

Bush fire hazard reduction

For new agreements to be established under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*

Bush fire hazard reduction and private land conservation agreements

Private land conservation (PLC) agreements are established to manage land to conserve and improve biodiversity values. A PLC agreement creates a legal obligation for yourself and future landholders to ensure biodiversity values are protected. Bush fire hazard reduction activities may impact or have the potential to impact the biodiversity values the agreement was set up to protect. This may be the case where the need to manage the land for bush fire hazard reduction purposes (with a focus on protecting life and property) may not be consistent with the conservation objectives of the agreement where there is a focus on protecting biodiversity. Because of this, it is important to consider bush fire risk management when establishing an agreement.



Fire personell during hazard reduction burn. Tom Denman
| DPIE

Bush fire hazard reduction is about reducing fuel loads, whether this be dry or living

vegetation, and to create a buffer between vegetation and assets such as houses or other important buildings on your property. Bush fire hazard reduction methods include removing vegetation via mechanical means and implementing hazard reduction burning. You must uphold the terms of your agreement in undertaking bush fire hazard reduction activities within your agreement area with particular consideration to the method used and associated impacts.

‘Hazard reduction is just one way of preparing for bush fires – it doesn’t remove the threat of fire, and it doesn’t remove the need for you and your family to be prepared’.

[NSW Rural Fire Services website –Hazard Reduction](#)

Who is this factsheet for?

This factsheet is for landholders who are looking to establish an agreement with the BCT and want to understand how this may affect bush fire risk management activities.

Bush fire protection measures are specific to each property. It is your responsibility to plan for future bush fire hazard reduction before entering an agreement. This includes identifying both the bush fire hazard reduction activities that will be required, and related infrastructure such as water storage points and access tracks.

Biodiversity stewardship agreement note

It is recommended that accredited assessors read this document to understand which areas should be excluded from the agreement area or may need to be mapped as a non-credit generating zone.

When do I need to plan for bush fire hazard reduction infrastructure and activities?

Before deciding on your agreement area.

Bush fire hazard infrastructure and activities may alter the layout of your agreement area or the management actions that can occur. In the majority of cases this will influence how your agreement is mapped and the recording of tracks and infrastructure. The New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is the primary fire authority in NSW and early discussions with local staff and brigade captains about fire management on your property will assist with the planning of the best location for your agreement area.

Ideally, you will have a clear idea of your future bush fire hazard reduction activities and the location of related infrastructure before you submit an application form or expression of interest form to the BCT.

What sort of hazard reduction activities and options may be relevant to areas where I am considering a PLC agreement?

Bush fire hazard reduction activities commonly involve:

1. Mechanically reducing or removing vegetation to separate an asset from the

vegetation that can carry a bush fire; and

2. Burning of vegetation to create a strategic zone of reduced fuels as a buffer to reduce the intensity of a bush fire.



Hazard reduction burn. Matt Lauder | DPIE

You should consider if any of the following bush fire hazard reduction options are relevant to your proposed agreement area:

- Clearance around your built assets and property infrastructure,
- vegetation management required on your land to protect assets on adjacent land,
- reduced fuel buffers – which are to be managed either by mechanical means or by burning,
- tracks for access that could serve as a control line for planned burns,
- cleared areas along external and internal fence lines, and
- whether any specific treatments apply under a Bush Fire Risk Management Plan, such as whether the land is identified as a Strategic Fire Advantage Zone.

You will also need to consider whether you want to install asset protection zones, and clear vegetation in accordance with current codes such as the [Rural Boundary Clearing Code](#) or the [10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice](#).

Do I need to consider the location of existing or proposed firefighting infrastructure?

Yes.

You may have existing firefighting infrastructure on your land or firefighting infrastructure that you may wish to install. This may include, but is not limited to:

Water sources such as:

- reticulated (piped) water
- water holding structures (tanks, dams, swimming pools etc).

Fire infrastructure such as:

- fire breaks
- fire trails
- fire truck turning bays
- property scale asset protection zones

It is essential that you understand the location and size of this infrastructure when establishing an agreement with the BCT. This allows the current or future location of the infrastructure to be mapped as part of the agreement.

Can land managed for specific bush fire hazard reduction activities be included within my agreement?

It depends.

In some cases, bush fire hazard reduction activities may not oppose the conservation management objectives of a PLC

agreement. In other cases there will be locations where the type of hazard reduction activities which need to be undertaken are not consistent, and may therefore need to be excluded from the agreement. This will be discussed with the landholder on a case by case basis.

Where the bush fire hazard reduction management objectives of specific areas are different to the management objectives of a BCT agreement, the following outcomes may apply:

- the area is excluded from the agreement area,
- the area is mapped as a separate management zone that allows bush fire hazard reduction activities,
- the area may have a reduced credit generation (BSA's only),
- the area is excluded from the credit generating area (BSA's only), or
- the area is mapped as tracks or other infrastructure.

When you nominate an agreement area, BCT staff will request confirmation that bush fire hazard reduction management requirements and options have been considered.

Biodiversity stewardship agreement note

For biodiversity stewardship agreements there may be circumstances where biodiversity gain will be limited by ongoing hazard reduction activities. The predicted gain will need to be appropriately justified in the relevant Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement Assessment Report (BSSAR).

How do I find out what bush fire hazard reduction options and infrastructure is needed for my property?

BCT recommends that you contact your local New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) brigade and visit the NSW RFS website for information.

The BCT can provide support in understanding how hazard reduction options and infrastructure relates to the terms of a PLC agreement.

After I enter into an agreement, can I install new infrastructure or tracks within my agreement to manage bush fire risk?

It depends.

In some cases, the installation of additional infrastructure or clearing for tracks not identified within your agreement may involve a variation of your agreement. Variations to agreements must be in accordance with the 'Policy for variation and termination of BCT agreements'. This is why it is essential for you to understand the infrastructure and track requirements prior to entering into a PLC agreement.



Gillans Creek NSW hazard reduction burn. Helen Jessup | DPIE

If you have an existing agreement and wish to install new infrastructure or tracks, it is recommended you contact your BCT regional officer for more information.

Where do I go for more information?

It is recommended that you visit the [NSW Rural Fire Service \(RFS\) website](#) for a range of information on bush fire preparedness.

The local RFS District Office is also available to discuss bush fire hazard reduction and bush fire management in relation to your property and at a regional scale. You can find the contact details for your local RFS District Office via the [NSW Rural Fire Service website](#).

Bush Fire Risk Management Plans are prepared by Local Bush Fire Management Committees in accordance with *Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997* and in accordance with the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee policies. You can view the Bush Fire Risk Management Plan that applies to your local government area here: [Bush Fire Risk Management Plans - NSW Rural Fire Service](#).

There are a range of fire-related property planning materials available on the [Hotspots Fire project website](#).

For information on bush fire prone land mapping visit your local council website.

For more information on bush fire hazard reduction and your agreement, contact your BCT Regional Delivery staff. You can get in touch with BCT via the BCT information line (1300 992 688) or via info@bct.nsw.gov.au.