



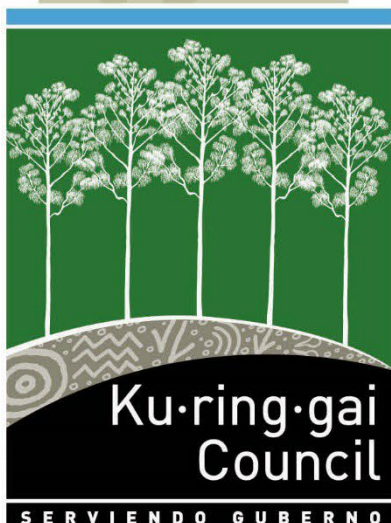
Ku-ring-gai Council

Bushfire Management Policy

Version Number 2

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Bushfire Management Policy

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Related Legislation:	<i>NSW Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>NSW Rural Fires Act 1997</i> <i>NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> <i>NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 No. 63</i> <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021</i> <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021</i> <i>Protection of the Environment Operations (Clean Air) Regulation 2022</i>
Related Policies (Council & Internal)	Ku-ring-gai Planning Scheme Ordinance 1971 (KPSO) Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan 2015 (KLEP) Ku-ring-gai Development Control Plan (DCP) Ku-ring-gai Biodiversity Policy (2022) Ku-ring-gai Bushland Reserves Plan of Management Climate Change Policy 2020 Ku-ring-gai Local Approvals Policy (2019)

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Other References	<p>Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Risk Management Plan 2023</p> <p>Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code for New South Wales (NSW Rural Fire Service)</p> <p>Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019 (NSW Rural Fire Service)</p> <p>Guidelines for Ecologically Sustainable Fire Management (2004, A project undertaken for the NSW Biodiversity Strategy)</p> <p>North Turrumurra Community Protection Plan (2016)</p> <p>Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Prone Land Map</p> <p>AS3959:2018: Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas</p> <p>Managing Bushfire Risk, Now and into the Future (Ku-ring-gai Council, 2012)</p>

Version History

Version Number	Version Start Date	Version End Date	Author	Details and Comments
1	1 July 2020	2025	Jacob Sife and Penny Hemsworth	First version
2	27 May 2025	2029	Mark Schuster	Updated Legislation References Minor amendments relating to RFS hazard reduction complaints Inclusion of pyrodiversity, research and cultural burning

Policy

Introduction

Bushfires in south-eastern Australia are a naturally occurring event and an important part of natural ecosystem processes but also pose obvious risks to life and property. The Ku-ring-gai area in particular faces some of the highest levels of bushfire risk in the Sydney Metropolitan Area due to the extent of bushland within and adjoining the Local Government Area (LGA), an abundance of older development carried out prior to the implementation of bushfire-specific development standards and the steep, rugged topography of the area.

It must be acknowledged that while the threat posed by bushfire can be lessened through appropriate management actions, it can never be completely eliminated; residents and assets close to the bush will always face some level of bushfire risk. Additionally, many of the measures available to reduce bushfire risk involve vegetation clearing which results in negative impacts to biodiversity and ecological processes that must be taken into consideration. In some cases, removal of vegetation that is serving as a wind break or ember screen may actually increase the bushfire risk to houses or other assets. It is evident therefore that bushfire management is a complex issue requiring a balance between an acceptable level of risk and an acceptable level of environmental impact.

The responsibility for managing bushfire risk is shared between Council, residents, other land managers, State agencies and emergency services. This policy covers those activities over which Ku-ring-gai Council has direct control or influence and/or for which it has approval and regulatory responsibilities, providing guidance for proactive management, with the aim of adapting to 'live with fire' into the future.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to guide the effective and sustainable management of bushfire risk within the Ku-ring-gai LGA.

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Minimise the risk posed by bushfire to the community, built assets and the natural environment;
- Ensure Council's compliance with all relevant legislation, standards, codes and plans;
- Promote a shared responsibility for bushfire management among Council, other land managers, fire authorities and residents;
- Empower Ku-ring-gai residents to improve the bushfire-resilience of their homes and families;
- Ensure bushfire management activities have due regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
- Support Council's involvement in incident control and recovery;
- Improve the collection and sharing of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge about bushfires and bushfire management; and
- Ensure continual improvement in Council's bushfire management strategies and operations.

Implementation Framework

Council will adopt the following management principles in the implementation of this Policy:

Precautionary principle

Section 8A of the *Local Government Act 1993* requires that all decision making by councils should consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development. One of the key ecologically sustainable development principles is the precautionary principle. As such, management decisions will be guided by "careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or

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irreversible damage to the environment, and an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options” (Section 6(2) of the *NSW Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*).

Evidence based management

Sound underlying scientific principles together with the most up to date science, research and effective management practices to inform decision-making and enable best practice.

Adaptive management

Bushfire management must incorporate an adaptive approach that is flexible and inclusive, and continually improved through testing / monitoring, learning and applying evidence based management.

Landscape management

Landscape-level assessments of bushfire hazards should inform the application and prioritisation of risk management strategies. Conducted in advance of project decisions and investments, these assessments should identify human, economic, cultural and natural assets; addressing potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts.

Pyrodiversity

Incorporate the principles of pyrodiversity (i.e. spatial and temporal variation in fire regimes) as a guiding principle to enhance Council's fire management program. Connecting pyrodiversity to biodiversity means creating variation in fire regimes tailored to suit the needs of ecosystems and species, whilst also allowing minimisation of risk from bushfire impacts to built assets and people.

Implementation Activities

The objectives of this Policy will be met through the implementation of the following activities across Council:

Land Use Planning and Development Control
The Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan (LEP) applies C4 (Environmental Living) zoning to key areas with high bushfire threat. The C4 zoning does not permit intensified uses nor uses involving vulnerable groups (elderly and children). It limits placing increased populations and property at risk.
Council's Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Development Control Plans (DCPs) address the provision of bushfire protection through consideration of access, landscaping, location and design of dwellings and other assets.
Council's LEPs and DCPs address bush fire evacuation risk by limiting the intensification of development or creation of vulnerable developments in unsuitable locations.
Development applications for properties at risk from bushfire provide for and accommodate adequate bushfire protection measures wholly within the boundaries of the development property. Council owned/managed bushland shall not be used for future asset protection purposes to accommodate new development.
Future subdivision of bushfire prone land for residential purposes ensures the creation of setbacks and resultant BAL ratings that meet the requirement for complying development under Clause 3.4 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008.
The Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Prone Land Map and Bush Fire Evacuation Risk Map are reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.
Ensure that landscape-scale assessment of past and future fire behaviour and cumulative development impacts are assessed during rezoning or change of use applications in Bushfire Prone Land.
Asset and Fuel Management on Public Land
Implement strategic fuel management works, including controlled burning in bushland and maintenance of identified Asset Protection Zones, in accordance with the current Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Risk Management Plan prepared by the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Management Committee.

Continually review and improve bushfire resilience of Council facilities, activities and events, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire emergency plans; • Bushfire protection measures for buildings/assets; and • Staff awareness.
Maintain a database of fire history within the Local Government Area, identifying the areas burnt, type of fire, date of burn, season, fire intensity and/or other relevant information.
Maintain a network of designated service trails in bushland in accordance with the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Risk Management Plan to provide vehicular access for fire suppression and fire management purposes.
Utilise designated walking tracks in bushland to provide access and establish control lines for fire suppression and fire management purposes.
Recognise that fuel management works including burning and mechanical clearing may be unachievable or ineffective in some areas due to limitations of topography, firefighter safety and fuel moisture content during the hazard reduction season. The changing climate may further reduce the efficacy of hazard reduction burning in limiting fire runs during Extreme and Catastrophic weather events. In such cases managing bushfire risk relies more heavily on building upgrades (i.e. retrofitting to achieve higher BAL-ratings) and bushfire emergency planning.
Respond to Hazard Reduction Notices issued by NSW RFS as they arise and implement bush fire protection measures as directed.
Refer bushfire hazard complaints from residents to RFS for evaluation.
Where an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) is created in response to a bushfire hazard complaint, any necessary clearing on private land is to occur prior to or concurrently with any necessary clearing of Council-managed land.
When planning the location and timing of hazard reduction burns give consideration to the retention of unburnt patches throughout the burn area, biodiversity corridors and connectivity to adjacent unburnt bushland (i.e mosaic burning).
Promote and participate in culturally-informed burning practices (where ecologically relevant) with indigenous groups and authorities, such as Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council and Traditional Owners.
Assess the environmental impacts of proposed fuel management works prior to undertaking the works (preferably in accordance with the <i>NSW Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code</i>) with appropriate consideration given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonality and timing of proposed burns with regard to recent and predicted climatic and bushfire conditions; • Floral diversity, age and structure of vegetation communities; • Threatened species and threatened ecological communities; • Key fauna habitat features, both natural and artificial.
Integrate the use of pre and post fire weed management with fuel management burns where appropriate.
Recognise the hazard reduction benefits provided by Council's ecological burning program.
In areas that are known or likely to support threatened species or threatened ecological communities, or where mechanical works (e.g. hand-clearing, slashing) are constrained by topography or site access, give preference to controlled burning as a fuel management method.
Make sports fields or other suitable open spaces available as staging areas and helicopter landing zones for the purpose of carrying out prescribed burns or firefighting operations, as required.
Where it is identified that impacts of planned burning and associated smoke on recreational reserves and ovals are unavoidable, make all reasonable effort to notify potential users accommodate participants at an alternative location.
Implement measures to minimise the air quality impacts of hazard reduction burns, giving consideration to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA clean air requirements; • Environmental approvals (e.g. Hazard Reduction Certificate); • Burn plan approval and smoke plume modelling; and • Removal of hazardous materials (e.g. tyres).
Utilise social media and other relevant communication channels to ensure that residents, businesses, community facilities and public services likely to be affected by smoke are notified of upcoming burning operations coordinated by Council.
Conduct Council's bush regeneration program and Bushcare/Parkcare/Streetcare volunteer program in a manner supportive of fuel management objectives. Investigate opportunities for volunteer APZ maintenance program.
Fuel Management on Private Land

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Provide advice and support for bushfire hazard reduction works on private land through collaboration with the relevant fire authorities and consideration of all required permits under the Rural Fires Act, Biodiversity Conservation Act and Clean Air Regulation.

Ensure that Hazard Reduction Certificates for fuel management burning on private property are issued only for genuine bushfire hazard reduction purposes and where there is no practical method of physically removing fuel from the site. Approval for burning for other purposes may be obtained for a fee under Council's Local Approvals Policy.

Ensure that owners or occupiers who are issued with a Hazard Reduction Certificate are aware of other restrictions such as:

- Special conditions associated with the Hazard Reduction Certificate;
- Appropriate fuel management techniques including NSW RFS standards for pile burning;
- "Total Fire Ban", declared by the Minister in accordance with the *RF Act*;
- "No Burn Day", declared by NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA);
- The requirement to obtain a Fire Permit from the relevant Fire Authority prior to burning.

Promote the planning and implementation of fuel management works on private land in accordance with the current Bush Fire Risk Management Plan prepared by the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Management Committee.

Ignition Management and Incident response

Prohibit the burning of solid or liquid fuel fires on public land except in designated fire pits/barbecues or where the burning has been authorized by Council and all appropriate permits and/or approvals have been obtained.

On days of Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, prioritise observation and patrol of bushland areas to facilitate early detection of any ignitions.

Implement risk management procedures for closures of Council assets to the public on Extreme and Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days consistent with adjacent National Parks' processes.

Implement the arrangements of the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies effectively and efficiently.

Support emergency response and suppression activities under the direction of the incident management agency.

Advocate for the provision of accessible and pet-friendly evacuation centres through its participation in the LEMC.

Regional and Inter-Agency Co-operation

Promote regional, landscape-scale fire management planning by actively supporting and contributing to the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Management Committee and Fuel Management Sub-Committee.

Plan fuel management activities in Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai, with the aim of maintaining a temporally and spatially variable mosaic of burnt and unburnt patches of vegetation.

Actively support and contribute to the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Local Emergency Management Committee.

Support and contribute to operational burn plans created by firefighting agencies.

Collaborate with Community Fire Units (CFU) and Rural Fire Brigades, providing opportunities for joint participation in fuel management and community engagement activities.

Partnerships, Advocacy, Research and Community Engagement

Working with firefighting agencies, other emergency services and land managers, provide community education for residents in order to:

- Assist them to assess their level of risk;
- Encourage them to maintain an appropriate level of bushfire resilience within their household (including building upgrades, landscaping and personal preparedness) and provide advice on how to do so; and
- Provide advice on what to do in the event of a bushfire.

Promote community awareness and understanding of fire management policies and practices of Council and the plans prepared by the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Management Committee.

Provide bushfire awareness information to residents adjacent to bushland when fuel management works are programmed for their local area.

Investigate, encourage and utilise opportunities for incentive programs to improve the bushfire resilience of new and existing development including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of bushfire fuels on private lands; • Retrofitting of bushfire protection measures for existing buildings; and • Ember protection measures for new and existing buildings outside of mapped bushfire prone land.
Encourage community participation in Community Fire Units (CFU) and Rural Fire Brigades including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making appropriate Council facilities available for training and open days; and • Collaboration in grant acquisition and implementation.
Encourage community use of Static Water Supply (SWS) signs available through Fire and Rescue NSW.
Co-ordinate community engagement activities with other local authorities and land managers.
Promote community awareness and understanding of fire behaviour and potential impacts, particularly enhancing community preparedness, by engaging participation in Council's Climate Wise Communities (CWC) program - https://climatewisecommunities.com.au/
Support the RFS implementation of Community Protection Plans (CPP) by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting in the promotion an understanding of the North Turrumurra CPP; and • Assisting in the creation of CPPs for other high-risk locations with limited egress
On days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, take all reasonable steps to close bushland reserves and to communicate closures of Council lands and Council Facilities to members of the public.
Provide support for tenants of Council's leased facilities regarding bushfire resilience and emergency planning.
Proactively engage with State and Federal Government and other relevant agencies to influence policies and reforms that affect Bushfire risk to the LGA.
Undertake monitoring, collation and analysis of local fire attributes (i.e. fuel loads, fuel load accumulation rates, ecological trends and conditions) to assist in adaptive management in enhancing Council's fire management program.
Collaborate with research institutions to enhance the local knowledge base to incorporate both evidence-based and adaptive management into a state-of-the-art fire management program – where both asset protection and ecological resilience needs inform the direction of Council's program.
Actively participate with conservation groups to progress fire knowledge and apply the knowledge to on-ground operations.
Encourage partnerships and knowledge sharing with key national, regional and local stakeholders, regarding operational bushfire management and bushfire risk.

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition
Bush Fire Evacuation Risk Map	<p>The map marked “State Environmental Planning Policy No 5—Housing for Older People or People with a Disability (Amendment No 6) Bush Fire Evacuation Risk Map” deposited within the Department of Planning.</p> <p>This map identifies specific areas in which SEPP (previously Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability, now the Housing SEPP), which would otherwise allow for the setting aside of local planning controls in order to facilitate development of certain high- density housing, does not apply.</p>
Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Risk Management Committee (BFMC) & Fuel Management Sub-Committee.	<p>A Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) provides a forum for cooperative and coordinated bushfire management in a local area. BFMCs are responsible for preparing, coordinating, reviewing and monitoring the Plan of Operations and Bush Fire Risk Management Plan for their area. The Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai BFMC is comprised of representatives from Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils, NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire & Rescue NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW Police, Crown Lands, Nature Conservation Council of NSW and various infrastructure operators.</p> <p>A Fuel Management Sub-Committee comprised of the BMFC member organisations that are responsible for managing land has been formed specifically to coordinate the details of fuel management works within the district.</p>
Community Fire Units (CFU)	A Community Fire Unit (CFU) is a team of local residents living in urban areas close to bushland who are supported by Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) to enhance their safety and resilience to bushfires.
Rural Fire Brigades	A rural fire brigade is formed by NSW RFS or a local authority in accordance with the Rural Fires Act 1997 and is comprised of volunteer RFS members and officers. Members and officers of a rural fire brigade are granted certain powers under the Rural Fires Act 1997 for the purpose of controlling or suppressing a fire or protecting persons, property or the environment from an existing or imminent danger arising out of a fire, incident or other emergency.
Hazard Reduction Certificate	<p>A bush fire hazard reduction certificate (HRC) is a certificate that authorises the carrying out of bush fire hazard reduction work on land in accordance with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a bush fire risk management plan that applies to the land, and the provisions of any bush fire code applying to the land specified in the certificate, and any conditions specified in the certificate. <p>A HRC may be issued or certified by NSW RFS or by a local authority, and serves as environmental approval for the hazard reduction activities in accordance with the relevant legislation.</p>
Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Bush Fire Risk Management Plan	<p>Under the Rural Fires Act 1997 the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) must constitute a Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) for each area in the State that is subject to the risk of bush fires. Each BFMC is required to prepare and submit to the BFCC a draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plan (BFRMP).</p> <p>The Hornsby Ku-ring-gai BFRMP is a strategic document that identifies community assets at risk and sets out a five-year program of coordinated multi-agency treatments to reduce the risk of bush fire to the assets. Treatments may include such things as hazard reduction burning, grazing, community education, fire trail maintenance and establishing community fireguard groups for both adjoining LGAs.</p>

Bushfire Prone Land Map	<p>It is a requirement under <i>the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> that a map be produced for each Local Government Area to which a bush fire risk management plan applies recording all land within the area designated by the Commissioner of NSW RFS as bush fire prone land.</p> <p>An area identified as bushfire prone land is land that can support a bushfire or is likely to be subject to bushfire attack. Special construction standards and development restrictions apply to areas mapped as bushfire prone land in NSW.</p>
Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC)	<p>Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMC) are responsible for the preparation and review of plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies in the Local Government Area (LGA) for which it is constituted.</p> <p>The Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai LEMC is comprised of representatives from Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils, NSW Police, the State Emergency Service, the NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and other local organisations.</p>
Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN)	<p>The EMPLAN prepared by the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Local Emergency Management Committee in accordance with the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, 1989.</p> <p>The aim of the Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) is to detail emergency preparedness, response to and recovery arrangements for the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Local Government areas and to ensure the co-ordinated to emergencies by all agencies having responsibilities and functions in emergencies.</p>
Pyrodiversity	<p>Fire ecologist David Bowman defines pyrodiversity as 'the outcome of complex interactions and feedbacks between fire regimes, biodiversity and ecosystem effects' (see Bowman et.al.2016 - https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2015.0169)</p>