OFFICE OF BUSHFIRE RISK MANAGEMENT (OBRM) UPDATE

Mapping Bush Fire Prone Areas in Western Australia

The Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) is responsible for the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas, which identifies areas of Western Australia that have been designated as bush fire prone by the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner. Properties that are located in designated areas may require additional assessment as part of any planning or building approval processes.

OBRM released the second edition of the Map on 20 May 2016. This edition identified both newly designated bush fire prone areas and those continuing from the first edition of the Map released in December 2015. All designated bush fire prone areas are coloured pink on the Map, with the newly designated areas further highlighted by a blue cross-hatched overlay. The blue cross-hatched overlay will be removed from the Map at the completion of the four month transitional period for newly designated areas, with additional planning and building requirements applying to development on these sites on and from 21 September 2016.

The Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas datasets are also available in GIS format through data.wa.gov.au. The next edition of the Map is due for release in May 2017, with the local government review period to support its development commencing in late 2016.

Bushfire Risk Management Planning Program

The Bushfire Risk Management Planning Program is a collaborative project led by DFES with support from OBRM. The project aims to ensure that bushfire risks are managed across local government areas by assigning and prioritising treatment works that appropriately manage risk to assets of value to the local community.

Since our last update, OBRM has been working with our counterparts to finalise updated versions of the templates to support the development of a Bushfire Risk Management Plan. These will shortly be available from the publications section of our webpage. We welcome feedback from those using the templates in their local governments, please send suggestions and comments to obrm@dfes.wa.gov.au or contact us by telephone on 9395 9538.

Reporting on Bushfire Risk

OBRM operates under a Charter which requires OBRM to review and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of bushfire risk management in Western Australia. This Charter responsibility includes reporting on the state of bushfire risk, the effect of prescribed burning and other fuel management techniques, the nature and availability of resourcing of relevant agencies, and the efficacy of legislation pertaining to bushfire risk. This information is sourced from a range of entities involved in bushfire risk management activities.

I wrote to local governments and agencies in August requesting data and information which will assist OBRM to fulfil its reporting obligations. Local government has an integral role in providing information that will provide an overview of bushfire risk across the state. In particular the number of permits to burn that are issued by local governments provides an indication of the amount of fire that is applied to the landscape, the purpose of those burns and an indication of the risks around the burning activities. The efforts and support of local governments in compiling and submitting this information by 9 September 2016 is appreciated by OBRM.
Local Government Permit to Burn Review Project

The Local Government Permit to Burn Review project is an OBRM-led initiative aimed at improving the coordination, oversight and consistency of planned fire activities at the local government level. OBRM is also seeking to identify a framework by which bushfire risk can be managed through best practice and a simplified regulatory structure. A simplified and flexible permit to burn will be a key component of this.

The Stakeholder Reference Group for this project has met three times this year and through its consultative structure is sourcing solutions to many of the issues. The Working Groups are in the process of applying a SWOT analysis to proposed solutions/options that may address the issues identified in the 2013/14 Permit Trial and those identified as both issues and potential solutions through this consultation that the Permit Trial did not identify.

Most recently, the Working Groups provided the SRG with an analysis of all of the legislative and regulatory elements associated with Permits to Burn. The SRG will determine which of these elements contribute to the effective management of the permit process in their current format. The SRG will seek advice as to how the current statutory components that do not contribute to the effective risk management associated with permit burns may be amended.

The Terms of Reference and Minutes of the SRG meetings are published on the OBRM webpage at: [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/obrm](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/obrm)

Consultation

The OBRM team and I have been making efforts to meet with many of our stakeholders during the recent period and create opportunities to develop our stakeholders’ understanding of OBRM and its functions. Below is a summary of key meetings that OBRM presented at this quarter:

- Fire and Emergency Service Units Volunteer Advisory Committee Meeting
- SSSI Surveyors in Bunbury
- P&W Prescribed Fire Workshop
- Parks and Leisure Australia Conference
- Avon Midland Country Zone meeting
- Urban Development Institute of Australia Hot Topics Breakfast – “Implementing planning for bushfire protection”

We look forward to building on this and creating further opportunities next quarter.

MURRAY CARTER
DIRECTOR OBRM
2 September 2016