



NATURAL AREA ESTATE FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY

**DOCUMENT NO:
A4619418**

1. Objective

That Council's natural area estate will be managed to protect life and property from wildfire while planning, manipulating and utilizing fire to maintain or enhance environmental values.

Human Rights Commitment

Ipswich City Council (Council) has considered the human rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

2. Policy Scope

This policy provides a framework for the desired aims and outcomes of fire management in response to the regulatory requirements, community and biodiversity needs of Council's natural area estate. It will be delivered through the preparation of procedures, plans, standards and guidelines for fire planning, operations, monitoring and evaluation.

2.1 Aims

The specific aims of fire management for Council's natural area estate are to:

- Protect life, property and the environment
- Minimise the risk of fire entering or leaving the estate and impacting upon the estate or adjoining private property
- Maintain ecologically appropriate fire frequencies, distribution, seasonality and intensity
- Ensure the long term viability and survival of populations of native plants and wildlife
- Ensure cultural heritage and historic values within and around the estate are protected; and
- Minimise social impacts and hazards associated with smoke

2.2 Relationship with Relevant Legislation

The policy recognises that existing and future legislation relative to land management will impact on the specific requirements and procedures and that this policy is consistent with overall objectives. Some existing legislation and regulations that have been considered in the preparation of this policy are:

Qld Fire and Emergency Services Act (1990)

Sustainable Planning Act (2009)

Nature Conservation Act (1992)

Environment Protection Act (1995)

Local Government Act (2009)

Local Laws

2.3 Responsibility of Council

Council has a responsibility under the Qld Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 to both minimise fire risk and take all reasonable steps to control fire on Council owned or controlled lands and to prevent its escape to other lands.

Under State and Federal legislation Council has responsibilities for appropriate management of environmental and biodiversity values in relation to both planned and wildfires.

In addition Council has a duty of care to provide safe access for park visitors.

2.4 Regional Co-ordination

Council acknowledges that appropriate fire management cannot be achieved in isolation. Council will engage and work with key stakeholders including the Queensland Fire & Emergency Services, Rural Fire Service, neighbouring property owners, research and special interest groups in planning and conducting its natural area fire management program.

2.5 Fire Risk Management

The key issue of fire risk management in the natural area estate will be addressed through range of strategies and actions including:

- Maintaining a park fire danger schedule for operational response and visitor safety
- Maintaining a close working relationship with Queensland Fire & Emergency Services and other disaster management agencies
- Developing and implementing fire management plans for individual reserves
- Developing and maintaining a network of fire trails, fire breaks and fuel reduced areas
- Conducting annual assessments of fire fuel loads
- Implementing measures to reduce risk on Council lands including the use of hazard reduction burns
- Educating park visitors through on ground signage, Council's website and other means
- Land use planning

2.6 Resourcing & Capabilities

Council will endeavour to resource fire management strategies, programs and actions as required to meet Council's community obligations as a responsible land manager, legal responsibilities under relevant legislation and duty of care.

In addition, Council will support fire management programs by appropriate training of Council personnel to fulfil their respective roles.

3. FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Council will take an integrated and planned approach to fire management based on current research, knowledge and best practice bushland fire management objectives and techniques. Key to this process will be Council's relationship with the QFES and participation in the SEQ Fire & Biodiversity Consortium (FabCon).

3.1 Research

Council will use relevant fire management research from recognised fire/land management agencies and research organisations such as FabCon as the basis for best practice fire management.

Where deemed relevant and appropriate Council may engage with research institutions, fire authorities and consultancies to undertake fire based research in the natural area estate to inform natural area planning and management programs.

3.2 Fire Management Planning

Detailed Fire Management Plans will be developed and reviewed for all Conservation Estates and Conservation Reserves within the natural area estate on a 5 year cycle. Plans will be implemented through annual works programs.

Each plan will contain the following key elements:

- Legislative requirements associated with fire
- Description of reserve features and natural values
- Reserve vegetation & values mapping
- Fire infrastructure planner and mapping
- Schedule of implementation actions
- Identification of hazard reduction mechanisms
- Prescribed burn plan
- Relevant standards, protocols etc

Fire management in Local reserves will be addressed by incorporation of fire planning and management principles and strategies in reserve specific maintenance maps.

3.3 Fire Infrastructure

Council will establish and maintain appropriate infrastructure on its lands to provide safe access for fire management and protect built and natural assets, human life and property. Environmental assessments will be conducted for the development of new fire infrastructure. Fire infrastructure may include fire trails, fire breaks, keyed gates, fire specific signage and access to water sources.

3.4 Prescribed Burn Program

Prescribed burns, as directed by the Fire Management Plan, will be used to consolidate the management requirements for hazard reduction and biodiversity maintenance.

Prescribed burning is defined as the controlled application of fire under specified environmental conditions to a predetermined area and at the time, intensity and rate of spread required to attain planned resource management objectives.

Council will engage an appropriately qualified and skilled organisation such as QFES to conduct its prescribed burns.

3.4.1 Hazard Reduction Burning

Prescribed fires for hazard reduction purposes will be used to reduce fire fuel loads and reduce

the risk, impact and severity of wildfire and its associated threat to life and property. Hazard reduction burns will also aim to achieve sound ecological outcomes and minimise impacts on local and regional air quality. Specific prescribed burn requirements will be determined on an annual basis subject to criteria including past fire history, weather, fuel load and risk.

3.4.2 Fire Ecology

As part of sound ecological management of Council's estate, prescribed fire will be applied as a management tool to achieve ecological objectives. This may include manipulation of the fire season and regime to achieve a range of objectives including pest plant control, stimulation of native vegetation or protection of fire sensitive species and habitats. Specific prescribed burn requirements will be determined based on ecological requirements, fire history, season and weather.

3.4.3 Notifications

Council will notify relevant adjoining landholders and other relevant agencies of planned burning as required under the Act. Additional notifications may take the form of public notices in local media and information posted on Council's website.

3.5 Wildfire Preparedness

Council will maintain a natural area reserves visitor and fire management decision matrix to guide and direct preparedness levels for Council's wildfire response systems and personnel. In addition the schedule will advise park fire safety actions including visitor access, permit and area restrictions.

In the event of a Catastrophic fire danger rating Council Procedure 30/11 – Temporary Closure of a Park or Reserve will be implemented for full closure of all Conservation Estates.

3.5.1 Wildfire Control

Council will give the highest priority to responding to wildfire in the natural area estate and fulfilling its obligations under the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990. Council will support the QFES in their response with the primary objective of rapidly containing and controlling fire.

In support of the QFES, Council will assist by facilitating reserve access, providing bulk water, equipment and on ground knowledge as required on a case by case basis. Environmental protection will be given due considerations once any threat to life and property have been removed.

4.1 MONITORING & EVALUATION

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is essential to achieving successful outcomes in fire management and will be incorporated into all program areas and levels. Key delivery areas within the fire management program will include:

- Program level audits conducted by external parties
- Reserve level audits of fire management plan implementation
- Ad hoc activity audits as determined through annual works planning

- Monitoring and evaluation of fuel load accumulation annually at permanent plots
- Monitoring and evaluation of post fire biodiversity response
- Monitoring and evaluation of fire history (planned and wildfire)

5.0 Policy Author: Planning Officer (Biodiversity)

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