Mapping Standard for Bush Fire Prone Areas
The Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) *Mapping Standard for Bush Fire Prone Areas* (the Standard) was approved by the Director of OBRM in May 2018. It is endorsed as the standard for mapping bush fire prone areas under the OBRM Charter. This is the fifth edition of the Standard, a revision of the Standard published in December 2015.

OBRM acknowledges those who assisted in the review and development of the Standard. In particular, OBRM recognises the valuable contribution of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety – Building Commission, the Western Australian Land Information Authority (Landgate), and the NSW Rural Fire Service. OBRM would also like to recognise the important role of local governments in the development of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas each year.

**Currency of the Standard**

The Standard shall be reviewed as appropriate to maintain its currency, and no less than once every five years, as per Section 7 of the Standard. The latest version of the Standard will be available at [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/OBRM](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/OBRM).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amendment</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Amended by</th>
<th>Release</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V5.0</td>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Minor amendment to reflect minor changes in approval timelines.</td>
<td>OBRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4.0</td>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Minor amendment to terminology to reflect maturity of review process (provision of ‘mapping’ rather than ‘datasets’). Update of contact details and agency names to reflect machinery of government changes.</td>
<td>OBRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3.0</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Major amendment to Section 1.1 to remove text “Where a bush fire prone area cuts across a portion of a parcel of land, the entire parcel is treated as a bush fire prone area for the purposes of this Standard.” Minor updates to other sections.</td>
<td>OBRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2.0</td>
<td>November 2015</td>
<td>Annual review undertaken as outlined in 2014 Standard. Consultation with Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety – Building Commission, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, and Landgate.</td>
<td>OBRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1.0</td>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>Initial release</td>
<td>OBRM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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### Definitions

The following definitions apply to terms used within this Standard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bush fire</strong></td>
<td>An unplanned vegetation fire. A generic term, which includes grass fires, forest fires and scrub fires, both with and without a suppression objective. ‘Bushfire’ and ‘bush fire’ should be taken to have the same meaning, with the latter used in this document to align with the terminology of the <em>Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bush fire prone area</strong></td>
<td>An area that is subject to, or likely to be subject to, bush fire attack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bush fire prone buffer</strong></td>
<td>An area 100 metres wide that immediately surrounds bush fire prone vegetation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bush fire prone vegetation</strong></td>
<td>Vegetation categorised as bush fire prone in accordance with the criteria and vegetation key specified in this Standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Designated bush fire prone area</strong></td>
<td>An area that has been designated by the Fire and Emergency Services (FES) Commissioner under s.18P of the <em>Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998</em> (as amended) as an area that is subject, or likely to be subject, to bushfires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precautionary principle</strong></td>
<td>The presumption against approving further strategic planning proposals, subdivision and development applications or intensification of land uses, where there is a lack of certainty that the potential for significant adverse impacts can be adequately reduced or managed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas</strong></td>
<td>An online map spatially identifying areas within Western Australia that are designated as bush fire prone, produced in line with the requirements of this Standard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. Introduction

The need to plan for appropriate land use in areas subject to bush fire risk is becoming increasingly prominent. A drying climate, expansion of urban land into rural areas and increasing fuel loads means that bush fire risk is a significant issue that needs to be addressed in Western Australia. The identification of bush fire prone areas is a fundamental step towards strengthening the application of bush fire planning and building controls.

The Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas (the Map) identifies the bush fire prone areas of the State as designated by the Fire and Emergency Services (FES) Commissioner. The Standard defines the process for the creation of the Map and its identification of bush fire prone areas in Western Australia.

The Map and Standard are important components of State Government reforms to reduce the risk of bush fire to life, property and infrastructure in response to the findings of A Shared Responsibility: The Report of the Perth Hills Bushfire February 2011 Review (also known as the Keelty Report). Together they help ensure the accurate and consistent designation of bush fire prone areas in Western Australia.

![Figure 1 – Western Australian Bush Fire Prone Areas Framework](image-url)
1.1 What is a Bush Fire Prone Area?
A bush fire prone area is defined as an area that is subject to, or likely to be subject to, bush fire attack. These areas are identified by the presence of and proximity to bush fire prone vegetation for the purposes of the Standard. Research into past bush fire events indicates that approximately 85 per cent of destroyed houses were within 100 metres of bushland, with ember attack being a significant cause of property ignition. As such, 100 metres has been added to the periphery of the bush fire prone vegetation to create the bush fire prone areas as defined by the Standard.

1.2 Purpose of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas
The Map identifies the bush fire prone areas of the State as designated by the FES Commissioner. Additional planning and building requirements may apply to developments within areas designated as bush fire prone by the FES Commissioner. A further assessment of bush fire risk may also be required. Further information on the bush fire planning policy and regulatory framework is available at www.planning.wa.gov.au/bushfire. The Map may also be used as a research tool by those seeking information about the bush fire prone status of land in Western Australia.

2. Scope
This Standard defines the process for the development of the Map and its identification of bush fire prone areas of Western Australia. The Map does not identify specific bush fire risks, and land not designated as bush fire prone may still be subject to bush fire.

3. Legislation and Policy
Recommendation three of the Keelty Report proposed the transfer of responsibility for designating bush fire prone areas to the State, through the Western Australian Planning Commission, to improve consistency in the application of bush fire planning and building controls. The Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998 was identified as the appropriate legislation to contain designation provisions and following the passage of the Fire and Emergency Services Amendment Act 2015 in August 2015, the FES Commissioner can, by order published in the Gazette, designate areas of the State as bush fire prone.

The Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) is responsible for the development of the Map that identifies designated bush fire prone areas of Western Australia, working with local government and partner agencies, and with technical support provided by Landgate. OBRM is an independent office within the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) reporting directly to the FES Commissioner. OBRM's role is to oversee prescribed burning and bush fire related risk management in Western Australia. The OBRM Charter provides for the development and promotion of standards, including the establishment of a mapping standard for bush fire prone areas.

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4. Identifying Bush Fire Prone Areas

This section provides an overview of the process for identifying bush fire prone areas.

4.1 Vegetation Classification

The vegetation types considered bush fire prone for the purpose of the Standard are contained in Table 1, sourced from Australian Standard 3959-2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetation Classification</th>
<th>Vegetation Type</th>
<th>Figure No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Forest</td>
<td>Tall open forest</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Trees over 30 metres high; 30-70% foliage cover; may include understorey ranging from rainforest and tree ferns to low trees and tall shrubs. Found in areas of high reliable rainfall. Typically dominated by eucalypt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tall woodland</td>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open forest</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>Trees 10-30 metres high; 30-70% foliage cover; may include understorey of sclerophyllous low trees and tall shrubs or grass. Typically dominated by eucalypt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low open forest</td>
<td>04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine plantations</td>
<td>Not shown</td>
<td>Trees 10-30 metres in height at maturity generally comprising Pinus species or other softwood species, planted as a single species for the production of timber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Woodland</td>
<td>Woodland</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>Trees 10-30 metres high; 10-30% foliage cover dominated by eucalypts; understorey low trees to tall shrubs typically dominated by Acacia, Callitris or Casuarina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open woodland</td>
<td>06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low woodland</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>Low trees and shrubs 2-10 metres high; foliage cover less than 10%. Dominated by eucalypt and Acacias. Often have a grassy understorey or low shrubs. Acacias and Casuarina woodlands grade to Atriplex shrublands in the arid and semi-arid zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low open woodland</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open shrubland</td>
<td>09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Shrubland</td>
<td>Closed heath</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Found in wet areas and/or affected by poor soil fertility or shallow soils. Shrubs 1-2 metres high often comprising of Banksia, Acacia, Hakea and Grevillea. Wet heaths occur in sands adjoining dunes of the littoral (shore) zone. Montane heaths occur on shallow or water-logged soils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open heath</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low shrubland</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shrubs &lt;2 metres high; greater than 30% foliage cover. Understoreys can contain grasses, Acacia and Casuarina often dominant in the arid and semi-arid zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Scrub</td>
<td>Closed Scrub</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Found in wet areas and/or areas affected by poor soil fertility or shallow soils; &lt;30% foliage cover. Dry heaths occur in rocky areas. Shrubs &gt;2 metres high. Typical of coastal wetlands and tall heaths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open Scrub</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Shrubs greater than 2 metres high, 10-30% foliage cover with a mixed species composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Mallee/ Mulga</td>
<td>Tall Shrubland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Vegetation dominated by shrubs especially eucalypts and acacias with a multi-stemmed habit; usually greater than 2 metres in height; &lt;30% foliage cover. Understorey of widespread to dense low shrubs (Acacias) or sparse grasses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Rainforest</td>
<td>Tall closed forest</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Trees 10-40 metres in height; &gt;90% foliage cover; understorey may contain a large number of species with a variety of heights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closed forest</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low closed forest</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Grasslands</td>
<td>Low open Shrubland</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>All forms including situations with shrubs and trees if the overstorey foliage cover is less than 10%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hummock grassland</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closed tussock grassland</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tussock grassland</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open tussock</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sparse open tussock</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dense sown pasture</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sown pasture</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open herbfield</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sparse open herbfield</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Overstoreys of open woodland, low open woodland, tall open shrubland and low open shrubland should be classified to the vegetation type on the basis of their understoreys, others to be classified on the basis of their overstoreys. Vegetation height is the average height of the top of the overstorey.

5 Source: AS 3959-2009: Table 2.3, reproduced with permission from SAI Global under licence number 1510-C090.
6 Figure number relates to those shown in Appendix 1 – Classification of Vegetation Summary.
The following classes of vegetation are not considered bush fire prone for the purpose of the Standard:


More detail is provided in Appendix 1 – Vegetation Classification Summary, which provides a visual guide to assist in classifying vegetation.

4.2 Bush Fire Prone Vegetation Data

The vegetation data used to develop the Map was sourced from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Forest Products Commission and PF Olsen. A review was undertaken with DFES and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to determine which types of vegetation contained in the data are prone to bush fire. As per Section 6 of this Standard, local government and relevant state agencies are provided with the opportunity to annually review the bush fire prone mapping for their administrative areas, initially within six months of the first release of the Map and on an annual basis thereafter.

4.3 Assessing Bush Fire Prone Vegetation

Vegetation is identified as bush fire prone on the Map if it contains at least one of the vegetation classifications identified in Table 1 (detailed in Appendix 1 – Vegetation Classification Summary) and meets the size and proximity requirements contained in points 1 – 3 in Figure 2 below and over page.

1. one hectare in area or greater:

![Diagram](Included as Bush Fire Prone Vegetation Excluded as Bush Fire Prone Vegetation)
2. less than 1 hectare to 0.25 hectares in area and 100 metres or less from other bushfire prone vegetation 1 hectare or greater in area:

Vegetation 0.25 ha and greater but less than 1 ha

100 m or less

Vegetation 1 ha or greater

Greater than 100 m

Vegetation 0.25 ha and greater but less than 1 ha

3. is less than 0.25 hectare in area but is 20 metres or less from bush fire prone vegetation of any size.7

Vegetation qualifying as bush fire prone

Greater than 20 m

Vegetation less than 0.25 ha

20 m or less

Vegetation less than 0.25 ha

20 m or less

Vegetation less than 0.25 ha

20 m or less

7 The inclusion of bush fire prone vegetation classifications that are less than 0.25 hectare in area but 20 metres or less from bush fire prone vegetation of any size was not explicit in the 2014 Standard.
4. strips of vegetation 20 metres or greater in width regardless of length and 20 metres or less from each other or bush fire prone vegetation of any size:

Vegetation should be classified at the point in time the assessment is undertaken. The future state of the site in question should not be considered (refer Section 6 of the Standard for more detail on how changes in vegetation will be captured over time).

4.4 Precautionary Principle

Where it is uncertain whether an area of vegetation meets the criteria to be bush fire prone, local government should adopt a precautionary approach and identify the vegetation as bush fire prone.

4.5 Identifying the Bush Fire Prone Area

Once the bush fire prone vegetation has been identified, a 100 metre buffer is applied to the periphery of the bush fire prone vegetation to create the bush fire prone area. Buffering of the bush fire prone vegetation may create overlapping bush fire prone areas. Where two or more buffers overlap, they are merged to form a single bush fire prone area. The bush fire prone area, which is comprised of the bush fire prone vegetation and the bush fire prone buffer, is displayed on the Map in accordance with Section 5 of this Standard.

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Figure 2 – Size and Proximity Requirements for Vegetation to be Considered Bush Fire Prone

8 The inclusion of bush fire prone vegetation classifications that are strips of vegetation 20 metres or greater in width regardless of length and 20 metres or less from each other or bush fire prone vegetation of any size was not explicit in the 2014 Standard.
5. Technical Specifications of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas

This section provides an overview of the technical specifications of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas.

5.1 Map and Data Accessibility

The Map can be accessed online through the DFES website utilising the Shared Location Information Platform (SLIP) administered by Landgate. The dataset for designated bush fire prone areas is also available from the Western Australian open data website, www.data.wa.gov.au, for users to access and incorporate into their Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as appropriate.

5.2 Map Inclusions

The Map includes the following data:

- Bush fire prone areas;
- Aerial photography;
- Cadastral boundaries;
- Local government boundaries;
- Town site names; and
- Road names.

5.3 Map Functionality

Users are able to search the map by address, or by navigating and zooming to areas of interest. When an area of interest is identified, clicking on the Map will display the:

- Designation status (‘not applicable’ or ‘bush fire prone area’);
- Designation date (DD-MM-YY format) of bush fire prone areas;
- Local government for that location; and

The Map also contains a links to Instructions for Use and Frequently Asked Questions which will provide users with greater detail on how to use the Map.
5.4 Map Depiction of Bush Fire Prone Areas

Bush fire prone areas will appear pink in colour on the Map as per the example image below. The pink colour used to identify bush fire prone areas is ESRI ArcGIS standard colour RGB colour model values 255, 0, 197 displayed at 70 per cent transparency.

Figure 3 – Map Sample

This section provides an overview of the schedule of development of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas.

6.1 Review of Bush Fire Prone Mapping

It is the responsibility of local government and relevant state agencies to monitor and review bush fire prone areas identified within their administrative areas to ensure the currency of the Map. Public and industry input should be provided to the relevant local government and will be captured through OBRM’s consultation process. Relevant state government agencies will be provided with the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Map as appropriate. OBRM will coordinate the initial six month review and annual review thereafter of bush fire prone mapping as follows:

- OBRM will write to local government and relevant state agencies in December of each year to initiate the annual review of the Map.
  - Local government and state agencies will be provided with access to the bush fire prone mapping for their administrative areas.
- Local government and state agencies will have approximately 60 days to review the mapping for their administrative areas, with assistance by OBRM if required.
- Requests for amendments are to be provided to OBRM by early March. OBRM must also be notified if no amendments are required.
- OBRM will review requested amendments, in consultation with local government and relevant state government agencies, with support from Landgate.
  - If OBRM does not accept proposed amendments, OBRM will liaise with relevant parties, and DFES if required, to confirm (or otherwise) the accuracy of the proposed amendments. Should a difference of opinion not be resolved at the operational level, the issue will be escalated to the Director of OBRM for a final decision.
- Where a local government or state agency chooses not to participate in the review process, OBRM may review the bush fire prone vegetation data of the administrative area with a focus on population centres. Major amendments will be made with the agreement of the Director of OBRM. Local government and relevant state agencies will be informed of major amendments made within their administrative area.

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9 Requests can only be lodged via the local government where the property or land is located.
10 In most cases, a desktop assessment and application of local knowledge is an adequate process for verifying the bush fire prone vegetation data. A field assessment is appropriate where data or local knowledge is not sufficient to make a determination.
11 Timeframes may vary slightly to reflect operational requirements. Requests for amendment may be submitted by local government or state agencies at any time during the year. However, amendments will only take effect with the annual gazettal of bush fire prone areas by the FES Commissioner.
6.2 Finalisation of the Bush Fire Prone Area Dataset

- Landgate, or an alternative technical service provider, will use the accepted bush fire prone vegetation data to prepare the draft bush fire prone area dataset and Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas in accordance with the requirements of this Standard by mid-May each year.
- OBRM will review the draft bush fire prone area dataset and Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas and declare a final version by late May of each year.

6.3 Publication of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas

- The bush fire prone area dataset as depicted on the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas is provided by OBRM to the FES Commissioner in May of each year for the annual designation of bush fire prone areas.
- The FES Commissioner designates the bush fire prone areas, identified for information purposes on the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas, through an order published in the Government Gazette.
- On behalf of OBRM, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services stores the designated bush fire prone area dataset and makes it publicly accessible through Landgate:
  - to view as the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas on the DFES website;
  - to view and download through www.data.wa.gov.au12; and
  - as a field in relevant Landgate Property Interest Reports.
- OBRM will provide a copy of the amended bush fire prone vegetation data to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development on request.

The annual review process is depicted as a flow chart in Appendix 2 – Schedule for Annual Review of this Standard.

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1 Mapping Standard for Bush Fire Prone Areas

The Standard shall be reviewed every five years or as appropriate to maintain its currency. The review process will be managed by OBRM, in consultation with state and local government stakeholders. Public and industry input can be provided to the relevant local government and will be captured through the OBRM consultation processes.

12 Previously designated bush fire prone area data will continue to be publicly available in the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas and www.data.wa.gov.au, and will be identified by its designation date.
Figure 4 – Classification of Vegetation Summary\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{footnotesize}\textsuperscript{13} Source: AS 3959-2009: Figure 2.3, reproduced with permission from SAI Global under licence number 1510-c090.\end{footnotesize}
Western Australian Photographic Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A Forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest Tall Open – Jarrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest – Karri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest – Melaleuca 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B Woodland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodland – Banksia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland – Eucalypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland – Melaleuca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group C Shrubland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shrubland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrubland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 The categorisation of melaleuca should be made with reference to the percentage of crown cover. If 30 per cent or greater it should be considered forest, and less than 30 per cent should be considered woodland. Consistent with AS 3959 – 2009, overstoreys of open woodland, low open woodland, tall open shrubland and low open shrubland should be classified to the vegetation type on the basis of their understories, others to be classified on the basis of their overstoreys.
**Group D Scrub**

| Scrub |

**Group E Mallee/Mulga**

| Mulga | Mallee |

**Group F Rainforest**

Rainforest in Western Australia is restricted to the Kimberley Region which contains small areas of dry rainforest scattered across sheltered valleys and high rainfall coastal areas. The majority of these sites are protected within the reserve system and are unlikely to be associated with future development.

**Group G Grassland**

| Grassland | Grassland – Spinfex | Grassland – Melaleuca Overstorey |

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*Figure 5 – Western Australian Photographic Examples*[^15]

[^15]: Western Australian photographic examples courtesy of the Bushfire Technical Services team of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.
Appendix 2

Figure 6 – Schedule for Annual Review

Acronyms
- BPA – Bush Fire Prone Area
- BPV – Bush Fire Prone Vegetation
- LG – Local government
- DFES – Department of Fire and Emergency Services
- FES Comm – Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner
- OBRM – Office of Bushfire Risk Management
- PIR – Property Interest Report
- SGA – Relevant state government agencies