

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on Council's role in bushfire management and planning.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all land under the management of the Whitsunday Regional Council.

Whitsunday Regional Council owns, manages and is trustee for over 800 lots of land. The area of land under Council management is approximately 36,000ha which includes the lots and road reserves. Council, as a landowner has an obligation to manage bushfire hazard on public land under its management. The management of bushfire hazard is a priority land management issue in a number of rural, rural residential and urban areas to protect life, infrastructure and maintain biological diversity. The most effective means for Council to manage bushfire hazard on public land is through developing collaborative approaches with bushfire management agencies and local communities.

Policy Statement

1. Council places a priority on the protection of life and infrastructure, whilst recognising the need to consider the ecosystem services which native forests provide.
2. Council acknowledges that planned fire can have a positive influence in reducing the risk of adverse impacts from bushfire.
3. Council acknowledges that bushland provides a range of ecosystem services such as habitat for wildlife, producing water and timber, storing carbon, releasing oxygen and hosting tourism and recreation opportunities.
4. Council will develop a Bushfire Management Plan which will include a list of high priority bushfire management areas.
5. Council shall undertake an active role in bushfire management and planning by:
 - a) Liaising with local communities and rural fire brigades and developing area specific bushfire management plans in high priority bushfire management areas.
 - b) Attending bushfire management and planning meetings with stakeholders.
 - c) Develop and implement a rural fire levy which can be used to assist in resourcing local rural fire brigades to carry out bushfire mitigation practises in high priority bushfire management areas.
 - d) Assisting the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service to develop regional bushfire management strategies and priorities.
6. Council shall provide financial resources to implement the tasks assigned to it as outlined in the area specific bushfire management plans, this may include the development and maintenance of fire control lines (fire breaks).
7. Council's current level of involvement in bushfire management and planning is reflected in the following table:

Bushfire Management Policy

Community Services - Natural Resource Management
and Climate
COMM_03

Management and Planning Role	Level of Current Involvement	Desired Actions
Bushfire Planning	Medium-high	- Participate in regional bushfire management priority setting. - Assist with developing bushfire management plans for high priority areas. - Write to rural fire brigades to formalise bushfire management arrangements for public lots of land where required.
Prevention	Low-medium	- Council will not undertake hazard reduction burns itself, rather it will request assistance from rural fire brigades to undertake this work. - Council will develop and maintain bushfire fire lines where possible and where agreed to by the relevant stakeholders.
Preparedness	Low	The rural fire brigades are managed by the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) which provides vehicles, training and other equipment. Council will liaise with QFES to ensure rural fire brigades are adequately resourced and trained to respond to local bushfire.
Fuel Management	Low	Council will delegate the lighting of hazard reduction burns to trained rural fire brigade groups or staff from the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Response	Low	Council does not have the resources to respond readily to bushfire. However, it may be able to provide limited heavy machinery in some instances. The Council will rely on rural fire brigades or urban fire services to respond to fires.
Recovery	Low	Council itself has limited resources to respond to the impacts of large bushfires. However, through the Whitsunday Disaster Management Committee, appropriate government and non-government agencies could be called upon to assist in the event of a large destructive bushfire.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Medium	Council will liaise with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services in monitoring bushfire hazard, bushfire mitigation planning and bushfire priority setting.

Applicable Legislation

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

Whitsunday Regional Council Local Law No. 4 (Local Government Controlled Areas, Facilities and Roads) 2014

Whitsunday Regional Council Subordinate Local Law No. 4 (Local Government Controlled Areas, Facilities and Roads) 2014

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990

Queensland Land Act 1994

Definitions

CEO refers to the Chief Executive Officer of the Whitsunday Regional Council appointed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Council refers to the Whitsunday Regional Council

Employee refers to any employee, contractor, volunteer etc. of the Council

Related Documents

Whitsunday Regional Council Bushfire Management Plan

Human Rights Compatibility Statement

This Policy has been assessed as compatible with the Human Rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

COUNCIL POLICY			
Date Adopted by Council	8 September 2021	Council Resolution	2021/09/08.09
Effective Date	8 September 2021	Next Review Date	8 September 2021
Responsible Officer(s)	Coordinator Natural Resource Management and Climate	Revokes	LSP_C&ENV_13
Public Consultation: Yes / No			