



# Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan - 2020

## Frequently Ask Questions

## What is the Bushfire Risk Management Planning Program?

The Bushfire Risk Management (BRM) Planning program (the Program) is a state-wide program led by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to support local governments to develop and implement an integrated BRM planning framework in Western Australia for their local area.

The Program:

- was initiated in 2013 to address recommendations<sup>1</sup> made by *A Shared Responsibility: the Report of the Perth Hills Bushfire February 2011 Review* (the Keelty Report).
- supports agencies to fulfil their responsibilities under *the State Hazard Plan for Fire and State Emergency Management Policy 2.9 Management of Emergency Risks* by developing a BRM Plan for local government areas with significant bushfire risk.
- aims to reduce bushfire risks across local government areas by identifying assets at risk and assigning treatment options that are best suited to the local community and environment.
- was piloted in four local governments between February and July 2014 to prove the framework and tools, inform development of a software solution and confirm the ongoing support requirements for extension of the Program to additional local governments.
- has been progressively implemented by DFES across priority local government areas since late 2015. In July 2020, 40 local governments had Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) endorsed BRM Plans.

## What are the Guidelines?

The *Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan* (the Guidelines) establish the process for developing and implementing a BRM Plan and set out the method for assessing bushfire risk. The Director OBRM has endorsed the Guidelines as a Standard to support a consistent approach to BRM planning across Western Australia. In September 2020 an updated version of the Guidelines were released. This update reflects minor changes in process and systems that have occurred over the first five years of implementing the program. The Guidelines are still aligned to *AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and guidelines*, which is applied to the development and implementation of any BRM Plan.

## Who are the Guidelines for and how are they to be used?

The Guidelines are intended for those involved in the development, implementation and/or review of BRM Plans in Western Australia. The Guidelines establish the following roles and responsibilities in the BRM planning process:

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<sup>1</sup> The Program contributes towards addressing the recommendations made by *A Shared Responsibility: the Report of the Perth Hills Bushfire February 2011 Review* (the Keelty Report), specifically components of recommendations 15, 21, 23, 38 and 53.



- *Local government* – The Guidelines reinforce the central role of local government in local level BRM planning in Western Australia, reflecting the State Hazard Plan - Fire requirement for an integrated BRM Plan to be developed for local government areas with high or extreme bushfire risk. Under the Guidelines, local government is the custodian of the BRM Plan and coordinate its development. Local government should ensure BRM Plans align with the Guidelines. In addition, local government, as a land manager, is responsible for implementing treatment strategies to address risks on the land they manage. The local government council approves an OBRM endorsed BRM Plans.
- *DFES* – The Guidelines reflect the Department’s responsibilities in the State Hazard Plan - Fire, requiring DFES to participate in, and contribute to, locally-developed BRM Plans. DFES supports local government by providing expert knowledge and advice, assisting with the identification of treatment strategies, and engaging other government agencies in the planning process. OBRM will review draft BRM Plans for consistency with the Guidelines, prior to final approval by the local government council. DFES administers the Bushfire Risk Management System (BRMS) and Mitigation Activity Fund.
- *Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) - Parks and Wildlife Service* – State Hazard Plan - Fire also requires DBCA to participate in, and contribute to, locally-developed plans. Local governments are encouraged to seek advice from DBCA when identifying environmental assets that are vulnerable to fire and planning appropriate treatment strategies for their protection. For many local governments, DBCA will be a significant land owner and treatment manager.
- *Government agencies and public utilities* – Local government and DFES will engage government agencies and public utilities that own or manage assets or land in the development and implementation of BRM Plans. Agencies and utilities can assist local government by providing information about their assets and treatment programs, and by participating in the risk assessment process. In most cases, their role will be to manage land that presents a significant risk to assets by implementing the treatment strategies agreed through the BRM planning process.
- *Corporations and private landowners* - Local government and DFES will engage corporations and private land owners that own or manage assets or land in the development and implementation of BRM Plans. Where privately owned or managed land presents a significant risk to assets, corporations and private land owners may implement treatment strategies on their own land, as identified and negotiated through the planning process. The planning process may also identify privately owned assets that are at significant risk from bushfire. Local government and DFES will assist asset owners to identify additional measures for reducing the vulnerability of such assets.

More information on the roles and responsibilities in the planning process can be found in section 2.2 Roles and Responsibilities in the Guidelines.



## What is the Bushfire Risk Management System (BRMS)?

The BRMS is a DFES managed software application that supports the development and implementation of a BRM Plan. BRMS is used to identify (map) assets, complete risk assessments and record information about risk treatments. It is an essential component of an integrated BRM planning process, providing for enhanced coordination, analysis and oversight of BRM information in Western Australia.

## 2020 update to the Guidelines?

The Guidelines and supporting templates have been updated to better reflect current processes in using the Program and improve the usability for local governments. These have been minor changes and do not significantly alter the processes from the previous version.

There will be a transition to the 2020 version of the Guidelines. Local governments are encouraged to adopt the new Guidelines and templates as soon as practicable, however the 2020 Guidelines and templates will take effect from **1 December 2020**. Any plans received after the **30 November 2020** will need to adopt the 2020 Guidelines and templates.

A summary of the changes:

- Added Forest Products Commission and Department Planning, Lands and Heritage to roles and responsibilities section.
- References to the Mitigation Activity Fund added to DFES' roles and responsibilities.
- Process diagrams simplified in the Guidelines, with the detailed process flows moved to the *Bushfire Risk Management Planning Handbook* (the Handbook).
- Updated the legislation, policies and emergency management doctrine references to reflect changes in legislation and the publication of new policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Linked the BRM planning process to existing Local Emergency Management Arrangements and the role of Bush Fire Advisory Committees.
- Moved details of risk framework, principles and risk management process to the Handbook and Training Manual
- Added new content to the context section covering threatened species and communities located within the local government.
- Updated risk process including likelihood/consequence information to reflect improved processes currently in use.
- Requirements for local government to submit an annual report to OBRM have been removed. This reporting requirement will be addressed through the annual request to local government to contribute to the *Fuel Reduction Activities* report conducted by OBRM.
- Removed *Appendix A – Vegetation Categories* and *Appendix B – Planning Area Assessment Tool*.
- Updated the *BRM Plan template* to reflect the changes to the Guidelines as described above and to provide additional guidance to local government when developing their BRM Plan.
- Updated the structure of the *Communication Strategy* to better capture what stakeholders were engaged in the development of the BRM Plan.



## **When will the Guidelines next be reviewed and how can I provide comment?**

Following the release of the 2020 Guidelines OBRM will be leading a comprehensive review of the Guidelines starting in October 2020. This review will look at the processes described in the Guidelines, implementation of the 2015 Guidelines, the outcomes of the BRM Planning process and the experience of those involved in the program. This review will be used to inform a review and update of the Guidelines and processes.

Members of the public and private sector are encouraged to provide their feedback to their respective local government and this will then be captured through OBRM's consultation process. Individual feedback can also be provided directly to OBRM at [obrm@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:obrm@dfes.wa.gov.au).

## **Where do I go for further information or advice?**

Program enquiries should be addressed to the DFES Bushfire Risk Management Branch by telephone on 6551 4043 or via email at [brmp@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:brmp@dfes.wa.gov.au).

Guideline and template enquiries should be addressed to OBRM by telephone on 6551 4095 or via email at [obrm@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:obrm@dfes.wa.gov.au).

