

COMMUNIQUE

The State Bushfire Advisory Council (SBAC) held its fourth and final meeting of 2025, on 8 December 2025, hosted online.

Insurance Cover for Bushfire Mitigation - Discussion Paper

The DFES Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) provided a briefing to SBAC on work undertaken in this area, including collaboration with the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA). The briefing provided background information and outlined current challenges, forming the basis for the development of a comprehensive discussion paper.

Summary of key points:

- Public liability insurance for undertaking bushfire mitigation has become increasingly expensive over the last several years.
- Affordability of appropriate insurance is often a barrier to contractors providing bushfire mitigation services and significantly increases the cost of works undertaken.
- It is also problematic for Aboriginal organisations that have, or wish to establish, a fire management program on their country. Such First Nations led fire programs are an important component of a unified approach to bushfire risk management and provide important cultural, environmental and social outcomes.
- A lack of affordable insurance for bushfire mitigation work compromises the viability of the private bushfire mitigation sector, reduces the quantum of work that is achievable and impedes the capacity of Aboriginal people to manage country.
- Since 2021 DFES has sought solutions to the issue of insurance affordability in collaboration with the private bushfire mitigation industry, the insurance sector, land managers and state government.
- The learnings from this work will be applied to continue DFES' advocacy for more informed pricing of insurance for public liability insurance for bushfire mitigation.

The SBAC acknowledged the information provided and will seek a further update from OBRM during the 2026 calendar year.

Bushfire Places of Last Resort (BPLR)

An update on the Bushfire Place of Last Resort (BPLR) guideline project was presented to SBAC. The update outlined the outcomes of further engagement undertaken by DFES with key stakeholders, including fire and emergency management agencies in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, WALGA, DPLH, DBCA, the Shire of Waroona, and the City of Albany. Feedback from these stakeholders has informed the ongoing development of the BPLR guideline.

Next key steps include:

- DFES seeking feedback from local government and other stakeholders through a discussion paper.
- Drafting the BPLR guideline and releasing it for a 14-week consultation period.
- Reviewing the draft guideline with consideration of submissions received.
- Presenting the revised draft guideline to SBAC for information and feedback (anticipated in the third quarter of 2026).

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- Presenting the final draft guideline to the DFES Corporate Executive Committee for consideration of submissions and adoption.

SBAC acknowledged the process and the broader engagement being undertaken, noting that the extended engagement will lengthen project timeframes.

The Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA)

SBAC received an update on engagement with the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation (YSRC) regarding the proposed case study. Following initial introductions facilitated by DPC, subsequent discussions were held with senior representatives from YSRC, the Chief Commercial Officer, Land Management Specialist, and other stakeholders.

Key points from discussions:

- YSRC shared early experiences from the transfer of the first 10 land parcels under the Yamatji Nation ILUA.
- Bushfire mitigation requirements vary significantly across the 11 LGAs affected, and support from SBAC in promoting a more consistent, strategic approach would be valued.
- Insurer requirements are a major influence on YSRC's fire risk management practices.
- YSRC is close to finalising the next tranche of 58 priority land parcels, balancing economic, cultural, and social opportunities.
- The priority list will be shared once finalised and aligned with the State's existing mitigation program.
- Current mitigation works are being undertaken by YSRC Rangers and contractors, with strong interest in State-provided training to build capacity in fire and broader land management skills.
- The meeting concluded positively, with agreement for ongoing contact and collaboration as the case study progresses.

The next SBAC quarterly meeting is scheduled for March 2026.

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