

## **Annexure 2 - RECENT HISTORY OF ACT PLANNING MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Prior to the commencement of self-government in 1989, planning for the ACT was administered by the National Capital Development Commission under the *National Capital Development Commission Act 1957*. In 1988 when the Act was repealed by the Federal Government, the *ACT (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* was introduced. This Act established the National Capital Planning Authority (NCPA), the preparation of a National Capital Plan, and the making of ACT laws to establish an ACT Planning Authority. The ACT Planning Authority's functions were to include the preparation and implementation of a Territory Plan, not to be inconsistent with the National Capital Plan.

The ACT's *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* came into effect in April 1992. This Act provided for the establishment of the ACT Planning Authority, and specified the objectives of the Territory Plan, and the administrative processes for the Variation of the Plan (which requires Assembly approval). The planning guidelines of the former NCDC (approximately 1,100 guidelines) remained in force until the Territory Plan was finalised and came into effect in 1993. The Act also contains requirements for the management of Public Land, and the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments and Preliminary Assessments where required as part of the Territory Plan Variation process. The Act was amended in 1999 to introduce the requirement for the preparation of Land Management Agreements for rural leases on the initial grant, varying or renewal of lease. Each of these documents provide the opportunity to assess fire hazards as required.

PALM also administers the *Building Act 1972*, which is the legislative mechanism for adopting the Building Code of Australia so that the relevant provisions have effect in the ACT. If a jurisdiction declares "bushfire hazardous areas" through a legislative mechanism, then the Australian Standard 3959 Building Construction in Bushfire Prone Areas (which is referenced in the Building Code of Australia) applies within the declared area. The ACT has no declared bushfire hazardous areas.

### **New Planning Agency from 1 July 2003**

On 12 December 2002 the ACT Legislative Assembly passed legislation that establishes a new governance framework for planning and land management in the ACT. The *Planning and Land Act 2002* establishes the ACT Planning and Land Authority, Planning and Land Council and Land Development Agency. The Act commences from 1 July 2003.

The Planning and Land Authority will have operational responsibility for the development and implementation of the Territory's planning and land management policies, and for regulation. The legislation is designed to enable the Authority and Council to provide robust, impartial and professional advice to the Government, the Assembly, the community and industry on long-term strategic planning issues.

The Authority, through the Chief Planning Executive, will be vested with decision making powers – it will no longer act as a delegate of the Minister or the Executive in most matters, particularly in relation to development assessment and leasing. The Authority will have access to expert advice from the Planning and Land Council.

The Land Development Agency will be responsible for the delivery of the Government's land development program, and for the sale of land. It will also have the capacity to undertake significant redevelopment on behalf of the Territory. The Agency will be managed by a Board, members of which will possess expertise in a range of relevant fields – land development, economics, public law, finance or accounting, public administration, and/or engineering.

## **ANNEXURE 3 - THE ACT PLANNING PROCESS**

### **Territory Plan**

The Territory Plan is the formal administrative mechanism that manages land use planning and development in the ACT. The Plan specifies the Land Use Policies for each area of the ACT, and where necessary, area specific policies which have additional land use controls. The Land Use Policies specify the detailed policy objectives and controls for each land use. There are specific references in the Territory Plan relating to fire hazard assessment. In Part A "General Principles and Policies" "the degree of fire...or other hazards associated with the location and the use or development of that land" is a to be taken into account when considering land use and development proposals.

Broadacre and rural Land Use Policies specify that development conditions may require fire hazard reduction measures to be incorporated into the lease or agreement. The Hills, Ridges & Buffer and Mountains & Bushland Land Use Policies specify that "development which would significantly increase fire hazard shall not be permitted". Development conditions may also require that clearing and siting of proposed development does not adversely impact on bushfire safety practices.

### **Fire Assessment In The Planning Process**

The process of determining the most appropriate temporary or permanent interface requirements for a new urban edge is based on extensive consultation with potential stakeholders, which assists in determining the final planning outcome. There are an infinite number of different interface scenarios but there are only two distinct types: Temporary and Permanent.

#### **Permanent interfaces**

These are generally fixed in approximate location by Variations to the Territory Plan and all agencies have an opportunity to request additional requirements to the adopted standards. The exact location is then fixed by a design process, which is carried out by either the government or by a developer. In both cases, there is an extensive opportunity for stakeholder input. Stakeholders that are adjacent to future urban boundaries are contacted to allow the design to consider their needs. (eg access, water, electricity etc) Stakeholders regularly include Canberra Urban Parks and Places, Canberra Nature Park, and Rural Lessees. The design then proceeds on the basis of the adopted urban edge standard plus any agreed additional features.

#### **Temporary interfaces**

The development generally follows an agreed land development sequence, and an approved land release program, all within the context of the requirements of the approved Territory Plan Variation for the area being developed. There are many factors that influence the sequence and program, with the temporary edge being a minor consideration. The location of the

edge is fixed through the design process, including extensive consultation with potential stakeholders. The design then proceeds on the basis of temporary works to achieve short-term protection of the temporary urban edge.

There is a range of planning processes used to fully consider the requirements of the Territory Plan when designing new urban areas, particularly where the urban edge will change. Where PALM does not undertake the work, specific briefs are provided to consultants to ensure that all relevant considerations are addressed. The stages of planning that provide opportunities to assess the bushfire risk are outlined below.

## **Structure Planning**

A Structure Plan sets out the broad framework (transport network, open space system) and the land use patterns (residential, commercial and community sites) for the future planning of a district or part of a district. It establishes a robust and flexible framework of objectives, principles and land use policies to guide the development of the area within the context of ecologically sustainable development. The Structure Plan seeks to achieve an efficient and sustainable land use structure together with a respect for the natural, heritage, environmental and cultural elements of the area (District or part of District Level Plan).

Bushfire threat is one of the matters considered when land capability studies are undertaken. For example during development of the North Gungahlin Structure Plan, Emergency Service Bureau has been involved substantially in the preparation of the Plan and their comments have been incorporated into the Plan. These bushfire principals have also been applied to the East Gungahlin Structure Plan, currently in preparation. This Plan will be referred to ESB for advice and input.

## **Outline Planning**

An Outline Plan is a planning tool which specifies notional land uses, broad infrastructure requirements, distributor roads, key features and boundaries of the suburb. It also identifies overall planning principles. The outline plan is generally based on the Structure Plan (Suburb Level Plan). Bushfire threat is one of the matters that may be considered in determining land capability for the specific land area. The current Outline Planning studies for Northern Broadacre (Kinleyside), Southern Broadacre (Jerrabomberra), Gungaderra Creek (Harrison & Mulanggari) have the requirement for the consideration of bushfire. ESB will be involved in these studies.

Previous planning work for Gungahlin and rural residential areas, particularly Uriarra Settlement, had detailed consideration of appropriate bushfire management and the limitations that the bushfire risk placed on the placement of the urban edge.

## **Development Control Plan**

A Development Control Plan is based on the Outline Plan and specifies in detail an indicative or mandatory subdivision design, dwelling number, road hierarchy and open space network for the estate. It may also specify tree locations, development conditions, mandatory and non-mandatory planning requirements (Estate Level Plan).

Bushfire threat is one of the matters considered when determining land capability. The development control plan reflects, in most cases, earlier planning intentions (ie. Outline or Structure Plan). Bushfire and other requirements are based on the guidelines, including the Stormwater Manual and ACT Landscape Guidelines.

The Bushfire Fuel Management Plan states that the fuel management units will alter as more development occurs (incremental development of urban edge) and co-operation with other agencies will ensure that fire reduction work will be undertaken to satisfactorily protect new residential areas from fires that may originate in grassland areas (eg Amaroo).

Horse Park 2 estate has been referred to ESB by Gungahlin Development Authority.

## **ACTCode for Residential Development (1993)**

ACTCode is the design code that sets out the standards for neighbourhood design and the subdivision of land. It is a performance-based code. There is specific consideration of bushfire hazard in ACTCode. 1.1 PC15 states:

“The layout of residential development abutting areas of bushfire hazard comprising the long term urban edge or conservation areas ensure that streets are designed, located and connected to allow safe and efficient movement of fire emergency vehicles, and blocks are configured to facilitate siting and design of houses incorporating bushfire protection measures”

Detailed subdivision is required to consider these requirements.

## **ACTCode 2 (subdivision Component only)**

ACTCode 2 is the revised design code, which sets out the standards for neighbourhood design and the subdivision of land. It is a performance-based code. The ACT Legislative Assembly is yet to approve the Code as a formal component of the Territory Plan, but agreed to the use of the subdivision component in the development of Deeds of Agreement. In respect of bushfire hazard, the Code provides:

5.13 Bushfire Protection. Intent of the Element is to reduce the level of fire risk associated with building in bushfire prone areas by adopting suitable passive and active protection measures relating to siting,

layout, design and construction techniques and landscape. A series of Performance Criteria and one Acceptable Solution (to comply with Building Code of Australia) is provided.

At this stage, there are no designated bushfire prone areas in the ACT. Notwithstanding this, if ACTCode 2 were formally adopted, it would provide a planning mechanism to declare Bushfire Prone Areas.

### **Deed of Agreement**

A Deed of Agreement is a legal agreement between the developer and the Territory for the sale and development of the estate. The Deed specifies the land development, planning, design and construction requirements. The Deed is based on the Development Control Plan. Reference is made to approved standard documents including the Urban Stormwater Manual and Landscape Guidelines. The Deed is based on the planning intention of the Development Control Plan.

In relation to the deeds for Conder 4, Dunlop 4 West and Block 6 Section 157 Belconnen, the developer is required to ensure compliance with the ACT Bushfire Fuel Management Plan, 2002-2004, which includes the need to maintain a fuel management zone in accordance with the respective Fuel Management Unit in the Plan for the area adjacent to the estates. This includes fire trails where needed and a 5m wide maintenance management zone. These requirements are based on the Guidelines.

A maintenance management zone at the interface of residential blocks with public open space, including the Canberra Nature Park, was required in the East O'Malley Deed, in accordance with ACT Urban Stormwater Manual and ACT Landscape Guidelines.

### **Preliminary Assessment / Environmental Impact Statement**

A Preliminary Assessment (PA) describes a development proposal. It includes consideration of issues such as the existing conditions on the area and the surrounding area, and the potential impacts of the proposal on biological, physical, human, social and visual aspects on the earth, atmosphere or the community, to determine whether further environmental assessment is required. The PA describes the planning/development intention for the area.

Where investigation of the natural elements, or the area in question, indicate there is a fire risk, further detailed assessment of the risk would be required. For example the North Gungahlin Structure Plan PA, specifically considers bushfire issues, and reflects ESB advice on the matter.

The East O'Malley PA makes reference to the bushfire risk of the area and provides some discussion about the planning mechanisms to reduce the

threat including fuel reduction, edge roads and multiple road exits. The Gungahlin EIS makes reference to fire breaks, fire management and access.

### **Implementation Plan**

The Implementation Plan is a development application setting out the proposed subdivision pattern and infrastructure works for an estate and is required to be approved prior to the undertaking of the works and the granting of leases for the subdivided blocks. The Implementation Plan reflects the Deed and Development Control Plan.

### **Lease and Development Conditions/Building Envelope Plan**

The Building Envelope Plan is a plan relating to block(s) in an estate specifying envelopes within which buildings will be required to be constructed along with any other specific block development controls. Lease type conditions may also be imposed (Block Level Plan). There are no specific bushfire requirements, other than reflecting conditions from an earlier planning stage (Development Control Plan).

### **Development Application**

A Development Application (DA) is the formal approval process to determine a proponent's development proposal under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*. All Development Applications must be considered against the Territory Plan.

### **Building Application**

A Building Application is an application considered by a building certifier to ensure that the requirements of the Building Code of Australia, its ACT Appendix and the Australian Standards and other technical documents are complied with in the development. As there are no 'designated Bushfire Prone Areas' in the ACT the relevant provisions of the Building Code of Australia and AS 3959 do not apply.

## **Annexure 4 - Background and Development of Bushfire Fuel Management Plans**

### **1. Background to Bushfire Fuel Management Plan**

Prior to the development of Bushfire Fuel Management Plans, under the *Bushfire Act (1936)*, Land Management Agencies had produced a number of documents relating to fire and fuel management. These included:

- Fire Management Policies for Plantation Areas and other Native Forest Areas managed by ACT Forests (1995)
- Conservation and Wildlife Fire Action Plan (1994)
- Draft Canberra Nature Park Fire Management Plan (1994)
- Fire Management Policy for Nature Conservation Areas Managed by ACT Parks and Conservation Service (1994)
- Fire Management Plans for ACT Forests plantations (1989-1990)
- Canberra Nature Park Slashing Policy
- City Parks Dryland Grass Management Document (1994)
- ACT Electricity and Water Bushfire Manual (1993)

The reports generally covered specific areas or activities, and there were no comprehensive strategies for Fire or Fuel Management between LMAs.

In May 1994, Howard McBeth was commissioned to undertake a consultancy on the Bushfire hazard reduction practices of the ACT Government, with particular emphasis on the role and functions performed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

The report received from McBeth in September 1994 was initially not accepted as it did not adhere to the project specifications. The report was considered to have placed too much emphasis on the structural arrangements for fire suppression in the ACT rather than on the stated requirement to review current fuel reduction practices. The opposition of the day made a commitment to review the McBeth report if elected.

In 1995, a change of government occurred in the ACT and the Bushfire Taskforce, chaired by Graham Glenn was formed to review current ACT bushfire fuel management practices and recommend policies and procedures for the future, taking into account the McBeth Report.

The Taskforce report was completed in August 1995. Key recommendations in relation to Government Land Management Agencies included:

- ACT BS to undertake broad-scale hazard assessment with LMAs and to undertake finer scale assessment in consultation with the CFCO;
- LMAs to give priority to hazard reduction and bushfire safety to residents in high risk areas;
- Amend the ACT Bushfire Act to include a requirement for land managers to prepare Bushfire Fuel Management Plans and guidelines were provided for what should be included in these plans;



- A Bushfire Fuel Management Committee be established to approve the plans developed by land managers;
- Recommendations relating to smoke management for prescribed burning procedures and practices;

The report identified the key elements of fuel management to be hazard assessment, land use planning, land management, environment and conservation and hazard reduction. The urban interface with rural and bushland areas was identified as an area of particular concern. The Task Force also noted the impact the *Air Pollution Act 1994* had on fuel management practices and the resulting decline in the amount of fuel reduction burning.

The recommendations in relation to fuel management on government managed land resulted in amendments to the *Bushfire Act* which came into force in 1996.

## **2. Framework for the development of Bushfire Fuel Management Plans**

Following the recommendations in 1995, a Bushfire Fuel Management Committee (BFMC) was created. The BFMC continues to meet as required to deal with issues relating to the development of the BFMP. The BFMC is chaired by the Executive Director of ESB and members of the Committee include representatives from the LMAs, Rural lessees Association and the Nature Conservation Council.

The BFMC liaises directly with the LMAs and the DUS Fire Management Group in co-ordinating the preparation and development of the BFMP. The chair of the BFMC is also a member of the Bushfire Council through which the progress and development of the plan is reported. The LMAs, through the LMFLG, provide direct feedback to ACT BS on the implementation of the actions in the plan, thus providing the link between fuel management practices and fire suppression operations.

The land managers collaborate through the DUS Fire Management Group for the preparation of the plan, with Environment ACT providing a dedicated officer for the Plan preparation and collation of information across all of DUS.

Upon preparation of the draft BFMP by the LMAs, it is reviewed by the BFMC. It is then amended, as required, by the LMAs before being publicly displayed and submissions invited from interested members of the public. Significant input into the 2002-2004 plan was provided by staff within ESB, particularly with the provision of risk assessments.

Subsequent amendments are reviewed by the BFC, and on its recommendation the draft BFMP is forwarded to the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections respectively.

On receipt of the draft BFMP, the Ministers may *make* the Bushfire Fuel Management Plan by approving the draft plan in writing.

Although the legislation for development of the BFMP is relatively prescriptive, it provides adequate flexibility for LMAs to allow ongoing development of the plan as demonstrated below.

There are no current arrangements for the co-operative management of fuels on commonwealth land, which are managed by commonwealth agencies, for example defence land, CSIRO and National Botanic Gardens.

### **3. Development of the 1998-2000 and 2000-2002 Bushfire Fuel Management Plan**

The clear priority for the first plan was to protect the urban interface. The Bushfire Hazard Assessment of the ACT (1991) was consistent with the priority focus to be on the urban interface.

Three major Land Management Agencies (CUPP, Environment ACT (Parks and Conservation Service) and ACT Forests) developed their plans individually on separate mapping bases. Additional project support was provided when the need for agency co-ordination became apparent.

Generally, a precautionary principle was adopted in relation to the impacts of prescribed burning on ecological values, particularly in Namadgi National Park, which was compatible with hazard assessment. However, a large number of prescribed burns were programmed. A proportion of these burns were not delivered due to insufficient number of days available for prescribed burning because of environmental proscriptions against burning when smoke dispersal factors were taken into account. Negotiations were undertaken with the Environment Protection Unit of EACT regarding smoke management limitations for prescribed burning and the guidelines were made slightly less stringent to allow for more opportunity to undertake prescribed burns.

The framework and structure of the 2000-2002 BFMP remained the same as for the 1998-2000 plan. The most significant change was that LMAs prepared revised fuel management actions. In the process of developing the second plan, it was acknowledged that although the draft plan was adequate, some deficiencies were identified by the Land Managers, the BFC and as a result of submissions by the public. A number of comments received from the public consultation process were unable to be incorporated into the 2000-2002 plan due to time constraints and problems with achieving the mapping refinements required for redevelopment of the BFMP. It was agreed that a range of new works would be included in the 2002-2004 plan, including a complete revision of the policy and framework.

The 2000 plan identified less areas for prescribed burning, when compared with the previous version. There was a greater emphasis on other fuel treatments, resulting in increased physical removal of fuels.

## **Annexure 7 - Development of the 2002-2004 BFMP**

A process of continual improvement, commencing in 2001, resulted in development of the 2002-2004 Bushfire Fuel Management Plan (BFMP) through the following three-stage process:

**Stage 1.** Following development of the 2000-2002 plan, the Bushfire Fuel Management Committee (BFMC) determined the need for improved mapping and alterations to the structure of the plan. These changes included a common mapping base for all land management agencies, improved co-ordination for development and implementation of Fuel Management Actions and a review of the policy and operational structure of the plan. Land Managers prepared the initial draft, incorporating these changes and submitted it to the BFC. Shortly thereafter the 2001 Stromlo fires occurred.

**Stage 2.** Following the 2001 fire DUS engaged an external reviewer to consider the policy and operational framework of the plan. While the first draft of the 2002-2004 BFMP provided some improvement on the previous plan, the 2001 fires raised concern that key strategic issues may require further development or identification independent from the Land Management Agencies. Phil Cheney of CSIRO Forestry and Forest Product Division was engaged to evaluate and report on:

1. Whether the plan was addressing appropriate issues and whether these issues were appropriately addressed in the text;
2. Strategies that should be included in the plan; and
3. Strategies that should be considered in the development of the 2004-2006 plan.

Key recommendations resulting from Cheney's review included the need for:

1. LMAs to consider the strategic problems of fire spreading across the ACT and the impacts of fuel loads on other land tenures, and give consideration to fuel management strategies across tenure boundaries;
2. refinement in the identification of areas of high fuel hazard, and preparation of a program of works to be carried out during the plan period;
3. prescription of fuel reduction activities in forest and woodlands;
4. identification of some further key strategic assets and inclusion of plans related to any high fire risk issues. This included Defence property, areas managed by the Land and Property section of DUS, and major assets on Mt Stromlo; and
5. refinement of maps to remove confusion in the mapping process and clarity in terms used within the BFMP.

In consultation with LMAs, the ESB Risk Analysis Unit prepared an updated risk assessment of the urban interface and other defined assets for incorporation into the plan.

**Stage 3.** Following the recommendations further development of the strategic fuel management objectives was required. DUS decided an appropriately qualified and experienced consultant in fire and fuel management planning could provide necessary knowledge and skills in line with best practice across

fire management agencies in Australia. In May 2002, a consultant (Ian Long – Ecosystem Management Australia) was engaged to further develop the strategic fuel management objectives of the plan. His work further refined development of a fuel management zoning approach, including asset protection, strategic management, general management and burning exclusion zones which is consistent with that used in other jurisdictions for Bushfire Fuel Management. Priority Fuel Management Units were identified by land managers, based on the risk assessment and fuel management requirements across an area, regardless of land management boundaries. This ensured that priority actions were to be co-ordinated across agencies.

Other key amendments then incorporated into the 2002 BFMP include:

- Revision of the Plan text, to provide a more sound overview for fuel management. References to the precautionary principle for fuel management were removed from the plan, acknowledging the need for an increased strategic fuel management effort based on adaptive management.
- Acknowledgment within the plan of the need to further progress fuel management planning in Namadgi National Park, which faces different issues when considering fuel management than other land areas within the ACT.

The Draft 2002-2004 BFMP was released for public consultation in August 2002. Stakeholder meetings with rural lessees, conservation groups and the Namadgi Interim Board of Management were undertaken to outline the planning approach and invite input into the consultation process.

Following amendments in response to public submissions, the final 2002/04 BFMP was released in November 2002 following endorsement from the BFMC and the Executive Director of EACT on behalf of DUS (after consultation with the CEO and DUS Board of Management).

Continual development of the BFMP's has resulted in significant improvement in its format, structure and content, particularly in its most recent iteration. Positive comment was provided by stakeholders following the public release of the draft, particularly in relation to the mapping format and structure of the plan.

## **Attachment 11 – History of Prescribed Burning for Fuel Management in Namadgi National Park**

The frequency of fires in the Namadgi National Park area, as with elsewhere in the Australian Alps, was higher up to the 1930-1940's than currently occurs. The fires were generally of low intensity. The majority of burning undertaken until the 1930's-1940's was by graziers operating through what is now Namadgi National Park. The burns were not primarily focussed on fuel reduction, but on pasture management. The area was, however, also subject to occasional high intensity wildfire. In areas remote from structures and assets there was little active fire suppression. Fires occurring in less accessible and mountainous terrain, either naturally from lightning strikes, or deliberately lit, were generally allowed to burn uncontrolled.

### **The Brindabella Lease**

In the 1940's, following the severe 1939 bushfires in the ACT, the Commonwealth leased NSW vacant Crown land abutting the ACT border with a view to assisting fire management control over the land to the west of the ACT. The lease was referred to as the Brindabella Lease and covered the area between the ACT border and the Goodradigbee River. The lease was managed by the BFC. After the 1983 Namadgi fires the BFC reviewed the management practices that were being applied to the lease area and concluded that prescribed burning operations in the lease area were ineffective and unsustainable in catchment management terms. It was considered that there could be little justification in burning dry forests with a low fuel accumulation potential in steep lands adjacent to a major water storage facility.

In 1995, following recommendations of the Bushfire Taskforce, the lease was revoked. In due course the unallocated Crown land was reserved as nature reserve and national park, managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

### **Since the 1940's**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that after the 1940's prescribed burning for fuel reduction to assist in wildfire suppression in the ACT was undertaken in a relatively informal manner, with the location and extent of prescribed burns decided upon by field staff targeting site specific protection objectives rather than operating under any strategic fuel management framework.

Over the last 10-15 years there has been limited prescribed burning in Namadgi National Park. The key reasons for this are:

- The opportunity to conduct prescribed burning in the high fuel load subalpine forests (primarily *E. delagatensis*) has been limited due to the a continual state of high fuel moisture content. These forests only become combustible in periods of protracted drought, when the deep moist fuel beds dry out. This also produces the potential for high intensity wildfire. Even when limited autumn burning is possible the resultant level of fuel reduction is insufficient to significantly reduce the intensity of a subsequent wildfire once the full fuel bed dries out in drought.
- Concern in eastern Australian that broad area prescribed burning in subalpine woodlands poses threats to catchment stability and the stability of subalpine vegetation structures. It is considered that the efficacy of burning as a wildfire amelioration and catchment protection measure was not demonstrated from the history of such practices over two decades in the adjacent Kosciuszko National Park.
- A lack of consolidated scientific data in relation to fuel accumulation, and the impact of fires on environment, vegetation and biodiversity, limited the development of fire management strategies in the Park, particularly in lower altitude open forests.

These issues are important for each of the key vegetation types within the Park. As a result, prescribed burning has been limited to small areas for asset protection.

In addition to the fundamental issues mentioned above, there were other factors influencing the approach to prescribed burning in NNP, including:

- The Bushfire Act requires that LMAs remain with a fire at all times until it is totally extinguished – this has been a disincentive for agencies when considering appropriate arrangements for prescribed burns;
- The interaction between the approvals process, and the limited window of opportunity for prescribed burns, contributes to an environment which discourages prescribed burning programs;
- Community input to land management issues has significantly increased over the last 25 years. Prescribed burning has been the subject of considerable discussion and polarised views exist with regard to its application and efficacy.

The adjacent Kosciuszko National Park has ecosystems similar to Namadgi National Park. Similarly, there is widespread community discussion and debate about fire management. A recent relevant report, titled Assessment of the Values of Kosciuszko National Park, was published by the Independent Scientific Committee during 2002.

Issues relevant to management of NNP are included in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Cooperative Management of the Australian Alps signed by the ACT, New South Wales, Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. Information on a range of management programs, including fire management, is shared between the jurisdictions and issues relating to other alpine parks are highly relevant to the management of Namadgi. The Inquiry may, therefore, find it useful to acquaint itself with the fire/vegetation/catchment issues enunciated in the report mentioned above - see [http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/parks/south/kosciuszko/pom/interim\\_report.html](http://www.npws.nsw.gov.au/parks/south/kosciuszko/pom/interim_report.html)

Concerns over the efficacy of broad area prescribed burning (encompassing the whole landscape and a broad range of vegetation types) has led to an increasing focus on the *strategic* implementation of fire protection measures. This may include prescribed burning on those areas where there is identified threat, and where effective reduction in fire hazard can be achieved. Hazard Assessment undertaken by ESB in 1991, and subsequent assessment for the BFMP, clearly identified the most significant wildfire threat was at the urban-bushland interface. Fuel management and suppression priorities were directed to the vicinity of the assets at risk on the margins of suburbs. LMAs supported this assessment and it formed the basis of subsequent strategies in the BFMP. Furthermore, it was considered that the spread of the urban development to the south of the ACT, towards NNP, would result in increased levels of arson within the Park, increasing the area of the Park that is burnt.

## **Annexure 12 - DEVELOPMENT OF THE NNP FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **Background**

During development of the 2002-2004 BFMP Mr Phillip Cheney of CSIRO was appointed to review the draft BFMP. He recommended modifications which placed increased emphasis upon fire management planning, along with further development of fuel management planning, in NNP. Namadgi National Park is a large area (over 50% of the territory), has diverse ecosystems and vegetation, a complex fire history and contains key social, economic and environmental assets in or around it. This distinguishes it from other land management units in the ACT.

The NNP Fire Management Plan will be developed to incorporate all aspects of fire management into a single document. It will be developed in association with other documents and provide the mechanism for linking the policy for managing the park with ongoing scientific research and operational requirements. The associated documents are:

- The Namadgi Plan of Management, a statutory document providing the framework for the strategic management of the Park and its values. The Fire Management Plan will form a complementary document to the Plan of Management, and providing the specific detail and strategies relating to fire management;
- The Bushfire Fuel Management Plan. The BFMP is a statutory document detailing the policy and actions relating specifically to fuel management in the ACT. The Fire Management Plan will also complement this BFMP and will provide the detailed scientific and policy background for the actions that will be specified in the BFMP in relation to NNP
- The NNP Pre-Suppression Plan, which was initially developed in 2002, will be a subsidiary document to the Fire Management Plan. The Pre-Suppression Plan is a map detailing all identified features in the park that assist Environment ACT and ESB in fire suppression operations. These features include existing and dormant roads and trails, sites of cultural and ecological significance and assets.

### **The Role of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee**

Critical in the development of the NNP Fire Management Plan will be the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC), which co-ordinates the management and co-operative research of the Alps across the jurisdictions of Victoria, NSW, the ACT and the Commonwealth. The Chair of the committee is a First Assistant Secretary of Environment Australia and the committee consists of Heads of Agencies and Land Managers from the jurisdictions mentioned above. This body considers the management of the Alps at the landscape level, in order to develop complementary policies and practices across jurisdictional boundaries. Forums for communications have been through meetings of executive and park management and ranger exchange programs between the relevant agencies.

Following the 2003 fires, there has been a strong focus by the committee on the development of strategic fire management policies for the Alps. Preliminary notes from the Australian Alps Heads of Agency meeting held in



April 2003 resolved the following:

- 1) Heads of Agencies (HOAs) to jointly prepare a brief on fire management in the Australian Alps that recognises the need to protect the community, vital water catchments, ecological complexes and their processes, and regional economies in the Australian Alps national parks system.
- 2) HOAs will seek their respective Ministers' acknowledgement of a need for a national approach to fire management in the Australian Alps national parks under the MOU.
- 3) HOAs acknowledged the offer to Victoria and the ACT by NSW National Parks Service to make available the Kosciuszko Independent Scientific Committee to assist in addressing the fire management issues associated with the natural and cultural heritage values of the Alps.
- 4) HOAs agreed that the AALC employ an officer to research and report on the fire history of the Alps with commentary on fire management as a priority.
- 5) HOAs requested the AALC to undertake review of effects of fire on species of limited distribution and ensure that management planning processes currently in train take account of these considerations.
- 6) HOAs asked the AALC to arrange a workshop to examine the opportunities for integrating management planning across the Australian Alps national parks system.

In addition to the NNP Fire Management Plan being complementary to the broad policies of the AALC, where appropriate the fire management planning process will be integrated with fuel management planning outside the Park, both in the ACT and in NSW.

### **Fuel Management Planning**

The issue of fuel management is a complex aspect of long term park management. NNP has had an extensive history of fire and fire management, resulting in a complex association of vegetation and fuel types. In addition, due to the Park's proximity to a number of research institutions (the ANU, CSIRO) and the fact that it is the source of much of Canberra's water supply, a significant body of scientific literature has been developed that relates to many aspects of fire and fire management. As such, one of the key issues has been to identify the work undertaken and consolidate it, where appropriate, to develop ongoing management strategies.

Key tasks identified in 2002 to facilitate development of the NNP Fire Management Plan were:

- Consolidate existing information on attributes relevant to fire and fire fuel management in NNP;

- Identify the consequences of a catastrophic fire event on the key natural and economic resources of the park, including water supply catchments and infrastructure, sensitive environments and park assets; and
- Undertake fuel accumulation studies, vegetation and strategic threat analysis to develop appropriate strategic prescribed burning regimes.

### **Development of the Plan**

The development of long term fire management strategies and management guidelines requires a high degree of collaboration between key stakeholder agencies and groups. It will involve people with a range of expertise and knowledge of fire management issues in the National Park.

To facilitate the development of the plan, the Namadgi Fire Working Group was convened, inviting key stakeholders from ESB, CSIRO, the ANU and Environment ACT. Future meetings and draft submissions of the plan will also involve key stakeholders, including the Australian Alps Liaison Committee and ACTEWAGL. The initial meeting of this group was held 29 November 2002 and a second meeting to discuss the terms of references and strategic framework for the plan was scheduled for January 2003. This was postponed following the events of January 2003, however it will be reconvened in 2003 and will develop the terms of reference for the plan.

### **Response to the January 2003 Fires**

Following the January 2003 fires EACT have progressed the following issues:

- A Road and Fire Trail Strategic Planning Group has been established to examine the current and future requirements of the road and fire trail network. Some of the issues the group will examine include:
  - the intensity of a road / trail network required for suppression and fuel management activities;
  - the quality of roads and trails required for fire related activity;
  - road and trail locations; and
  - co-operative management with other LMAs, including those in NSW.

It will complement the development of pre suppression and fuel management planning for NNP and include considerations relevant to the NNP as distinct from road and track networks prepared for other land use areas. Development of the framework has already commenced, with relevant information, systems and processes obtained from other land management jurisdictions (Victoria DSE, NPWS NSW, State Forests NSW). This group will fall under the NNP Fire Working Group.
- Monitoring and research work has been accelerated to undertake targeted assessment and survey in burnt areas.
- Continued development of the NNP pre suppression plan. In addition to information derived from the preparation of the strategic road and trial plan further examination of water points, emergency meeting points and other relevant fire suppression information is underway.