

COMMUNIQUE

The State Bushfire Advisory Council (SBAC) met at the DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Nambelup for their second quarterly meeting of 2025.

Bushfire Places of Last Resort (BPLR)

At their last meeting, the SBAC provided feedback recommending further preliminary engagement was needed prior to progression of the BPLR Guidelines and process. The project team provided an update on the development of the guidelines following further stakeholder engagement.

Next steps will include policy development and testing with key stakeholders and a 14 week consultation period on the draft BPLR guidelines. The SBAC noted the progress of work and proposed next steps.

Strategic Priorities working group update

The working group met in mid-May to discuss and agree updates to the workbook items following the planning session at the March SBAC meeting. The updated workbook was circulated to Council for comment prior to the meeting. The Chair noted a number of today's agenda items have been progressed from the Workbook.

The Minister for Emergency Services has recently issued an updated Statement of Expectations which includes a revised list of SBAC priorities. The Chair advised the updated priorities as follows:

- Facilitate constructive consultation on the Consolidated Emergency Services Bill.
- Oversee the development of guidelines and processes for Places of Last Resort in Bushfire Prone Areas.
- Ensure consistent processes for bushfire mitigation on Rail Corridors.
- Development of a discussion paper to inform advocacy options for improving accessibility and affordability of Insurance cover for bushfire mitigation.

The SBAC will update their workplan to include the Minister's priorities.

Fuel Management Activities Report overview

The DFES Office of Bushfire Risk Management provided an overview of their Annual Fuel Management Activities report. This report surveys key stakeholders from State Government, local governments and private land managers on their fuel management programs and activities.

In 2023-24, 110 organisations reported on their fuel management programs, collectively describing 8.3 million hectares of planned burning and 22116ha and 3825 kms of other fuel management activities.

The SBAC noted the presentation and will schedule invitations to organisations identified in the report to present on their fuel management activities.

Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) 'end of season' update

The presentation by Bushfire Technical Services included AFDRS system improvements including:

- AFDRS biannual fuel type refinement updates:
 - Integration of Crop/Pasture cover dataset from Digital Agricultural Services (DAS) for the fuel type map;
 - Refined Fuel type interpolation method implemented in Fuel State Editor – now based on dominant fuel type;
 - Model updates for Shrubland (heathland) and Malee Heath;
- Fire Danger Viewer improvements included single sign on alleviating access issues, themed menus, set up bookmarks, downloadable Meteograms (graphs), and new layers;
- Grassland observer app for mobiles, allowing offline observations.
- An increase in number of remote Cameras and weather stations to assist with observations.

The number of observations and queries have dropped over the 3 year period, suggesting less anomalies in the system with continuous enhancements.

The SBAC noted the improvements to the system and reduction in anomalies and queries and closed this item on their workplan.

The Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) - Strategic Work Priority

The SBAC members received a comprehensive overview of the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) which covers some 48,000 square kms of land in the State's mid-west region. It was noted that the implementation of this ILUA would eventually see the creation of a new Yamatji Land Estate, comprised of some 14,500 ha freehold land and a further 134,000 ha of Crown land, with the first 10 of some 1,386 identified land parcels having already been transferred to Yamatji control.

The SBAC noted the need to ensure relevant provisions being transitioned from the existing Bushfires Act 1954 to the consolidated emergency services legislation under development had been suitably updated to reflect the vast new land estates to emerge from the implementation of the Yamatji Nation ILUA and other similar agreements to follow.

The SBAC agreed to consider the way Crown land in occupation will be dealt with going forward, and develop a suitable policy model which supports a seamless transition of fire mitigation responsibilities as land is progressively transferred from State Government control, whilst also ensuring ongoing community confidence in associated arrangements.

The next SBAC quarterly meeting is scheduled for 9 September 2025 at the offices of the Dept of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

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