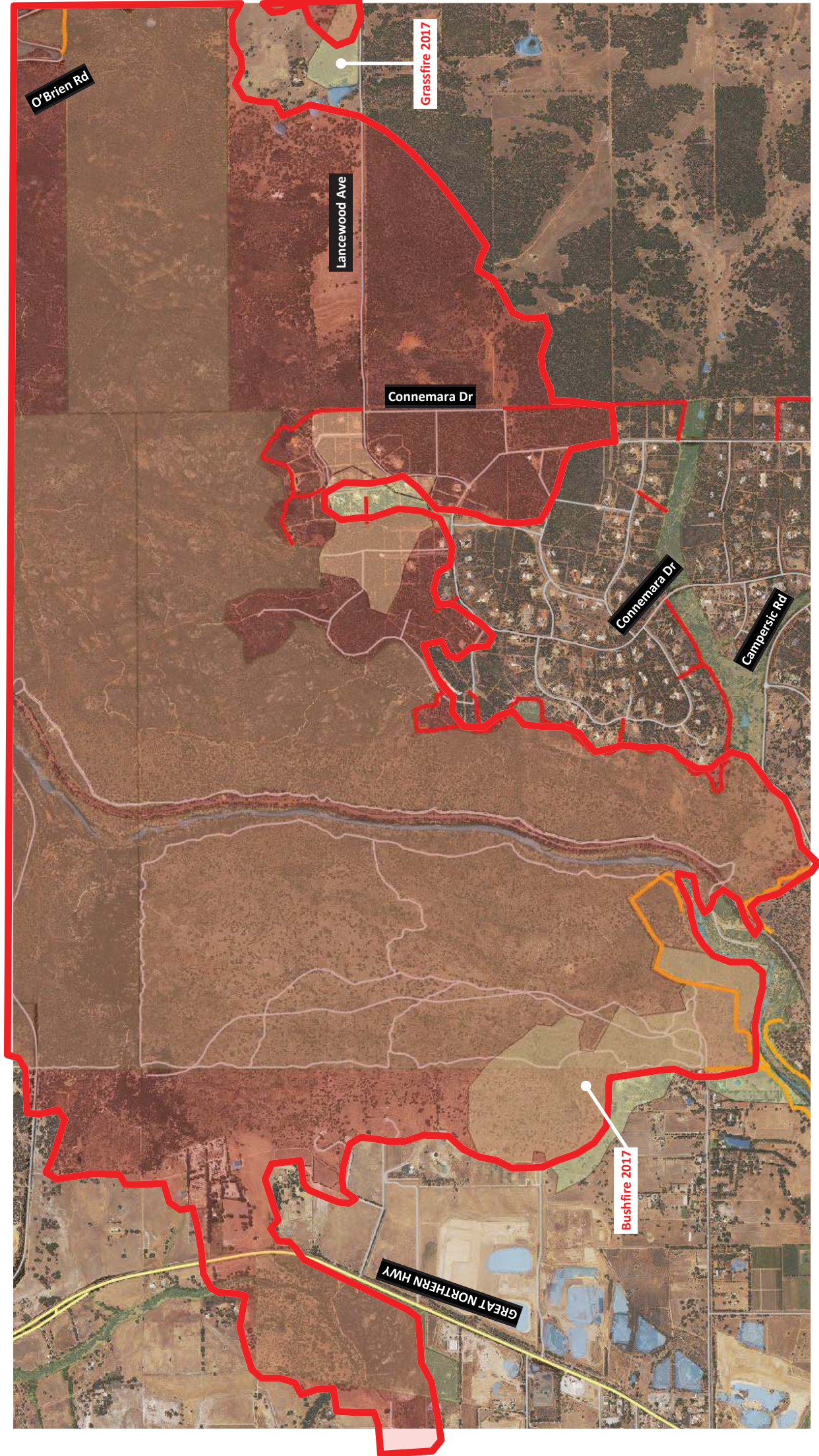










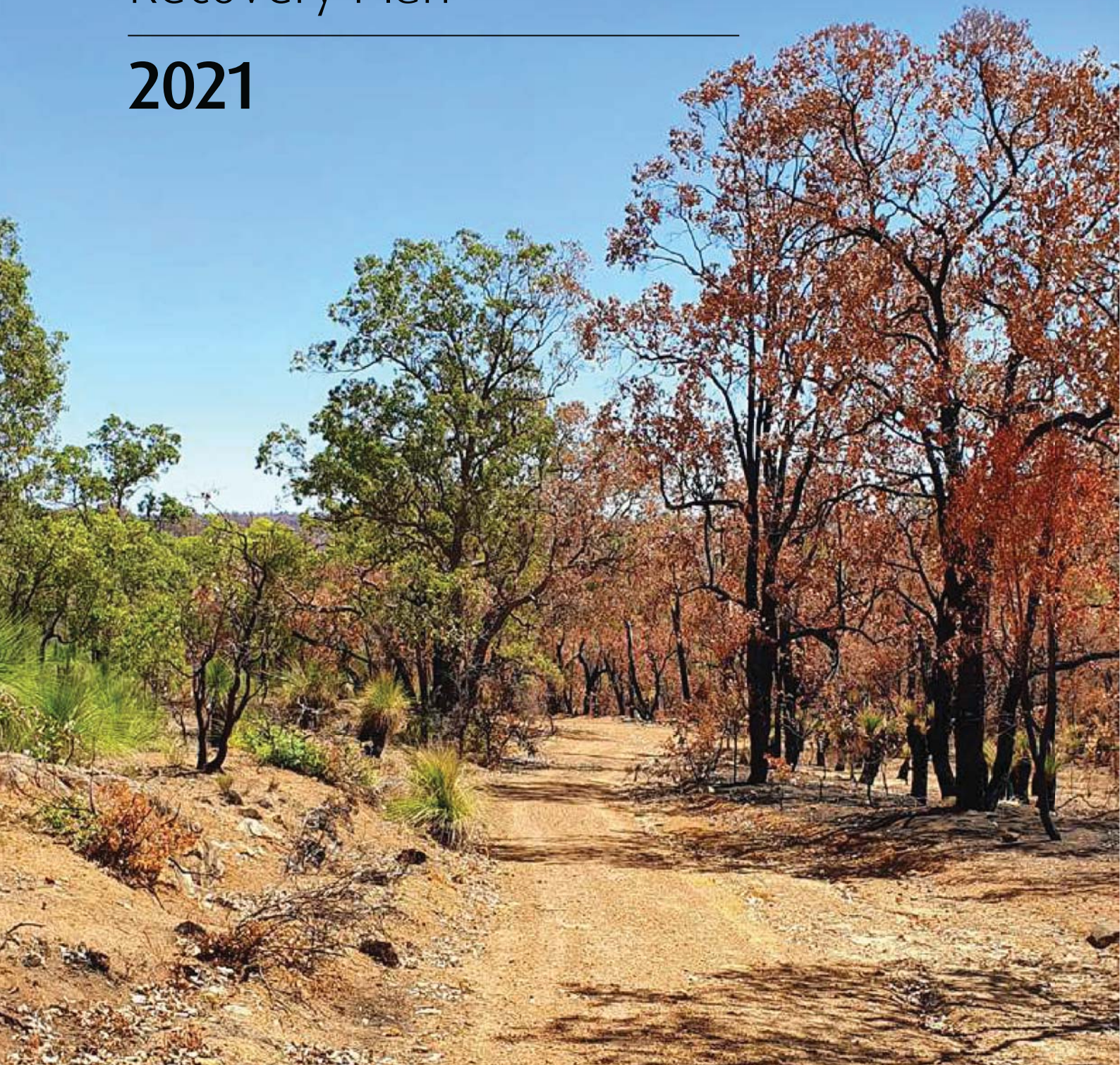




# Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery Plan


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## 2021



[www.swan.wa.gov.au](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au)

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Ngalak Maali Boodja Kaditj  
Wadjuk Moort Noongar Boodjara  
Baalap Kalyagool Noyyang  
Boodja Kep Moort  
Ngalak Kwabaduk Wirn  
Kabarli Bworan Kora Kora  
Yeyi Ngoongoolong

The City of Swan acknowledges the traditional custodians of this region, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and their descendants.

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# Overview

The City of Swan (the City) Local Bushfire Recovery Plan (the Plan) identifies the recovery actions, and sets out principles to guide decision making during each phase of the local communities recovery from the impacts of the 2021 Wooroloo Bushfires.

The bushfire started in the suburb of Wooroloo, which is located in the Shire of Mundaring, leading to the event being named the 'Wooroloo Bushfire.' Many significantly impacted properties were in Gidgegannup, with other significant community impacts throughout the Swan Valley, Bullsbrook, Ellenbrook, Aveley and The Vines within the City.

The Wooroloo Bushfire was the most significant natural disaster in the City in at least the last twenty years, with the recovery process expected to take at least one to two years.

The Plan outlines a series of short, medium and long-term actions to assist community recovery. A supporting action plan also sits alongside this guiding document, which will be updated as required, to enable the City to monitor and respond to community needs during the recovery process.

Figure 1 below, from the National Recovery Bushfire Agency's document named 'Journey to Recovery', shows how recovery plans at each level (local, state and territory) work together to create a strong national approach, supported by Commonwealth and the joint funding outlined in the Governance and Funding section of this Plan. The Wooroloo Local Bushfire Recovery Plan fits in the 'Local/Regional Bushfire Recovery Plan' category of the hierarchy.

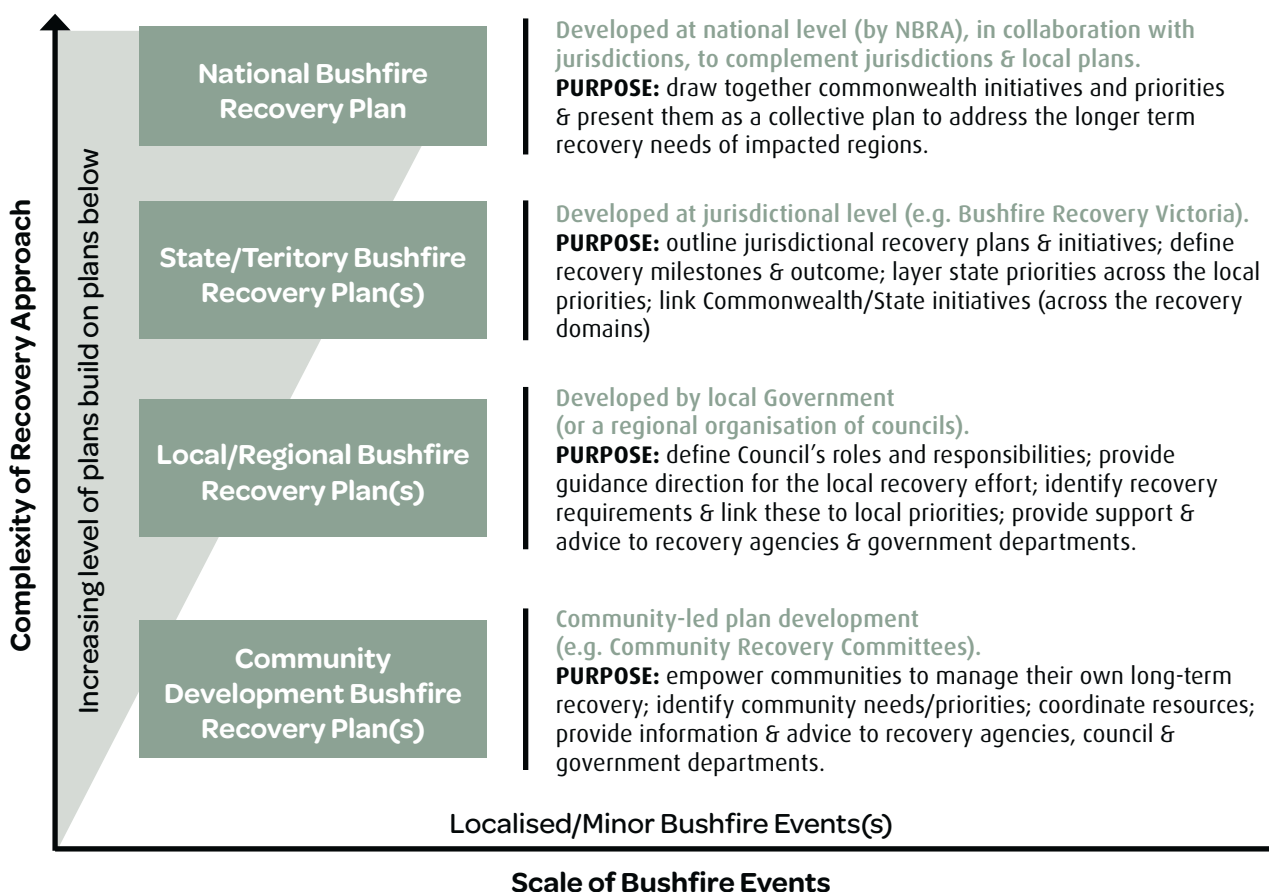


Figure 1 - Interaction of recovery plans, National Recovery Bushfire Agency website.



# Background

The Wooroloo Bushfire started at 12:02pm on Monday, February 1 2021. Initial responding fire crews observed a fast-moving grass and scrub fire, impacting properties in the Wooroloo area; they immediately shifted to asset protection in the area. The fire spread rapidly to the west and north-west with erratic fire behaviour and easterly winds driving the fire towards Gidgegannup. Wind changes to east-south-east resulted in the fire burning through Noble Falls Reserve, Tilden Park and other parts of Gidgegannup before spreading into the Walyunga National Park. Persistent winds from the east with both northern and southerly influences also threatened the Shady Hills subdivision in Bullsbrook, Upper Swan, Aveley, The Vines and Ellenbrook.

The bushfire impacts included the loss of 86 residential structures, power infrastructure, animal lives and road infrastructure. Loss of critical and essential power supplies resulted in the loss of water and communications infrastructure.

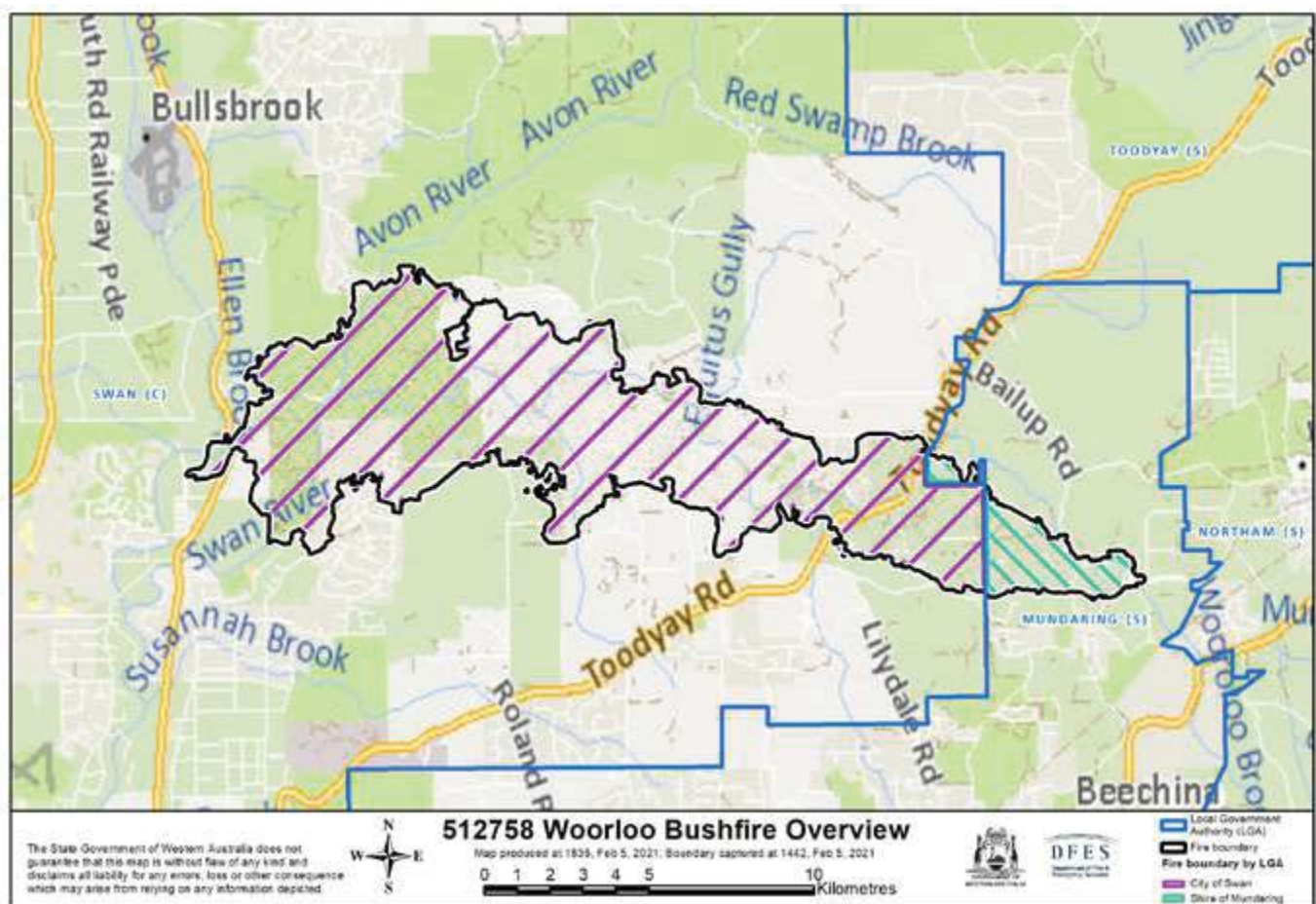


Figure 2 - Wooroloo Bushfire Overview Map

# Impact on the City

The State Government undertook an analysis of the immediate impacts the Wooroloo Bushfire had on the social, economic, natural and built environments. Key impacts identified are listed below.

## Social Environment

The directly affected area within the City of Swan (Figure 2) has a population of approximately 520 people, however more than 50,000 people reside within the area which was placed under an emergency warning. Figure 3 shows the location of people registered for the Wooroloo Bushfire. Some residents in the area needed to evacuate, others elected to stay and defend their properties. Key known impacts included:

- Several firefighters reported minor injuries, but most returned to fighting the fire after a recuperation period. No civilian injuries were reported at this time.
- The City activated its Animal Emergency Welfare Plan on February 1.
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) activated the State Support Plan Animal Welfare in Emergencies on February 2.
- A large number of agistment properties and farms in the City resulted in a significant effort for managing horses within the bushfire area.
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) estimates, as at February 10, they had attended to 756 animals; treating 34, finding 50 with minor injuries, euthanising 14 and finding 52 dead on arrival.
- The City of Swan supported the Department of Communities in operating three evacuation centres at Swan Active Midland, Beechboro Community Hub, and Brown Park Oval (Shire of Mundaring), with City staff in attendance 24 hours a day for the six days that the evacuation centres were open.
- On February 8 the Percy Cullen Pavilion and Oval was activated by the City of Swan to be used as the City's Community Bushfire Recovery Centre. This centre became a hub for more than twenty five support agencies including not-for-profit agencies, and insurance and banking companies alongside other local, state and federal government agencies.

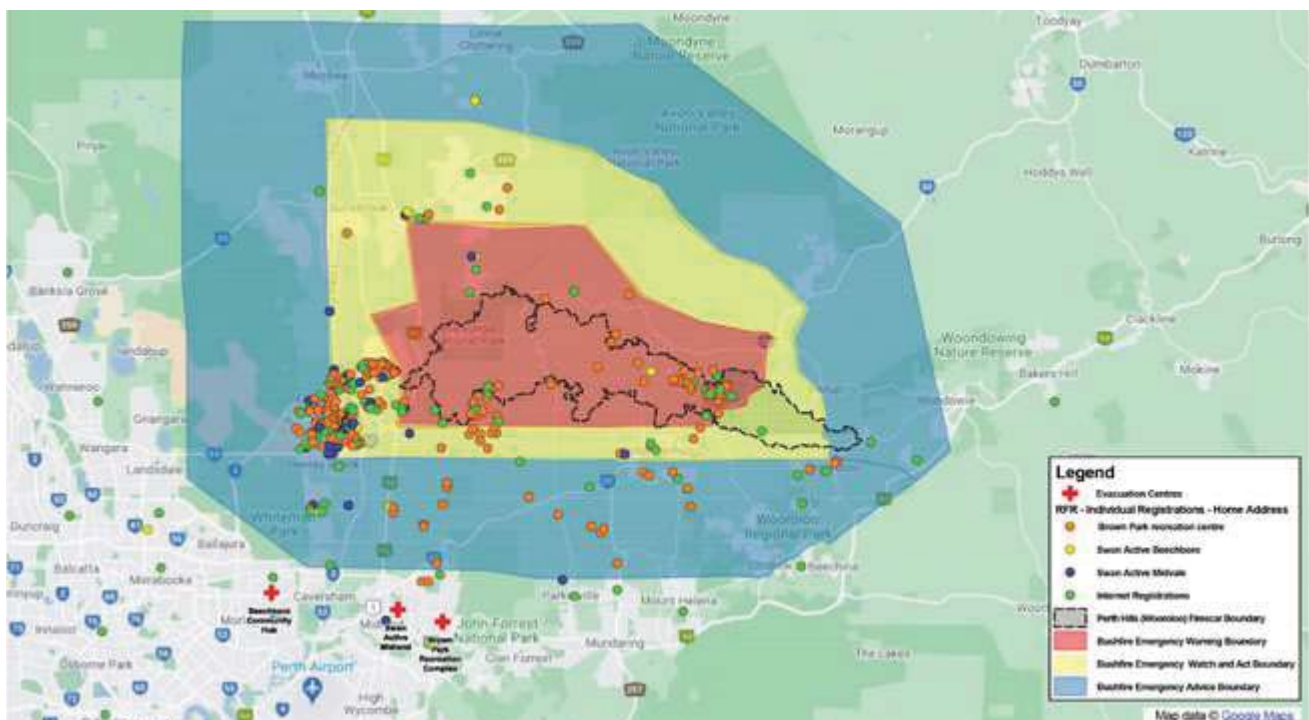


Figure 3 - Map of people registered for Wooroloo Bushfire





## Natural Environment

The bushfires heavily impacted City-managed natural environment sites including:

- Noble Falls Bushland
- Noble Falls Picnic Area
- Koorinal Vale Bridle Trail
- Tilden Park Bridle Trail South
- Tilden Park Bridle Trail North
- Tilden Park Fire Dam
- Charlie Miles Fire Dam
- Hargraves Crescent Bushland- Reserve
- Lillie Road Reserve
- Reserve 53480 Lillie Road
- Reserve Road Foreshore
- F R Berry Reserve
- O'Brien Road Bushland South
- O'Brien Road Bushland North
- Bells Rapids

Native vegetation on private landholdings, and verge areas, are also considered important environmental assets that were significantly impacted by the bushfires.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) reported no significant impacts on native wildlife despite the scale and size of the fire. The Western Swamp Tortoise Species within the Ellen Brook Nature Reserve is of significant importance. One dead tortoise was found, and one dehydrated, which was cared for by DBCA and returned to the Ellen Brook Nature Reserve.





## **Economic Environment**

The closure of key road and rail transport routes through the area resulted in significant impacts on commercial and industrial transport, with subsequent effects on local, regional and state-scale businesses.

The bushfire, and subsequent road closures and evacuations, also impacted many agricultural businesses and farming properties, as well as horse studs. Agricultural impacts also extended to vineyards and orchards.

According to the Australian Exposure Information Platform (AEIP) there are 185 businesses registered within the bushfire area in the City of Swan.

Most local businesses are now able to operate. There are some local businesses unable to operate where their properties have been damaged or lost.

The effect on the amenity of riding and walking trails may also impact on tourism in the area.

## **Built Environment**

Damage to the built environment occurred throughout the incident area. Damage included residential buildings, non-residential buildings such as sheds and warehouses, and agricultural, industrial and commercial buildings.

There were 203 residential dwellings with a reconstruction value of \$98,190,000 within the incident area in the City of Swan at the time of the fire. Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) identified 80 destroyed residential dwellings within the City.

Due to the age of residences in the impacted area, it is likely that a small percentage will contain some asbestos and copper chrome arsenic (CCA) treated timber used during construction.



## Transport Infrastructure

The following key transport infrastructure was impacted by the bushfire:

- Toodyay Road
- Great Northern Highway
- Tonkin Highway (restricted speed limits)
- East-West Rail Line (Avon Valley Rail Line)
- North-South Rail Line (along Railway Parade Bullsbrook)

## Power Infrastructure

Significant damage was caused to power infrastructure. The resultant loss of power impacted on radio and telephone communications, National Broadband Network (NBN) and water supply infrastructure.

Shared radio communications sites impacted through the loss of power caused communications challenges. To provide alternative communications channels, mobile repeaters for communications were established in partnership by DFES and DBCA.

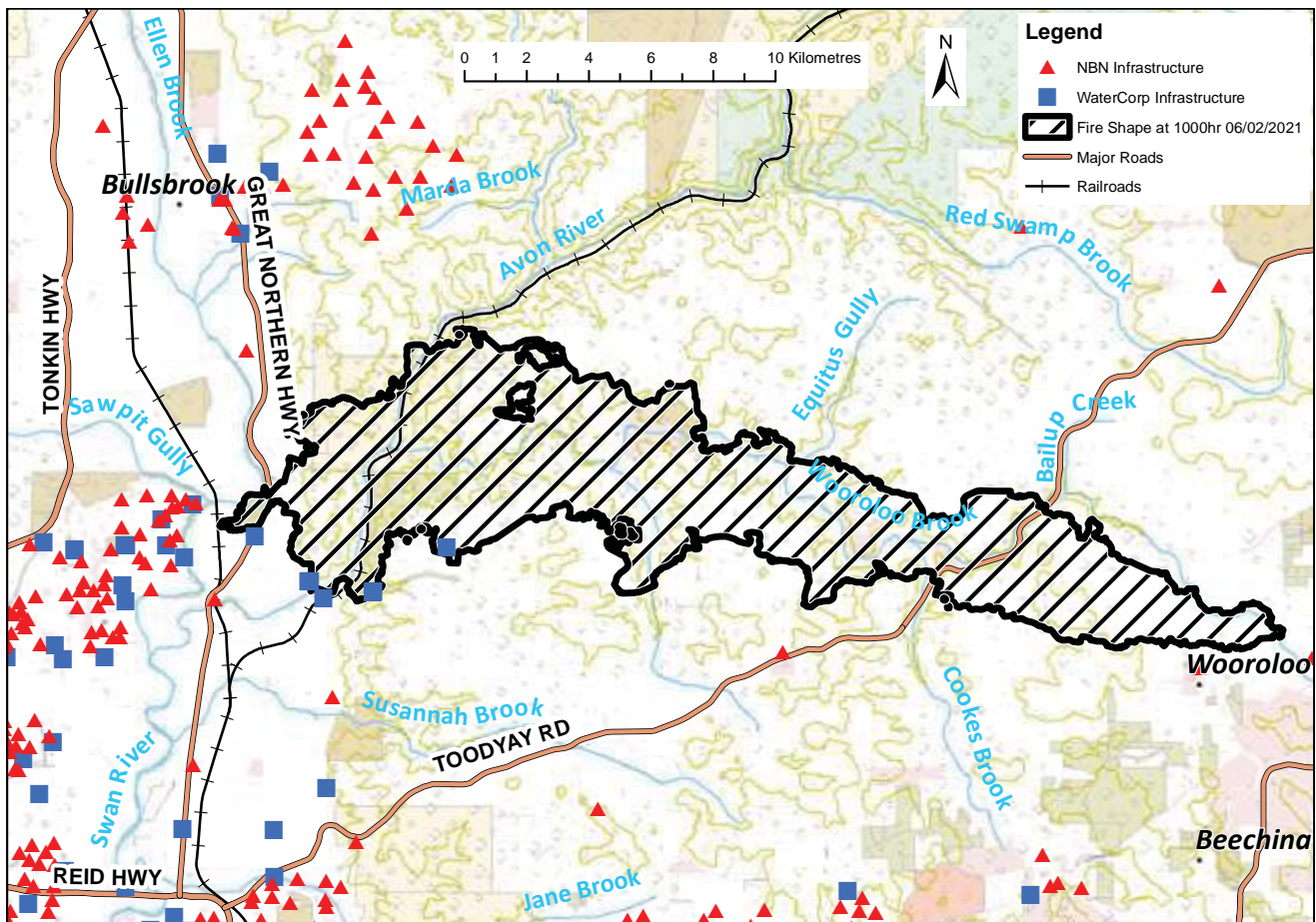


Figure 4 - Wooroloo Bushfire Built Environment Impacts



# Disaster Recovery

Recovery is a shared responsibility between federal, state and local governments, to assess impacts, engage with the affected communities and plan to meet their needs. It is critical that recovery is community-led because recovery has different meanings to different people. There is no single experience no single way for individuals or communities to recover.

In Australia, we use the National Principles for Disaster Recovery to guide our efforts, approach, planning and decision-making:

**[www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/recovery](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/recovery)**

The main elements of these principles, as set out in the National Bushfire Recovery Agency's Journey to recovery publication, are summarised on the next page.

## What is recovery?

According to the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience:

Recovery is the restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and 'build back better', to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.





## Principles of recovery

These principles from the Journey to Recovery, act like a checklist to inform actions and ensure they meet community needs.

### OUTLINE THE PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY

<b>Understand the context</b>	Successful recovery is based on an understanding of community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.
<b>Recognise complexity</b>	Successful recovery is responsible to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community.
<b>Use community-led approaches</b>	Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.
<b>Coordinate all activities</b>	Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.
<b>Communicate effectively</b>	Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.
<b>Recognise and build capacity</b>	Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.

## Phases of recovery

The Journey to Recovery outlines the phases of recovery as follows:

PHASE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Response</b>	The help provided during or immediately after an emergency, providing immediate safety and security to those who have been impacted (including food, emergency shelter and medical care)
<b>Relief</b>	Short-term assistance, including material support, short to medium-term accommodation, and access to mental health support that contributes to the recovery and resilience of communities.
<b>Recovery</b>	The coordinated process of restoring emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing, and rebuilding infrastructure into the medium and longer-term, and building resilience.





## Community-led recovery

To ensure community-led recovery, national recovery spans all four domains as shown in the following diagram from the Journey to Recovery.



Figure 5 - Domains of Recovery, Journey to Recover

## Journey to recovery

Journey to recovery considers that people respond to disaster in different ways and over different time ago through immediately after a disaster.

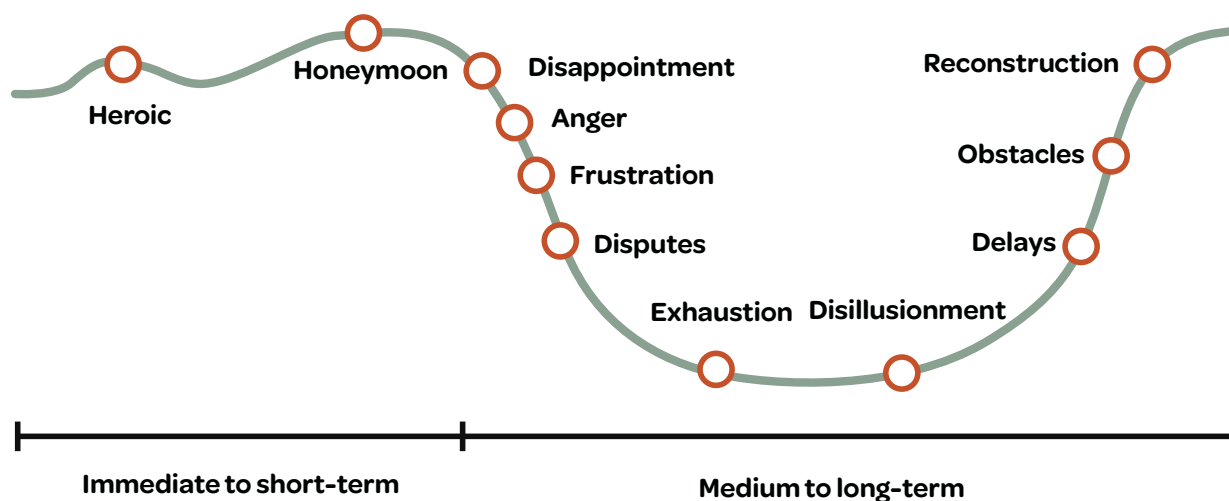


Figure 6 - Human Experience of Recovery, Journey to Recovery

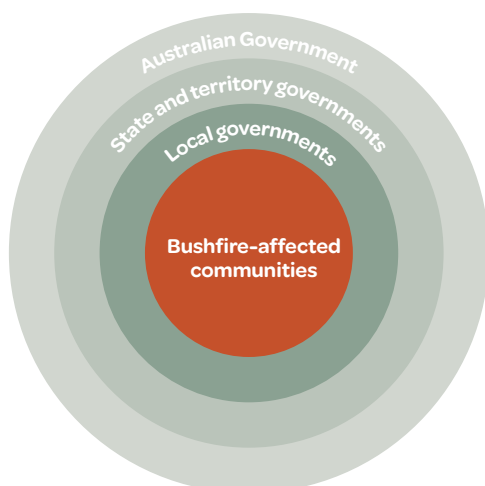
It is important to realise that, just as actions in the recovery domains are not necessarily linear nor sequential, people and communities may move through these phases at different paces, meaning they are ready for new recovery actions at different times.





## Planning the journey to recovery

Recovery planning happens in a 'system of systems'. The journey starts and ends with bushfire impacted communities and is supported by each layer of government and their relevant responsibilities, as illustrated in the figure below from the Journey to Recovery.



Australian Government	Enables and supports recovery through additional funding and resources
State and territory governments	Consolidate and support planning activity across the jurisdiction
Local governments	Develop local plans, based on community needs
Bushfire-affected communities	Identify needs, actions and priorities
National Bushfire Recovery Agency	Builds and maintains partnerships to support recovery efforts

Figure 7 - The recovery planning system, Journey to Recovery

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery guides our efforts, approach, planning and decision-making for the Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery effort.





# Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery

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## Recovery structure

While the Wooroloo bushfire was being brought under control, the City appointed a Local Recovery Coordinator and formed a Local Recovery Coordination Group. To progress recovery efforts a joint recovery group was established with the Shire of Mundaring together with various sub-committees focused on key recovery issues. The recovery structure, including the connection to the State Recovery Coordination Group, is described below. Figure 8 lists the groups involved in the local recovery structure.

## **Governance and Funding**

Immediately following the bushfires, communities, the corporate sector, and governments provided financial support as follows:

- The Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund (LMDRF) was established in conjunction with the State Government. The LMDRF provides financial assistance to individuals for the relief of distress, suffering and personal hardships, brought about by any disaster or emergency within WA declared by the Western Australian Government, or for which the LMDRF Board considers assistance is warranted. The City of Swan Finance sub-team is administering this program, in collaboration with the City of Perth.
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet Bushfire Relief Payments (DPC) – funded by State Government and administered by the City of Swan. Emergency funding of \$4,000 to those who have lost their homes, and \$2,000 to people whose houses have been damaged.
- Federal Government, through Services Australia, announced Disaster Recovery Payments and Allowance of up to \$1,000 per eligible adult and \$400 per child as well as a short term allowance for a maximum of 13 weeks.
- Local Government can claim financial assistance for the purpose of disaster relief and recovery from the Commonwealth via the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements of Western Australia (DRFAWA).
- The City of Swan Council has also approved a number of other initiatives to provide relief to victims of the bushfire, such as rate relief and reduced or waived planning and building fees.



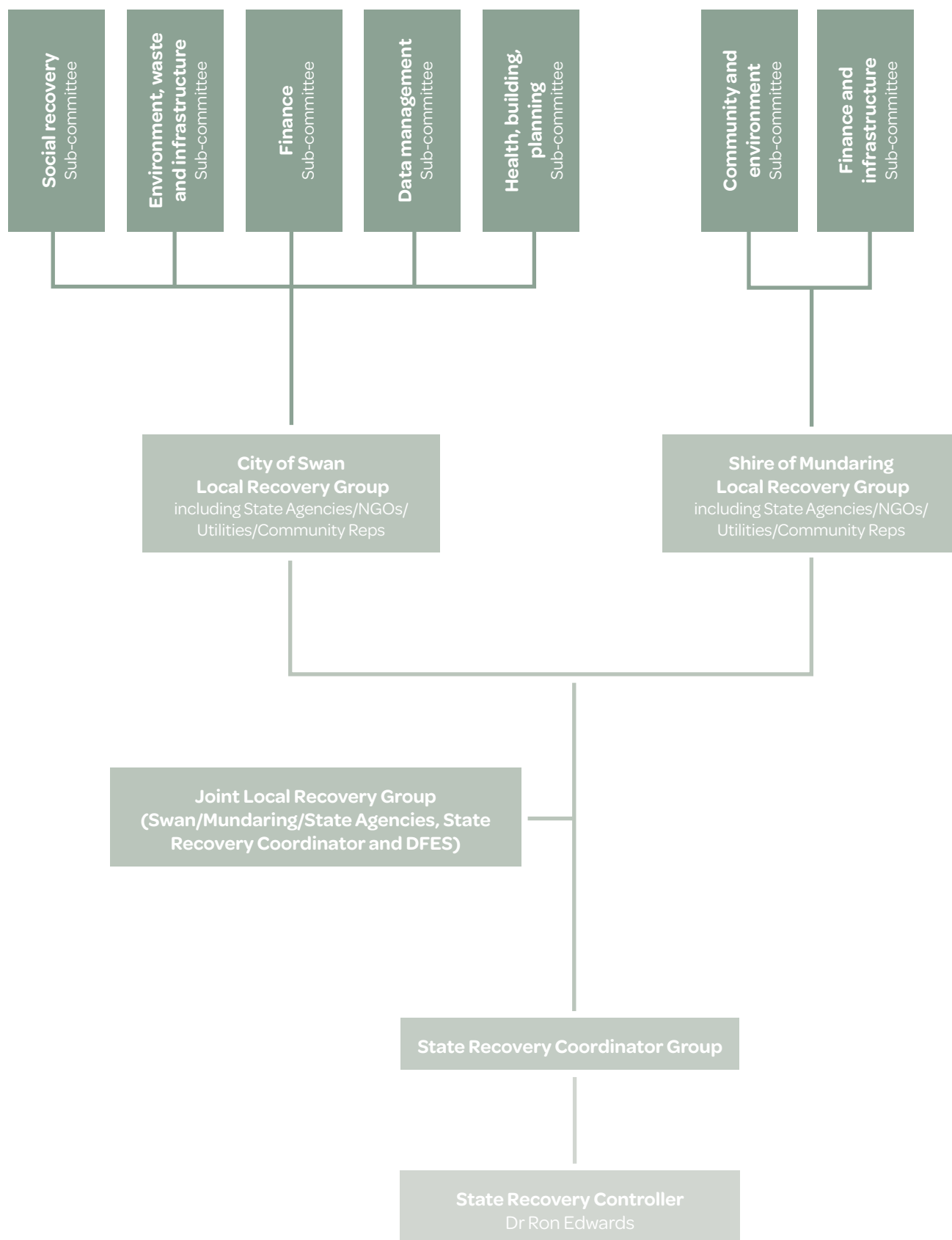


Figure 8 – Local Bushfire Recovery Structure

# Focus Areas and Purpose

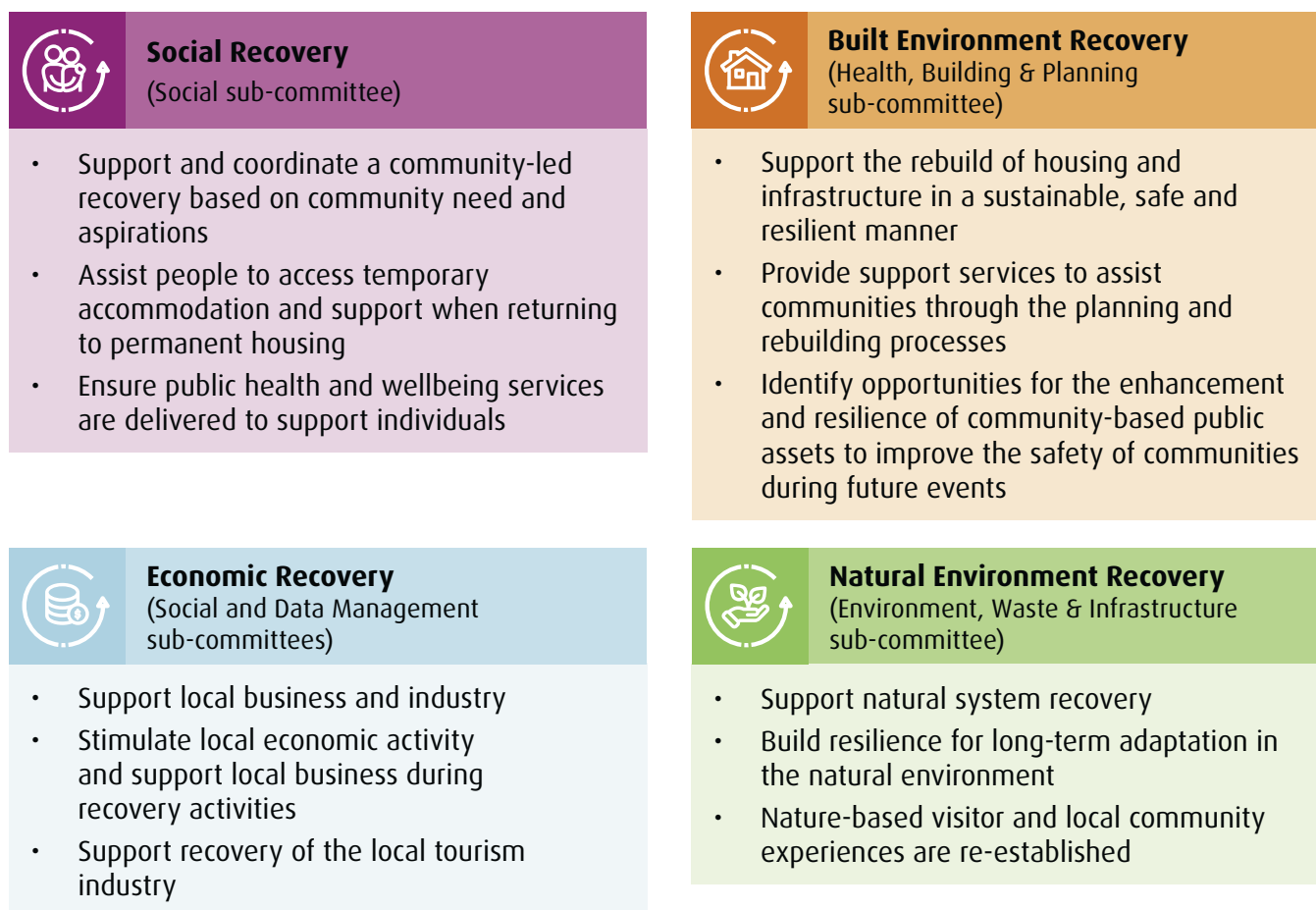
The Wooroloo Bushfire Local Recovery Plan guides and supports the City's overall approach to community recovery.

The City identified focus areas to help prioritise and guide the response and recovery in the Swan community. These are aligned with the DFES Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFAWA funding). Each focus area also has an identified purpose linked to the community priorities of:



## Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy under each of the identified focus areas are:



# Principles and Delivery Timeframe

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The City's recovery focus is divided into three phases being short-term, long-term, and ongoing review phases.

## **Short-term Phase (Adapt)**

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The priority of this phase is to focus on adapting to the impacts of the Wooroloo Bushfires. The following principles apply to the short-term phase:

- Provide support and civic leadership to our community
- Where safe, re-open closed facilities and infrastructure within the affected areas
- Maintain positive communication and a strong connection with our community
- Maintain productive communications between the City of Swan and City of Mundaring to address shared issues and be responsive and adaptable.

## **Long-term Phase (Recovery)**

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This phase focuses on aiding our social, built, natural and economic environment:

- Support social, built, natural and economic environment restoration
- Support resilience activities within the local community
- Consider the ongoing impacts and needs of the groups affected (landowners, local residents and businesses).
- Reorient appropriate City resourcing to recovery efforts and align recovery activities to City operations as part of the Annual Business Planning process.
- Seek opportunities to aid and promote local tourism.

## **Review Phase (Learnings)**

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This phase focuses on learning from the City's recovery efforts to be better prepared for future emergencies and to identify those activities and actions that will, if implemented permanently, enhance the City's operations. The following principles apply to this phase:

- Critically analyse the effectiveness of recovery initiatives
- Identify opportunities for all stakeholders to be better prepared for future emergencies
- Identify measures to mitigate impacts of future emergencies on all stakeholders
- Build on the resilience and innovation strategies developed during the recovery.



# Bushfire Local Recovery Action Plan

Appendix 1 sets out the specific actions that will facilitate recovery, which take into consideration the objectives, principles and delivery timeframes. Appendix 1 is subject to modification at any time.

APPENDIX 1 - CITY OF SWAN BUSHFIRE LOCAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN						
KEY FOCUS AREA	COMMUNITY OUTCOME	ACTION	WHO	TIMEFRAME*		
				SHORT	MED	LONG
Community Engagement	The impacted community are well informed and engaged in decisions on social recovery	Establish place based social recovery committees in Gidgegannup, Bullsbrook, Ellenbrook and Swan Valley	City of Swan			
		Recruit a recovery team to engage with community and facilitate social recovery committees	City of Swan Red Cross DoC			
		Conduct a community outreach program to ascertain local need and coordinate support	Red Cross			
		Establish Bushfire Recovery Centre for community members to access information and support	City of Swan			
		Provide information to support recovery through various channels.(Website/Social Media/Hard Copy)	City of Swan			
		Support the community to provide feedback and to share information	City of Swan			
		Coordinate the distribution of information about social support, community events and donations	City of Swan			

SHORT 0-6 months    MEDIUM 6-12 months    LONG 12-24 months

# APPENDIX 1 - CITY OF SWAN BUSHFIRE LOCAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

KEY FOCUS AREA	COMMUNITY OUTCOME	ACTION	WHO	TIMEFRAME*		
				SHORT	MED	LONG
Donations management	Grants and other donations are distributed equitably and quickly to affected residents	Facilitate provision of funds received from Lord Mayors Distress Fund, Premiers Grants and other grants	City of Swan City of Perth Department of Premier & Cabinet.			
		Liaise with CWA, Gidgegannup Recreation Club and other agencies facilitating physical donations to affected residents	CWA GRC City of Swan			
		Facilitate small grants and other donations such as water tanks directly to the community	City of Swan			
		Manage volunteers and hold recognition events	City of Swan			
		Create and maintain a donations register	City of Swan			
Community led activities, support and events	The community have ownership and are leading the delivery of recovery activities	Coordinate the provision of funding and support to local groups to deliver specific community recovery activities	City of Swan			
		Encourage local groups to access funding opportunities to support existing programs and events	City of Swan Red Cross			
		Connect community members with existing groups and support agencies	City of Swan Red Cross			
		Facilitate the use of local volunteers to provide small community connection activities to support health and wellbeing	Community City of Swan			
		Deliver community event/information/activity sessions, which encourage community connection	City of Swan Community Red Cross			
		Ensure that community leaders and bushfire affected residents are engaged on working groups and committees	City of Swan			
		Deliver regular face to face updates on recovery, at community activity/information sessions	City of Swan Red Cross			

SHORT 0-6 months MEDIUM 6-12 months LONG 12-24 months





## APPENDIX 1 - CITY OF SWAN BUSHFIRE LOCAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

KEY FOCUS AREA	COMMUNITY OUTCOME	ACTION	WHO	TIMEFRAME*		
				SHORT	MED	LONG
Social Support	The community have the capacity and support to manage recovery	Deliver recovery readiness forums to the community	Red Cross			
		Provide case management and psych-social support to impacted individuals and family members	DoC			
		Provide disaster trauma recovery support and information	Red Cross DoC			
		Provide information, referral and support to individuals to access psycho-social support, housing or emergency relief	City of Swan DoC Red Cross Community			
Coordination of Support	Community support is provided to the community in a coordinated way	Develop a bushfire donation system which connects donations with people in most need	City of Swan Community			
		Develop a register of local services who can provide social support to impacted communities	City of Swan Red Cross			
		Facilitate the delivery of bushfire relief payments to impacted communities	City of Swan			
		Coordinate the provision of volunteers to bushfire recovery activities	City of Swan Community			

SHORT 0-6 months    MEDIUM 6-12 months    LONG 12-24 months



# APPENDIX 1 - CITY OF SWAN BUSHFIRE LOCAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

KEY FOCUS AREA	COMMUNITY OUTCOME	ACTION	WHO	TIMEFRAME*		
				SHORT	MED	LONG
Business Development	The business community are supported in recovery	Advocate for a small business recovery grant through the Lord Mayors appeal	City of Swan Community			
		Conduct business development workshops for local business to encourage recovery	City of Swan			
		Deliver a business networking event with local business chamber	City of Swan Community			
		Facilitate a co-working opportunities for home businesses who have lost homes	City of Swan Community			
Environmental Programs	The community are actively involved in environmental recovery	Deliver community planting days in areas needing revegetation	Community Environmental Groups City of Swan DBCA			
		Conduct environmental awareness workshops	Community Environmental Groups City of Swan DBCA			
		Create information sheets on topical environmental issues	Community Environmental Groups City of Swan DBCA			
		Provide support to deliver a nesting box initiative	Community Environmental Groups City of Swan			
Environmental Restoration	Restoration and revegetation of local environment	Weed control	City of Swan Community			
		Private and community land restoration	City of Swan Community			
		Ensure that bridle trails and walks are made safe, repaired and reopened in a timely manner to support social recreation	City of Swan			
		Provide support with removal of green waste from private properties	City of Swan			
		Provision and management of Mulch	City of Swan Community			

SHORT 0-6 months MEDIUM 6-12 months LONG 12-24 months

# APPENDIX 1 - CITY OF SWAN BUSHFIRE LOCAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

KEY FOCUS AREA	COMMUNITY OUTCOME	ACTION	WHO	TIMEFRAME*		
				SHORT	MED	LONG
Animal Welfare	Local animal management issues are resolved	Provide support to stock feed volunteers and cover fuel costs for machinery and vehicles	City of Swan Community			
		Provide stock feed to volunteers for affected community where donations have dried up	City of Swan Community			
		Support the coordination of veterinary first aid	City of Swan Veterinary Association Animal welfare groups			
		Stray stock are reunited with owners in a timely and efficient manner	City of Swan			
Communications	Restoration and improvement of local communications	Restoration and improvement of communications	Service providers			
		Advocacy to state and federal governments regarding improvements to the local communications network	City of Swan Resident Associations			
Road Infrastructure	Restoration of local road networks	Inspection and restoration of local road networks including signage	Main Roads, City of Swan			
Mitigation	Confirmation of mitigation activities prior and following the bushfire	Review of approaches to bushfire mitigation from lessons learnt during bushfire	DFES City of Swan			
Private Property Restoration	Support and assistance with property restoration	City to support DWER (state government) led cleanup initiative	City of Swan			
		City to support Blaze-Aid, Disaster Relief Australia, Army and other agencies offering support on private property restoration	City of Swan			

SHORT 0-6 months MEDIUM 6-12 months LONG 12-24 months

## APPENDIX 1 - CITY OF SWAN BUSHFIRE LOCAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

KEY FOCUS AREA	COMMUNITY OUTCOME	ACTION	WHO	TIMEFRAME*		
				SHORT	MED	LONG
Building & Planning	Advice, information and support through the building and planning process	Provide community information and support regarding the rebuilding process	City of Swan			
		Provide information and support regarding Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessments and their interaction with building and planning processes	City of Swan DFES			
		Ensure that relevant technical staff are stationed at the Recovery Centre	City of Swan			
		Prioritise those impacted by the bushfire for additional support during the rebuild process	City of Swan			
Rebuild Support	Use of local knowledge and support during rebuild process	Conduct workshops to share information between local residents rebuilding	City of Swan			
		Advocate to relevant peak bodies and the state government to prioritise support with rebuilding from the building industry	City of Swan			
Art and Culture	The community have the opportunity to express themselves creatively and can share stories	Develop community art projects with local schools and community	City of Swan Community			
		Plan for a public art installation to signify the Wooroloo Bushfires and community strength	City of Swan Community			
		Conduct storytelling projects to collect local stories of the bushfire	City of Swan Red Cross Community			
Data and Information Management	Record and understand what has occurred	Map the variety of data sources with information related to the fire	City of Swan			
		Provide residents with timely and accurate information	City of Swan			
		Review and analyse data for learnings and improvements	City of Swan DFES			

### Abbreviations

DFES	Department of Fire and Emergency Services
DOC	Department of Communities
CWA	Country Women's Association
GRC	Gidgegannup Recreation Club
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

SHORT 0-6 months    MEDIUM 6-12 months    LONG 12-24 months

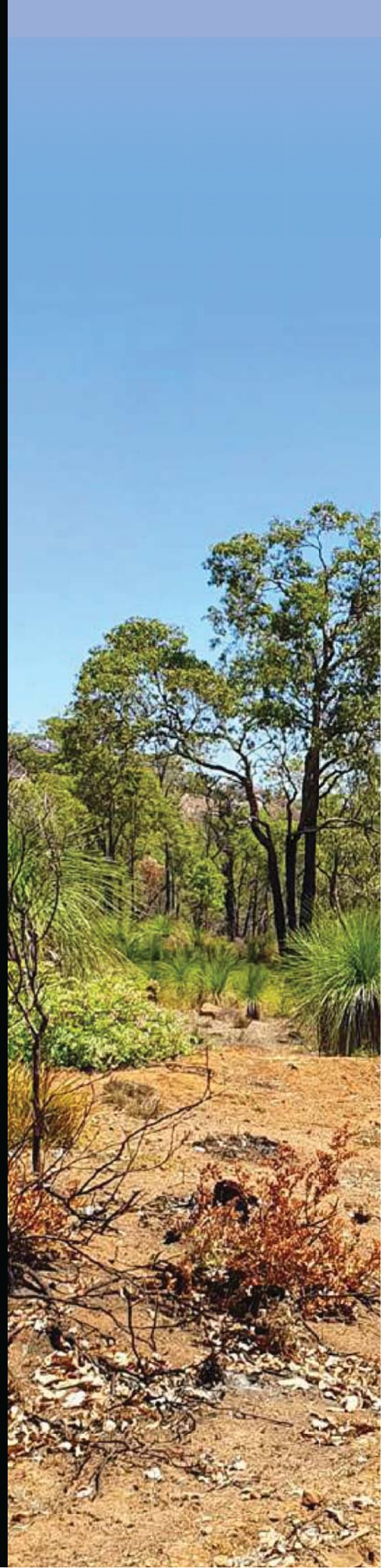


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This document can be made available in  
alternative formats on request.



## **Community Groups, Key Initiatives and Partnerships (alphabetical order)**

### **Australian Army**

On Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 Army personnel from the 13<sup>th</sup> Brigade were deployed for two weeks to assist with tree felling, removal of rubbish (haulage), general clean up duties and removal of damaged fencing, primarily on private property. Between 15 and 25 soldiers were deployed to assist with these tasks with Army working under the direction of the City Local Recovery Team and alongside other organisations that were also lending support, during this deployment the army was based at RAAF base Pearce.

### **Bendigo Bank Mundaring**

Volunteer board members, staff and the bank have provided in kind and financial support in organising the series of Community Dinners and Updates. These were held originally on a fortnightly basis and then in consultation with community monthly. These are ongoing and provide the opportunity for the City and Shire to provide timely updates on recovery services and information. Guest speakers are also in attendance to cover a variety of topical subjects. These events typically attract about 100 guests per month. Parkycare Volunteers prepare the food that is paid for by the bank

### **Blazeaid**

Blazeaid volunteers assisted 168 properties replacing boundary fencing by the time they finished their deployment on 30 June, 2021 utilising 356 volunteers registered conducting a total of 2774 days' work with 89 kilometres of fencing cleared and 130 kilometres of fencing erected. This service was greatly appreciated by the local community.

### **CWA and Gidgegannup Recreation Club Volunteers**

Fire affected residents could visit the volunteers who were running a supplies storeroom from Percy Cullen Pavilion at the Bushfire Community Recovery Centre. Free work wear and work boots, clothing for adults and children, stationary and school supplies, food and meals, tools, toys and fencing supplies were available, at no cost.

The storeroom was open at the same time as the Bushfire Community Recovery Centre and affected residents were welcomed to have a cup of tea and a talk too. This also enabled those accessing the donations to make vital supporting connections at the recovery centre and vice versa. With staff from the adjoining buildings being in regular communication and referring residents on and providing welfare assistance and support.

The CWA also opened funding of up to \$500 for emergency needs to all affected residents.

### **Department of Communities (Doc)**

The Department of Communities established the three Evacuation Centres and attended the Bushfire Community Recovery Centre from day one. Department of Communities are now co-located with City Recovery Team and Red Cross three days a week where there are positive relationships and synergy between agencies. Communities' staff also provided support to residents during the Authority to Act site inspections and demolitions. Other assistance provided has included documentation and identification replacement assistance, referrals to counselling, referrals to community support organisations, advocacy and on-going case management while also providing support at all Bushfire Recovery Community events and hosting informal weekly morning teas in

Gidgegannup for all residents to attend and speak with Communities, local government and Red Cross staff while also building their local community support networks.

#### **Disaster Relief Australia – DRA**

Received 105 Requests for assistance and 81 completed and 24 outstanding when DRA stood down April 24th. Redeployed in early August and currently completing outstanding works and new requests. This was the first time that DRA deployed in W.A. with many DRA volunteers arriving from, interstate, a WA contingent of DRA is now operational as result of the Wooroloo bushfire.

#### **Dream builders Church**

Pod kits – families who received a Minderoo Pod were eligible to receive a pod kit designed to provide everything they need to be able to use their pod straight away. These kits included bedding and bathroom linen, kitchenware and cleaning equipment.

#### **Feed It Forward Wooroloo**

Collected and distribute donated food (Second Bite) to fire impacted residents and provide fresh fruit and vegetables at the Department of Communities morning teas.

#### **Gidgegannup Medical Centre – Mental Health Services Team**

The team have been extremely active and have engaged many local residents who have been referred for additional support, the team also presented a Trauma Talk to about 20 impacted residents on 28 May in Gidgegannup.

#### **Gidgegannup Recreation Club (GRC)**

The GRC are the umbrella organisation at the Percy Cullen Oval and Pavilion, where the original was located. Preformed relationships with City staff enabled the transition from sporting club to the Bushfire Community Recovery Centre. The GRC supported the City and community in every way possible at Bushfire Community Recovery Centre on a daily basis and were most accommodating. GRC was instrumental in organising and supporting bushfire recovery community events. Following the initial management of donations by the CWA, a group of volunteers under the auspices of the GRC coordinated a significant amount of donation distribution within the local area.

#### **Gracelife Church**

Volunteers have been assisting with small scale clean ups and gardening at properties.

#### **Health, Building and Planning Committee**

This committee was formed to manage all aspects relating to health, building and planning and has representatives from the fire affected community, Gidgegannup Progress Association and a Tilden Park representative to ensure that the needs and aspirations are met. They are also vital in acting as a community barometer and identify new and emerging issues that can be addressed in a timely manner.

#### **Identified Community Members (Barometers)**

Through the pre-existing stakeholder relationships and through the accelerated process of forming new relationships and engagement opportunities, Recovery Officers were able to tap into local communities leaders to gauge accurate sentiment, priority requirements and emerging issues.



### **Jacaranda Community Centre – Belmont**

This not for profit organisation have provided financial support to over 90 fire impacted families and continue to provide support including financial counselling and other referrals to residents.

### **Lions Club of WA**

The club has been assisting affected community, behind the scenes, with financial support. This club is committed to recovery for the long term, knowing that it is likely that other organisations may withdraw from the recovery process. They are also working on projects with the Gidgegannup Primary School and example being the Children of Courage Awards.

### **Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service (Midlas)**

Midlas is a not-for-profit community legal centre based in Midland that provides financial counselling, tenancy advocacy, a limited legal service and disability discrimination, and emergency relief to people throughout the North East Metro region of Perth. They were based at the recovery centre and provided support.

The team at Midlas supported people to access available grants and payments, assess insurance entitlements. They also helped pay for vulnerable people to go into more suitable accommodation until their claims are processed or they could return home.

### **Minderoo Foundation**

The Minderoo Foundation has supplied a total of 44 Pods (converted sea containers) to residents to allow them to return to their properties and stay connected with their community. The social and wellbeing benefits to the community through this initiative have been enormous.

Many pods were manufactured locally in Malaga WA.

### **Parkycare**

Parkerville Community Care Inc was established by the senior leadership of Parkerville Baptist Church in 2019 as an independent ACNC registered charity, out of the ashes of the 2014 Parkerville/Stoneville/Mt Helena bushfire crisis in WA. They have been assisting with preparing meals at the Community Dinner Updates and helping with small scale property clean ups.

### **Red Cross**

The Red Cross provided community support to Evacuation Centres and Bushfire Community Recovery Centre from day one. 145 Red Cross Volunteers visited 1630 properties across City of Swan bush fire impacted area and surrounds and then provided a summary report to the City with key community issues. The Red Cross provided support at all Bushfire Recovery Community events, hosted training for recovery teams and agencies and arranged Dr Rob Gordon for community sessions explaining psycho-social recovery. Red Cross are now co-located with City Recovery Team and Department of Communities three days a week at the Bushfire Community Recovery Centre, where there are positive relationships and synergy between agencies.

### **Rotary Club of WA – Emergency Team**

Have been donating fencing materials to affected community with support from local volunteers from the Gidgegannup recreation Club, the City of Swan and Department of Communities. (Over \$100,000 in donated fencing to date)

This group have also generously converted and stocked a sea container with a vast array of tools and have opened a Tool Library, run by their volunteers in Tilden Park Drive next to the ablutions and recreation room forming a small hub. A similar Tool Library has also been set up by the Rotary Club in Wooroloo for their impacted residents.

### **Social Bushfire Recovery Working Group**

This group was formed early in the recovery phase and has community members from;

- Gidgegannup Agricultural Society
- Bendigo Community Bank
- Country Women's Association (CWA)
- Gidgegannup Church
- Tilden Park residents
- Education Department
- Gidgegannup Recreation Club
- Gidgegannup Progress Association
- Newly formed Men's Shed
- Rotary Club

### **Stockfeed – EASE WA**

People in the Wooroloo bushfire area could access free animal feed from Gidgegannup Showgrounds from EASE WA – Volunteers and local community members, initially from the pony club. This had a tremendous positive impact on people's health and wellbeing due to the community large amount of domestic pet animals in the area.

### **St Vincent de Paul**

Provided financial support to fire impacted residents with a cash payment direct to client's bank accounts for generator fuel costs, clothing and other emergency needs.

## **Community Events**

Including but not limited to,

- Fortnightly Dinners and updates (now monthly at request of community)
- Family Fun Day and Movie
- Hills Symphony Orchestra
- CWA Coffee Mornings
- Noble Falls Tavern – regular organised community catch up (Tilden Strong)
- Rapid Response Team event – Rec Club
- Pizza & a Yarn – Youth (12-18yrs)
- Gidgegannup Fire Information & Debrief – Rec Club
- Charity Footy Match – Rec Club
- Wooroloo Connect (fortnightly Wooroloo Hall)
- Insights into Trauma – Gidgegannup Hall
- From our Garden to Yours
- Dr Rob Gordon (Red Cross) – Disaster Trauma
- Landscaping and Environmental forum
- Department of Communities led morning teas
- Gidge Youth Digi Space events

These events have been initiated, organised or supported by community members and groups.



## **City Initiatives**

Through the Health, Building and Planning Committee it was identified that on site toilets, showers and an information board were required in the Tilden Park subdivision.

Three toilet and shower units, a large water tank and generators have been installed in Tilden Park Drive within the most heavily impacted and total loss area of the fire.

An information trailer was also set up at the site and was stocked with timely and topical information sheets, pamphlets and brochures to support those without power and internet connection. This has now been replaced with a small 6m by 4m recreation room with kitchenette, air conditioning, tables and chair for respite and recreation. Community members are also installing their own community library at this facility.

## **Building Officer**

A dedicated Building Assistant is based at the Bushfire Recovery Centre every Wednesday from 10am to 4pm and is available to explain the building processes and permit requirements. He can also provide general information and support through the building permit application process.

## **DFES BAL Assessments and Independent BAL Reimbursements**

DFES undertook desk top BAL Assessments for all property losses to assist with the rebuilding process, this are available to residents on request. Residents who are rebuilding their homes can access up to \$2,000 in reimbursements on Independent BAL assessments costs, undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. These reimbursements can be claimed through the City and are funded from the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund.

## **Dedicated Bushfire recovery email and phone number**

A dedicated Bushfire Recovery email address and phone number was established so that affected community had a direct conduit to the Local Recovery Team. These initiatives are still in place and will be for the foreseeable future.

Phone: 0438 242 356

Email: [bushfirerecoverygroup@swan.wa.gov.au](mailto:bushfirerecoverygroup@swan.wa.gov.au)

## **Water tanks free testing by City of Swan**

The City undertook some free water analysis for people concerned about domestic water tanks being contaminated, the value of conducting this work or simply replacing the water was a challenge during the early stages of recovery.

## **Rates Concessions**

City of Swan Council voted in April 2021 to apply rates concessions to bushfire-affected residents and waive building and planning application fees, representing an estimated \$476,000 saving for ratepayers and those rebuilding in the fire affected area.

For ratepayers, the decisions made at the April 14 Council Meeting means:

- For properties that are damaged but the house is habitable, the City will apply a one-off pro-rata credit for the 2020/21 Council rates for the period from 1 February to 30 June 2021.
- For properties that are destroyed and the houses are not habitable, the City will apply a one-off credit for the full 2020/21 Council rates.
- Total credits are estimated at \$191,000, and does not apply to the Emergency Services Levy, as this charge is not under the City's control.
- The total amount is subject to change dependant on number of applications.

The City are also waiving fees for planning applications, building permits and certificates, onsite effluent disposal and for temporary accommodation under the Caravan Park and Camping Act for a period of three years, representing approximately \$285,000 in concessions.

Anyone who was affected by the bushfire, and who has already paid a planning or building fee, will be refunded accordingly.

#### **Total Processed 27/8/2021**

<b>Level of Damage</b>	<b>Number of properties eligible</b>	<b>Processed as at 19 July 2021</b>
<b>1. Pro-rata (1 Feb to 30 June 2021) credit for damaged but habitable properties</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>-\$ 106,596</b>
<b>2. One-off full year (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) credit for destroyed and not habitable properties</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>-\$ 115,821</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>-\$ 222,417</b>

#### **State Governments Clean-Up – City Advocacy**

The City advocated for the State Government Clean Up to be fully funded and managed by the state. The clean-up ensured the safe removal of bushfire damaged houses, structures and vehicles as well as trees deemed a safety risk, from residential blocks to enable rebuilding.

The City contacted 120 property owners to commence the Authority to Act process that allows contractors to carry out debris removal on resident's properties. Applications were then processed by the Department of Water and Environmental regulation (DWER), who also coordinated the clean-up undertaken by contractors.

## **Weed Control**

The City has partnered with Gidge Rural local business to assist in the fire recovery efforts by providing free weed control supplies to residents impacted by the bushfires. Allocations are dependent on property size.

## **Skip Bins**

Skip bins were placed at 16 locations for residents to use for general waste - these are listed below. To 1 September over 525 tonnes of waste materials have been collected through this City service.

## **Water Services**

Over 4 million litres of water was supplied to bushfire affected residents by City contractors for water tank top ups as there is no scheme water in the bushfire affected area.

## **Surveying Services**

The City contacted the Surveyors Association of WA to seek pro bono services for residents who had lost property boundary pegs. Surveyors came forward and over 30 properties were surveyed and re pegged.

## **Donations Management**

COVID lockdown, a high level of media exposure during lockdown and key messaging meant that there were only small manageable amounts of physical donations of household goods and clothing, but enough to assist community.

The City have recently been facilitating donations of thirty 5,000 litre water tanks from and thirty desk top computers to community members in need, in partnership with Department of Communities.

## **Virtual Donations Warehouse**

The City of Swan worked with numerous local and not-for-profit agencies to establish a virtual donations warehouse.

## **Operations Division**

The City's Construction/Maintenance and Waste Services teams, supported by contractors have been on the ground since the response phase and have been actively making safe and clearing, roads, road shoulders, drain, culverts, firebreaks, walk trails, bridle trails and City recreational assets and reserves.

## **Green waste removal on fire affected properties**



The City compiled a register of people who expressed interest for green waste removal from their properties and are now taking additional requests for this service.

### **Mulch**

Starting August 30, a free delivery service of mulch was made available to affected-residents in Gidgegannup, as part of the City's commitment to the recovery process. Each property is entitled to around four truckloads of mulch, which is roughly 50 cubic metres. This is in an effort to reduce environmental impact of weeds.

As at 1 September 2021 over 4,000m<sup>3</sup> of mulch from recovery operations have been stock piled for delivery to community.

## **Animal Management Operational Recommendations:**

- For volunteers and all agency staff to be appropriately dressed, some presented with inappropriate footwear, had no PPE (masks/goggles) or adequate drinking water for operations in an emergency environment with many hazards.
- Medical/euthanasia/first aid supplies to be made readily available and identifiable.
- Volunteer vet staff used their own vehicles, which in some cases were not appropriate (off-road) and not identifiable as emergency vehicles.
- The volunteer task force used WhatsApp for communication – this is not reliable in an area of affected mobile coverage. Important messages were also lost in the low importance/chatty messages.
- Communications between mobile taskforce members were not in place vehicle to vehicle or back to an area coordinator. Radios of some sort should be made available for every vehicle for coordination and safety.
- Intelligence and mapping for the taskforce members was reported to be of poor quality and lacking data (topographical detail, aerial imagery or clear road map references). Improved liaison and data sharing between DFES, local government and DPIRD could address this.
- There was double up in some cases of properties checked by different teams, a flagging tape or other marker to indicate cleared and checked properties for animals may assist with this.
- Personal identification alongside tabards and vehicle markers could be developed to identify legitimacy within the incident area.
- Briefings delivered to those addressing animal welfare should include an appreciation of physical, environmental, and physiological threats prior to deployment.
- Access into controlled areas was refused at times, when endorsed volunteer taskforces are legitimately performing roles under incident control, access permissions need to be confirmed with traffic management.
- RSPCA attendance from the outset would have been more beneficial and their role needs to be better defined under the State Animal Welfare Plan.
- Care needs to be taken in clarifying to volunteers whether they are empowered or acting on behalf of DPIRD, the local government or other agency to confirm if they have any authorisation to conduct the required activity.

# Verge Maintenance in Rural areas

The City of Swan is committed to keeping residents, facilities and the environment safe from the threat of bushfire. Within the City there are thousands of kilometres of rural verges, a significant verge maintenance program operates to manage unwanted vegetation on these verges.

Grassed verges that are accessible are mowed on an annual program, additionally the City conducts a significant road tree pruning and verge clearing program to improve the safety for all road users and reduce identified fire hazards.

The prioritisation of hazard reduction work takes into consideration wellbeing and safety for all road users, the actual fire risk from a verge, not just the visual amenity and considers the valuable environmental habitats which exist, some rural verges contain populations of rare flora and fauna which the City is required to protect.

The threat from fire to private property can be greatly minimised by maintaining a low fuel area between the verge and property. Landowners are encouraged to consider the verge adjoining their property as a part of their land's overall fuel management plan.

Removal of non-native vegetation and non-permanent works such as slashing, reducing leaf litter and removing fallen branches are acceptable methods to address the fuel load.

Burning of verges, clearing or thinning existing native vegetation is not allowed without appropriate approvals from the Department of Environment and Regulation and the City of Swan.

If you wish to discuss the management of a rural verge please call the City of Swan on **9267 9267**.