

# Bushfire Management Plan

## What is Bushfire Risk and why is it relevant to me?

Bushfire Risk is the likelihood of a fire starting, spreading, and impacting on people, property, and the environment.

The Otway Ranges is one of the most fire prone areas in the world and is highly susceptible to large, intense bushfires due to the terrain, naturally flammable vegetation, and frequent exposure to hot, dry, windy weather. Climate change, local and introduced vegetation types, and the high density of populations living in this landscape, mean bushfire risk is an ever-greater threat.

The management of bushfire risk to a township is recognised as a responsibility shared between government and community as a significant threat is posed by the proximity of vegetation to buildings on private property. Government agencies work to reduce bushfire risk on public land via various means including planned burns, vegetation management, implementation and maintenance of strategic fire breaks, and the protection of access and egress routes. Bushfire risk on private property is the responsibility of landholders and is predominately managed via the ongoing and appropriate maintenance of vegetation. The Surf Coast Shire Council's Fuel Reduction Program is a support mechanism for this responsibility.

## What is a Bushfire Management Overlay

A Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) is a planning control for land in Victoria that is significantly affected by extreme bushfires. The Victorian Planning Scheme identifies the purpose of the BMO in detail (clause 44.06). A significant purpose of a BMO is to identify areas where the bushfire risk warrants the implementation of **bushfire protection measures**. The extent of the overlay is determined by an area's extreme bushfire hazard, such as the proximity to dense vegetation, and the impact of this hazard to life, property, and community infrastructure.

## What is a Bushfire Management Plan?

The requirement to prepare a Bushfire Management Plan (BMP) was first introduced following the devastation of the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires as a planning mechanism to manage bushfire risk on private property.

A BMP shows all the **bushfire protection measures** that must be implemented as part of a property development to reduce bushfire risk to an acceptable level. Any permit issued since 2016 for buildings and works in an area subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) will include a BMP. The permit will also include a condition that states:

*The bushfire protection measures forming part of this permit or shown on the endorsed plans, including those relating to construction standards, defendable space, water supply and access, must be maintained to the satisfaction of the responsible authority on a continuing basis. This condition continues to have force and effect after the development authorised by this permit has been completed.*

## What is defined in a Bushfire Management Plan?

A Bushfire Management Plan (BMP) aims to address the significant bushfire hazard associated with the development and ongoing management of a property by defining site specific **bushfire protection measures**. These measures may include:

- **Construction requirements:** building to an appropriate Building Attack Level (BAL) Rating.
- **Defendable Space:** implementing an area around buildings where vegetation is managed to reduce bushfire risk. This area extends a distance of 50m around buildings or to the property boundary, whichever is the lesser.
- **Vegetation management:** the standard to which vegetation must be maintained across a property, specifically within the area of defendable space. Will include plant selection and arrangement, the location of vegetation in relation to buildings and maintenance of trees.
- **Water supply:** storing an effective capacity of 10,000 litres within an above ground tank, fixed with the appropriate water pipes and fittings required for firefighting.
- **Access requirements:** providing and maintaining appropriate access and egress to a property.

The ongoing maintenance of the bushfire protection measures defined in a BMP remain the responsibility of the property owner.

## Why do I have a Bushfire Management Plan?

Your property has been developed since 2016 within an area subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). As part of your planning permit, you are required to implement the **bushfire protection measures** defined within your Bushfire Management Plan (BMP). This requirement continues in perpetuity.

If you have purchased your property since 2016, the requirement to implement the conditions of the planning permit and the bushfire protection measures defined within the BMP runs with the land and has transferred to you.

At present, there is no formal mechanism to communicate the transfer of planning permit requirements following the sale of a property. For further information regarding permits associated with your property, contact Council.

## Why is it important that I adhere to the prescriptions of my Bushfire Management Plan?

The **bushfire protection measures** defined in your Bushfire Management Plan (BMP) work to reduce the risk of bushfire to your property.

Maintaining the measures in your BMP not only reduces the risk of your buildings igniting during a bushfire, but also reduces the risk of house-to-house combustion; a significant risk during bushfires.

Making your house and property bushfire safe is your contribution and is important for your family, your business and for the environment. Well-planned bushfire management activities on private property can reduce the risk of bushfire.

Emergency service agencies cannot provide every person and home with individual protection during a major bushfire and recognise that many people may have to face a bushfire without their support. Building community safety through greater community self-reliance means that you and your neighbours can work together to develop strategies to manage fuel levels to reduce the impact of bushfire in your area.

The buildings on your property have been built to withstand the impact of bushfire only when the **bushfire protection measures** defined in your BMP are implemented and

maintained. Diverging from these measures, specifically vegetation management, can significantly compromise the resilience of your property, your safety, and the wellbeing of your neighbours and their assets, and the broader community.

## What happens if I don't comply with my Bushfire Management Plan?

Implementation of the **bushfire protection measures** defined in your Bushfire Management Plan (BMP) remain the responsibility of the property owner and should be maintained throughout the year.

Council Officers will assess the implementation of the **bushfire protection measures** defined in a BMP to ensure appropriate action has been taken to reduce bushfire risk to a property and neighbours.

Should the vegetation measures for a property not meet the conditions of a permit, Council Officers will issue a Fire Prevention Notice. A Fire Prevention Notice is an enforceable direction to remove vegetation. It will specifically identify vegetation that needs to be addressed, a treatment method, and a due date for completion of works.

## What is Council expecting me to do?

Property owners should be maintaining their landscaping and vegetation according to the **bushfire protection measures** defined in their Bushfire Management Plan (BMP). However, Council recognises that they may not be familiar with these requirements and may not be actively implementing the required vegetation maintenance.

As part of this season's Surf Coast Fuel Reduction Program, Council is commencing a review of BMPs with a focus on the management of vegetation requirements. You are encouraged to review your BMP to ensure understanding of the requirements and take measures to ensure the vegetation on your property is maintained according to permit conditions.

If the landscaping and vegetation on your property has evolved beyond the conditions of your planning permit, you are encouraged to revert to the state prescribed in the BMP.

## Guidance

- The Country Fire Authority (CFA) website provides further information regarding Bushfire Management Plans within their planning and bushfire management overlay page ([cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/building-planning-regulations/planning-controls/planning-and-bushfire-management-overlay/bushfire-management-plan](https://cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/building-planning-regulations/planning-controls/planning-and-bushfire-management-overlay/bushfire-management-plan))
- Further information on how to prepare your property can be found on the (CFA) website [cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property](https://cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property)
- The landscaping of your property should follow the guidelines outlined in *Landscaping your Surf Coast Garden for Bushfire*. This is available on the Fire Ready page ([surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Community/Emergencies-and-safety/Fire-ready](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Community/Emergencies-and-safety/Fire-ready)), along with a booklet on weeds and indigenous plants.
- The (CFA) also provides a *Landscaping for Bushfire* booklet which you can download from the CFA website [cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property/landscaping](https://cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property/landscaping). This booklet provides general information and is not tailored to the Surf Coast.
- Information regarding Fire Prevention Notices can be found on the Fire Ready page of the Surf Coast Shire Council's website ([surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Community/Emergencies-and-safety/Fire-ready](https://surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Community/Emergencies-and-safety/Fire-ready))
- Community Fire Safety and Environment Officers provide free property inspection services to property owners requiring bushfire risk advice or property assessments. Contact Council on **5261 0600**.