### Legal responsibility

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The Country Fire Authority Act - Council has obligations as a land manager and also has delegated powers under this Act for the issuing of Fire Prevention notices on private land.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 is the tool where planning decisions are made for new developments to ensure multiple obligations of safety and appropriate land management outcomes including biodiversity conservation are considered. New bushfire planning provisions were introduced into planning schemes in November 2011 to ensure that planning decisions prioritise the protection of human life over other policy considerations and decision-making in areas at risk from bushfire. This involves ensuring any biodiversity and environmental objectives specified in the planning scheme are compatible with planned bushfire protection measures.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 - seeks to put in place preventative management mechanisms to ensure no biota or ecological communities become extinct and that the processes that threaten biodiversity are identified and addressed. The Act is far broader than 'endangered species' legislation, covering ecological communities; potentially threatening processes; and community involvement in conservation.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - protects the environment, streamlines a national environmental assessment and approvals process, protects Australian biodiversity and integrates management of important natural and cultural places.





Yarra Ranges Council

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#### Related materials

#### Guidelines

Yarra Ranges Council Flora & Fauna Plan 2012: Sustaining biodiversity for current and future generations Yarra Ranges Council Environment Department Landscaping for bushfire: Garden Design and Plant Selection CFA Victoria Websites

- General websites
- www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au
- www.dpi.vic.gov.au

#### • Fire Ecology

- http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/fire-and-other-emergencies/fires-and-biodiversity
- http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/fire-and-other-emergenciesCFA Building in a Wildfire Management Overlay Applicants Kit.
- Scientific Publications

Landscape and Building Design for Bushfire Areas, (2003) Ramsay, C and Rudolf, C & L, CSIRO Aust

#### Photo acknowledgements: Marty White, Simone Orscheg





Action Sheet

Fire







# **Fire**

This Action sheet covers the flora and fauna issues relating to fire. Fire is both a natural component of the Australian landscape and is also a component that has been added by humans. Fire and its management is extremely complex as it can be both an important component of renewal of ecosystems and also a threat to life, property, ecosystems and species.

#### Fire and native flora and fauna

Many Australian ecosystems have evolved alongside fire, and plant and animal species have many ways to deal with fire.

dependent primarily on two things: first, on the fire characteristics, and second, on the life strategy of The timing and process of recovery depends on the the organisms affected. Fire may negatively affect some species while others benefit.

present, and since fire has occurred in Australia for many years, one of these conditions may be and habitat structure dependent on the time since a fire regime. For plants, these survival strategies disturbance. On a landscape scale the resulting are not always about the survival of the adult plant mosaic within ecosystems allows for a wider range but persistence of the next generation after the fire. of species. Fauna in fire-prone areas have developed strategies to avoid fire by seeking refuge on unburned patches or moving out of the area entirely and burrowing into soil to escape heat. Some fauna actively use the fire and burnt areas for feeding.

There are vegetation types in Yarra Ranges that contain a large number of species that have been excluded from fire for a long time, such as cool temperate rainforests. These vegetation types are sensitive to fire as they do not have mechanisms that enable dominant flora species.

#### Flora and fauna principles

Ecosystems are regularly confronted with natural environmental variations and disturbances over time and geographic space. Disturbance is any event or process that removes living biomass from a community, such as a fire, flood, drought, or threats from predators. Vegetation types that have evolved alongside fire require this disturbance to maintain The response of flora and fauna to burning is diversity. Fire creates environmental mosaics and a patchiness to ecosystem age and canopy structure. vegetation type. This process of colonisation after a disturbance event is called succession.

Species adapt to the local environmental conditions Vegetation types will go through different growth stages which will have recognisably different species

> Wildlife return to a burnt area at different rates and times, dependent on the availability of habitat requirements (e.g. food and shelter) and is not necessarily related to time since fire.

# Flora and fauna goals

prevention activities.

of many plant species.



Goal 2 ENHANCE

Goal 3 RESTORE

# Goal 7 INFLUENCE

Council acknowledges that there have been significant advances in both understanding and strategic direction of State Government agencies in consideration of fire ecology in the planning and implementation of fuel reduction activities. Council advocates for improved co-operative effort in fire ecology assessments to inform and guide fire prevention planning across the municipality.



fauna relating to fire are: prevention of fire in fire-sensitive areas, careful application of fire in areas where flora and fauna require fire to remain viable and avoiding or minimising impact on vegetation and habitat through strategic fire

These goals focus on habitat management for the benefit of significant flora and fauna both on a landscape-wide scale and on individual properties (see Action sheets 1 and 2). These goals also relate to fire or fire prevention activities. Effective and strategic use of fire on high priority bushland reserves can maximise the regeneration potential



After fire wildlife return when regenerating habitats re suitable for them.





### What you can do

Seek advice from your Regional CFA officer or one of The Council will continue to operate in a way that the Council's Municipal Fire Prevention Officers about suitable fire prevention activities for your property. When conducting appropriate strategic fuel reduction activities on your property consider the following:

- If there are native grasses or wildflowers on site, time your slashing of seed heads as late as the fire season will allow to give the plants the chance to set seed.
- Avoid exposing bare earth while slashing, as this increases the risk of weed invasion and erosion.
- Avoid the use or large machinery where feasible, opting for more targeted methods such as brushcuttina.
- Avoid using large machinery when soil is wet which will lead to soil compaction and erosion.
- Remove environmental weeds (see Action sheet 7.) as a priority as this will help reduce available fuel and benefit the environment.
- Retain shrubs in small but isolated clumps to break up elevated fuels that allow fires to move up into the canopy of trees. This allows the retention of some habitat for birds and insects. (See Action sheet 2.)
- Retain trees, where safe to do so, as trees provide important habitat resources such as hollows and nectar. (See Action sheet 2.)
- Retain large logs, where safe to do so, as logs provide shelter and food for ground dwelling flora and fauna. Logs do not contribute to rate of spread of a fire. Where logs are being retained reduce the level of fine fuels (kindling) that will discourage the log catching alight during a fire. (See Action sheet 2.)

## What Council will do

meets its obligations across various Emergency Management and Flora and Fauna conservation legislation policies and procedures through:

- Ensuring that fuel modification planning on Council managed land is informed by Fire Ecology Assessments.
- Identifying and implementing ecological burns on Council managed land.
- Continuing Council's Annual Fire Slash Program that appropriately manages both fuel reduction requirements and conservation values along roadsides and in Bushland Reserves.
- Continuing to work closely with fire and other land management agencies such as CFA, DSE and Melbourne Water in strategic planning of fire and biodiversity management.
- Continue to work as the responsible Authority under the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme with Agencies such as DSE, CFA to ensure new developments are well planned to achieve fire safety and minimal impact on Flora and Fauna.