

COMMUNIQUE

The State Bushfire Advisory Council (SBAC) met at the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Perth Hills office on the 4 September 2023, for the third quarterly meeting of 2023.

Wooroloo Bushfire Independent Review Recommendations Implementation

The SBAC noted the release of the second edition of the public reporting document on 7 August. This report has been well received with another spike in downloads following the release of the second edition. The report is updated quarterly and resides with the Wooroloo Independent Review on the government webpage. The SBAC noted the update on the Wooroloo public reporting.

The SBAC received an overview of the Wooroloo Intra Action Review (IAR), intended to provide a preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of the work undertaken to date on the implementation of the recommendations. The SBAC noted the progress of the Wooroloo Intra Action Review.

The SBAC received briefings on the closures of recommendations 6 - DFES should promote the creation of a Bushfire Practitioners Accreditation Register to ensure State Planning Policy and bushfire building codes and standards compliance are applied by appropriately trained and accredited practitioners and recommendation 11 - DFES and local government should continue discussions with telecommunications providers to explore the adequacy of current arrangements for backup power at telecommunication towers in emergency incidents. The SBAC endorsed the closure of both projects.

More information on the Implementation of the Review recommendations can be obtained from the updated public reports at [WA Government website](https://www.wa.gov.au) or by emailing RuralFire@dfes.wa.gov.au

Consolidated Emergency Services Act Update

SBAC was provided with an update on the progress of the Consolidated Emergency Services Act. The Parliamentary Counsel's Office is working to finalise an Exposure Draft Bill which will be used to consult the community on how the new Emergency Services Act might look. Once the Exposure Draft Bill is complete it will be released for public comment which will include fact sheets and a feedback submission document. It is intended that public submissions will be open for at least 3 months.

The SBAC members discussed elements of the updates provided and noted the update on the progression of the Consolidated Emergency Services Act.

SPP 3.7 – Map of Bushfire Prone Areas/LUP Guidelines

The SBAC received an update on the progress of the jointly reviewed Bushfire Framework. The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH),

Public consultation on the draft State Planning Policy 3.7: Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas (SPP 3.7) and Draft Planning for Bushfire Guidelines (Guidelines) took place between 19 April and 17 July 2023.

DPLH is currently reviewing the submissions and engaging with key stakeholders in review and response to them.

DFES are refining the Map of Bushfire Prone areas to inform and complement the State Planning Policy. DFES have been developing an alternative method to update the Map to achieve the requirements of the original Cabinet decisions to develop an evidenced, risk-based Map that can allow a more nuanced land use planning response.

DFES have been correcting the Map's accuracy within the Perth, Peel and Bunbury Region Scheme areas and identifying suburbs that may pose lower landscape scale bushfire risk due to being

significantly developed. The update to the Map has resulted in a reduction of 4,917 ha of Bushfire Prone Vegetation (BPV). A 100m buffer is then applied around BPV to determine the BPA. This has resulted in a reduction of 1,819 ha of BPA.

Public consultation will open in September 2023 for 90-days. The Map is expected to be finalised for gazettal in early 2024.

SBAC noted consultation on the SPP3.7 has now closed, and findings would be shared in early 2024. SBAC also noted the upcoming DFES consultation in relation to mapping.

AFDRS Review update

The national review process has taken place to facilitate learnings from the 2022/23 fire season and to inform the future direction of the AFDRS. The review was facilitated by AFAC between March – July 2023. All states and jurisdictions have been involved in the review process.

The first season national review report released in August 2023 and National Implementation Plan to transition development phase to Business as Usual (BAU) outlines key findings and identifies 18 recommendations and 5 key findings relating to program governance, community-facing elements, operational and industry capability development, and fire science and technology.

WA combined community and stakeholder surveys, and Bushfire Campaign Evaluation, and the significant amount of other feedback received relating to concerns around Fire Danger Rating forecasting accuracy i.e., under/overestimation and inability to burn/use burn permits due to highly publicised elevated fire danger ratings was all submitted to National review.

The key benefits provided by the AFDRS is the ability to refine, update and constantly improve its application and functionality as new science, fire behaviour models, and evidence becomes available. Substantial updates have been made to underlying data driving the system, including fuel type and fuel load during the 2022/2023 southern bushfire season, which has resulted in significant improvement in forecasting in several areas across the state. Further work is occurring and will continue in this regard.

Future engagement and training opportunities are being offered throughout the state involving multiple stakeholders, to build awareness and confidence of the AFDRS prior to the Southern Fire Season, including promotion of the Observer Network to enhance the validation of satellite data on fuel loads/condition and curing.

Land use Management Issues

SBAC were provided with an introduction to the significant changes in land use/tenure currently occurring across the State, and the effect these may be having on the management of on-ground bushfire risk.

The presentation is intended to give SBAC members an appreciation of the types of land use/tenure changes currently occurring across WA and drivers of these changes; the areas affected and potential impacts on sound bushfire management.

DBCA Burning Process

SBAC were provided with an overview of the DBCA burning process which included targets for prescribed burning, forest resilience, burn program planning, prescribed fire plans, trail diversions, biodiversity considerations, traffic and access management and monitoring, evaluation and reporting, burn severity and climate change.

The next SBAC meeting is scheduled for Monday 4th December 2023.

For SBAC related information or enquiries, please email RuralFire@dfes.wa.gov.au