# Bushfire Notice Survey

Bushfires occur every year in the City of Busselton and pose a potentially significant risk to life, property and the environment. Governments, communities and individuals, who have a shared responsibility to manage the risk, use a range of approaches to do so (e.g. fire brigades, prescribed burning programmes).

One of the key approaches involves the setting and enforcing of local government regulations that require landowners to manage fire risk on their own properties. That is done through what are often referred to as 'Bush Fire Notices' or 'Firebreak Notices' (and will be referred to here as the 'Bushfire Notice').

The City is reviewing its Bushfire Notice and is seeking feedback from the community on potential changes before making any final decisions. Consultation would have occurred last year, but due to COVID-related restrictions was deferred. It is now envisaged that should any changes be made to the notice, they would be in place prior to the 2021/22 summer season.

**Key factors that have led to the review include:**

- It has not been substantially reviewed for over ten years.
- Because of increased development and changes to the climate, the risks in some areas have increased.
- There have been changes in State level regulations, particularly since 2015.

In general, the potential changes would increase the requirements placed on landowners to manage bushfire risk on their properties, including through increased requirements to remove or trim/cut vegetation near houses and access ways. In identifying the potential changes, the City has been conscious of a range of considerations in addition to bushfire risk, including the environment and visual amenity.

The proposed changes are not 'set in stone', and the City expects that some people may have concerns with aspects of the proposed changes. The City will consider feedback very carefully before any final decisions are made.

**What category is your property in?**

Your property will fall into one the four proposed new bushfire categories. Click here to search for your property on the City's Intramap site. Select the address tab at the bottom of the page and input your address details. Intramaps will search and identify your property. The current and proposed new new bushfire category relating to your property will be identified on the right hand side of the screen.

1. Category 1 - Urban
2. Category 2 - Urban Bush Fire Prone
3. Category 3 - Rural-Residential
4. Category 4 - Rural Bush Fire Prone

You can provide your feedback on the proposed control changes by completing the survey below.

**Submissions close of business Monday 10 May 2021.**

# Category 1 - Land in the Urban category

**A.** Land in the 'Urban' category includes urban, suburban or townsite areas that are not in an area identified by the State Government as being 'Bush Fire Prone'. This includes both residential and commercial/industrial areas.

**B.** Currently, on most of the land in the Urban category, the following would be required during the fire season –

I. If the lot is larger than 2,024 square metres (i.e. half an acre), a boundary firebreak;

II. Grass, ground cover or any dead vegetation to be kept to no more than 10cm in height;

III. All tree branches to be pruned to 3 metres clear of the eaves and 5 metres clear of the roof of the house on the lot; and

IV. It is recommended that trees should be spaced at least 15 metres apart.

**C.** On land in the Urban category, the proposed Bushfire Notice would require grass, ground cover or any dead vegetation to be kept to no more than 10cm in height during the fire season.

**D.** The key reasons for these proposed changes are –

I. The level of risk in these areas is relatively low, and especially as most gardens are watered throughout the summer, it is not seen as necessary for trees to be so widely spaced or pruned to be clear of houses (and these requirements have not been strongly enforced in the past either); and

II. Control of dry grasses or similar is still seen as appropriate, as such grasses are fairly easy to ignite and fire can move quickly through them.

# Category 2 - Land in the Urban – Bush Fire Prone category

**A.** Land in the 'Urban – Bush Fire Prone' category includes urban, suburban or townsite areas that are in an area identified by the State Government as being 'Bush Fire Prone'. It also includes some areas Zoned 'Rural-Residential', but which have lot sizes smaller than around 4,000 square metres (i.e. around an acre), which have reticulated water supplies, and which are also an area identified by the State Government as being 'Bush Fire Prone'.

**B.** Currently, on most of the land in the Urban – Bush Fire Prone category, the following would be required during the fire season –

I. If the lot is larger than 2,024 square metres (i.e. half an acre), a boundary firebreak;
II. Grass, ground cover or any dead vegetation to be kept to no more than 10cm in height;
III. All tree branches to be pruned to 3 metres clear of the eaves and 5 metres clear of the roof of the house on the lot; and
IV. It is recommended that trees should be spaced at least 15 metres apart.

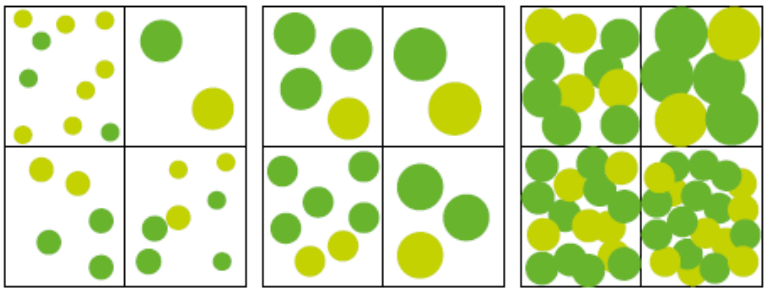
**C.** On land in the Urban – Bush Fire Prone category, the proposed Bushfire Notice would require –

I. Grass, ground cover or any dead vegetation to be kept to no more than 10cm in height during the fire season; and
II. All vegetation within 25 metres of a habitable building (including a house) to be maintained to the APZ standard during the fire season (does not require management of vegetation outside property boundaries).

**Note:** The 'APZ standard' is as follows -

- **Fences:** within the APZ are constructed from non-combustible materials (e.g. iron, brick, limestone, metal post and wire). It is recommended that solid or slatted non-combustible perimeter fences are used.
- **Objects:** within 10 metres of a building, combustible objects must not be located close to the vulnerable parts of the building i.e. windows and doors.
- **Fine Fuel load:** combustible dead vegetation matter less than 6 millimetres in thickness reduced to and maintained at an average of two tonnes per hectare.
- **Trees (> 5 metres in height):** trunks at maturity should be a minimum distance of 6 metres from all elevations of the building, branches at maturity should not touch or overhang the building, lower branches should be removed to a height of 2 metres above the ground and or surface vegetation, canopy cover should be less than 15% with tree canopies at maturity well spread to at least 5 metres apart as to not form a continuous canopy.

**Figure 18:** Tree canopy cover – ranging from 15 to 70 per cent at maturity




- **Shrubs (0.5 metres to 5 metres in height):** should not be located under trees or within 3 metres of buildings, should not be planted in clumps greater than 5m² in area, clumps of shrubs should be separated from each other and any exposed window or door by at least 10 metres. Shrubs greater than 5 metres in height are to be treated as trees.
- **Ground covers (<0.5 metres in height):** can be planted under trees but must be properly maintained to remove dead plant material and any parts within 2 metres of a structure, but 3 metres from windows or doors if greater than 100 millimetres in height. Ground covers greater than 0.5 metres in height are to be treated as shrubs.
- **Grass:** should be managed to maintain a height of 100 millimetres or less.

**Note:** If there is an approved Fire Management Plan/Bushfire Management Plan (FMP/BMP), then the requirements of the FMP/BMP may prevail, in the following circumstances –

a) Where the FMP/BMP was endorsed by the City in December 2015 or later;
b) Compliance with the normal requirements of the Bush Fire Notice would place the landowner in breach of environmental or Aboriginal heritage regulations; and
c) The BMP/FMP provides for additional firebreaks or similar.

**D.** The key reasons for the proposed changes are –

I. The level of risk in these areas is often relatively high, and new buildings are required to be built to bushfire resistant standards, but providing adequate bushfire safety cannot be achieved through building design alone, it also requires management of vegetation to the APZ standard, typically within around 25 metres of the house; and

II. Control of dry grasses or similar is still seen as appropriate, as such grasses are fairly easy to ignite and fire can move quickly through them.

# Category 3 - Land in the Rural-Residential category

**A.** Land in the 'Rural-Residential' category includes land Zoned 'Rural-Residential, where the lots are between around 4,000 square metres (i.e. around an acre) and 20 hectares (i.e. around 50 acres) in area. It also includes some smaller lots in the 'Rural' or similar Zones.

**B.** Currently, on most of the land in the Rural-Residential category, the following would be required during the fire season –

I. A boundary firebreak, other than where the lot is within a strategic firebreak area;
II. Parkland clearing in paddocks and along boundaries;
III. All tree branches to be pruned to 3 metres clear of the eaves and 5 metres clear of the roof of the house on the lot; and
IV. It is recommended that trees should be spaced at least 15 metres apart;
V. All vegetation within 20 metres (25 metres if the house was built after November 2011) of a building to be maintained at the BPZ standard during the fire season.

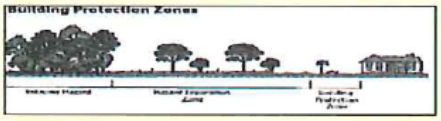
**Note:** The 'BPZ' standard is as follows -

**C - Building Protection Zones (BPZ) -** **This is a modified area of reduced fuel immediately surrounding a building**

**BPZ's starve the fire by reducing the fuel levels around your house. These requirements are designed to reduce the fire's intensity and minimise the likelihood of flame contact with buildings. The BPZ gives more protection to families should a fire threaten suddenly and they cannot leave. It also provides extra protection for fire fighters and property owners who may decide to stay with their property.**

A BPZ shall be provided for buildings in bush fire prone areas. The surroundings of buildings must comply with the following requirements:

1) The BPZ for existing buildings must be at least 20 metres from any external wall of the building unless varied under an approved Fire Management Plan (FMP) in accordance with section E - Interpretation and Additional Requirements (refer to E4).
2) The minimum BPZ for buildings constructed after 1 November 2011, in all cases shall be 25 metres.
3) The BPZ must be located within the boundary of the lot that the building is situated on.
4) Hazardous/flammable materials must not exceed the maximum fuel load specified in Point 5 below with grass areas not exceeding a height greater than 10 cm.
5) Fuel loads must be reduced and maintained at 2 tonne per hectare.
6) Isolated trees and shrubs may be retained, however, the first 5 metres around all buildings is to be clear of all hazardous/flammable materials.
7) Reticulated gardens in the BPZ shall be maintained to a height of no greater than 500 millimetres.
8) Wood piles must be at least 10 metres away from habitable dwellings.
9) Trees in the BPZ must comply with section E - Interpretation and Additional Requirements (refer to E1).
10) Where the land has an approved FMP, compliance must be achieved in accordance with the FMP. The FMP may vary the above BPZ requirements.
11) A Hazard Separation Zone (HSZ) is also recommended in the absence of a Fire Management Plan. Section E - Interpretation and Additional Requirements (refer to E3).




**Note:** If there is an approved Fire Management Plan/Bushfire Management Plan (FMP/BMP), then the requirements of the FMP/BMP may prevail.

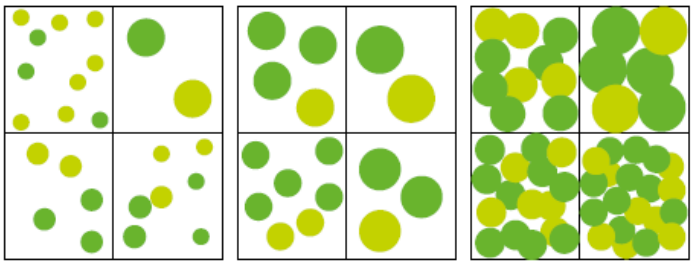
**C.** On land in the Rural-Residential category, the proposed Bushfire Notice would require –

I. All vegetation within 25 metres of a habitable building (including a house) to be maintained to the APZ standard during the fire season (does not require management of vegetation outside property boundaries); and
II. A firebreak of the perimeter of the lot, or within ten metres of the lot boundary

**Note:** The 'APZ standard' is as follows -

- **Fences:** within the APZ are constructed from non-combustible materials (e.g. iron, brick, limestone, metal post and wire). It is recommended that solid or slatted non-combustible perimeter fences are used.
- **Objects:** within 10 metres of a building, combustible objects must not be located close to the vulnerable parts of the building i.e. windows and doors.
- **Fine Fuel load:** combustible dead vegetation matter less than 6 millimetres in thickness reduced to and maintained at an average of two tonnes per hectare.
- **Trees (> 5 metres in height):** trunks at maturity should be a minimum distance of 6 metres from all elevations of the building, branches at maturity should not touch or overhang the building, lower branches should be removed to a height of 2 metres above the ground and or surface vegetation, canopy cover should be less than 15% with tree canopies at maturity well spread to at least 5 metres apart as to not form a continuous canopy.

**Figure 18:** Tree canopy cover – ranging from 15 to 70 per cent at maturity




- **Shrubs (0.5 metres to 5 metres in height):** should not be located under trees or within 3 metres of buildings, should not be planted in clumps greater than 5m² in area, clumps of shrubs should be separated from each other and any exposed window or door by at least 10 metres. Shrubs greater than 5 metres in height are to be treated as trees.
- **Ground covers (<0.5 metres in height):** can be planted under trees but must be properly maintained to remove dead plant material and any parts within 2 metres of a structure, but 3 metres from windows or doors if greater than 100 millimetres in height. Ground covers greater than 0.5 metres in height are to be treated as shrubs.
- **Grass:** should be managed to maintain a height of 100 millimetres or less.

**Note:** If there is an approved Fire Management Plan/Bushfire Management Plan (FMP/BMP), then the requirements of the FMP/BMP may prevail, in the following circumstances –

a) Where the FMP/BMP was endorsed by the City in December 2015 or later;
b) Compliance with the normal requirements of the Bush Fire Notice would place the landowner in breach of environmental or Aboriginal heritage regulations; and
c) The BMP/FMP provides for additional firebreaks or similar.

**D.** The key reasons for the proposed changes are –

I. The level of risk in these areas is often relatively high, and new buildings are required to be built to bushfire resistant standards, but providing adequate bushfire safety cannot be achieved through building design alone, it also requires management of vegetation to the APZ standard, typically within around 25 metres of the house; and

II. Whilst providing boundary firebreaks in areas where they are not currently required because of strategic firebreak networks would have environmental impacts, in most cases the strategic firebreak networks, which were the outcome of planning approaches from ten or more years ago, are considered inadequate – and they are the very areas where boundary firebreaks would be of most benefit in making properties more defendable in a bushfire.

# Category 4 - Land in the Rural category

**A.** Land in the 'Rural' category includes land Zoned 'Rural', 'Viticulture and Tourism' and several other Zones, as well as some lots Zoned 'Rural-Residential that are over 20 hectares (i.e. around 50 acres) in area.

**B.** Currently, on most of the land in the Rural category, the following would be required during the fire season –

I. A boundary firebreak;
II. Parkland clearing in paddocks and along boundaries;
III. All tree branches to be pruned to 3 metres clear of the eaves and 5 metres clear of the roof of the house on the lot; and
IV. It is recommended that trees should be spaced at least 15 metres apart;
V. All vegetation within 20 metres (25 metres if the house was built after November 2011) of a building to be maintained at the BPZ standard during the fire season.

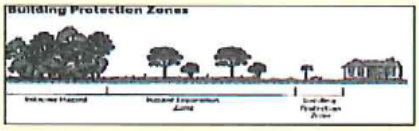
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A BPZ shall be provided for buildings in bush fire prone areas. The surroundings of buildings must comply with the following requirements:

1) The BPZ for existing buildings must be at least 20 metres from any external wall of the building unless varied under an approved Fire Management Plan (FMP) in accordance with section E - Interpretation and Additional Requirements (refer to E4).
2) The minimum BPZ for buildings constructed after 1 November 2011, in all cases shall be 25 metres.
3) The BPZ must be located within the boundary of the lot that the building is situated on.
4) Hazardous/flammable materials must not exceed the maximum fuel load specified in Point 5 below with grass areas not exceeding a height greater than 10 cm.
5) Fuel loads must be reduced and maintained at 2 tonne per hectare.
6) Isolated trees and shrubs may be retained, however, the first 5 metres around all buildings is to be clear of all hazardous/flammable materials.
7) Reticulated gardens in the BPZ shall be maintained to a height of no greater than 500 millimetres.
8) Wood piles must be at least 10 metres away from habitable dwellings.
9) Trees in the BPZ must comply with section E - Interpretation and Additional Requirements (refer to E1).
10) Where the land has an approved FMP, compliance must be achieved in accordance with the FMP. The FMP may vary the above BPZ requirements.
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**C.** On land in the Rural category, the proposed Bushfire Notice would require –

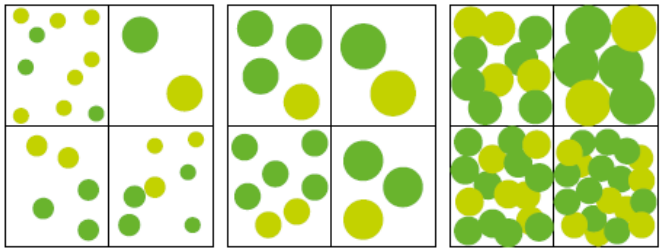
I. All vegetation within 25 metres of a habitable building (including a house) to be maintained to the APZ standard during the fire season (does not require management of vegetation outside property boundaries); and
II. A firebreak of the perimeter of the lot, or within ten metres of the lot boundary.

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**D.** The key reasons for the proposed changes are –

I. The level of risk in these areas is often relatively high, and new buildings are required to be built to bushfire resistant standards, but providing adequate bushfire safety cannot be achieved through building design alone, it also requires management of vegetation to the APZ standard, typically within around 25 metres of the house; and

II. The requirement to 'parkland clear within paddocks' is not clearly described, and extensive parkland style clearing across large areas is not seen as necessary or appropriate to manage bushfire risk.