



Bushfire Places of Last Resort (Neighbourhood Safer Places) Plan

Version 2.0

Current date: May 2026

Version Control Table

Version	Date	Author/s	Summary of change/s
1.0	June 2010	MFPO	Original plan using MAV template.
2.0	May 2026	MFPO and MEMO	Updated terminology to BPLR (from NSP). Updated to align with CFA Guidelines (2025).

Acronyms and abbreviations

BPLR	Bushfire Place of Last Resort
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Country Fire Authority
NSP	Neighbourhood Safer Place
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MEMO	Municipal Emergency Management Officer
MEMPC	Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee
MEMP	Municipal Emergency Management Plan
MF MPC	Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee
MFPO	Municipal Fire Prevention Officer
TPP	Township Protection Plan

Glossary

Community Fire Refuge	Purpose built or modified buildings that are endorsed by the Emergency Management Commissioner and prescribed in the <i>Country Fire Authority (Community Fire Refuges) Regulations 2014</i> , that can provide short-term shelter from the immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire, but do not guarantee safety. The <i>Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) Community Fire Refuge Policy (June 2015)</i> outlines the purpose, attributes and other arrangements related to establishment of refuges.
Emergency Relief Centre	A place (such as a town hall or community centre) a council establishes to provide immediate and basic services to people affected by an emergency (<i>Victorian State Emergency Management Plan; October 2024, pg. 60</i>).

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The *Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report* (2009) recommended that neighbourhood safer places (Bushfire Places of Last Resort [BPLRs]) be identified and established to provide persons in bushfire affected areas with a place of last resort during a bushfire.

In response to this recommendation, the Victorian Government introduced the *Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009* (Vic) (ESLA Act) which amends the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (Vic) (CFA Act) and the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (Vic) (EM Act). The effect of these amendments is to require the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to certify BPLRs against the criteria set out in the *CFA Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort Assessment Guideline* (2010) (the Guideline), and Victorian councils to identify, designate, establish and maintain suitable places as BPLRs in their municipal districts.

1.2 Defining Bushfire Places of Last Resort (BPLRs)

BPLRs (also known as Neighbourhood Safer Places) are areas or premises that provides separation distance from the bushfire hazard and protection from direct flame contact and excessive (life threatening) levels of radiant heat. They are places of relative safety only, and do not guarantee the survival of those who assemble there. BPLRs are existing locations and not purpose-built, fire-proof structures. A BPLR may be an open space such as a local sports field, foreshore or park, or it may be located within a community facility such as a hall or sports pavilion. BPLRs should not be confused with [Community Fire Refuges](#) or [Emergency Relief Centres](#).

BPLRs are places of last resort during the passage of a bushfire and are intended to be used by persons whose primary bushfire plans have failed. Furthermore, there may be serious risks to safety encountered in travelling, and seeking access, to BPLRs during bushfire events. Depending on the direction of a particular fire, it may not be a safer place to assemble than other places within the municipal district.

BPLRs have several limitations including the following.

- Sheltering at an BPLR may result in physical and/or psychological trauma.
- There are risks to people travelling through a fire affected environment on foot or in a vehicle to an BPLR.
- There are risks to people accessing, sheltering and leaving a BPLR during the passage of the fire front.
- Limited capacity and parking.
- No guarantee of safety.
- May not cater for animals.
- Emergency services will not necessarily be present.
- Do not provide amenities or services (e.g. food, drink, toilets, medical services).
- May not cater for special needs (e.g. infants, elderly, ill or disabled).
- Not an appropriate destination when leaving the area early.
- Not assessed to be a place of shelter from other types of emergencies (e.g. to escape rising floodwaters or as a shelter from severe weather events).
- May be in the open and therefore provide no protection from the elements, such as high temperatures from the sun, high wind, or smoke, ash and embers from the fire.

1.3 Aim and purpose

This Plan is a Bushfire Places of Last Resort (BPLR) (also called Neighbourhood Safer Places) Plan for the purposes of the legislation and contains guidelines which have been developed by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to assist the council in identifying, designating, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning places as BPLRs within the municipality.

This Plan also identifies other matters that should be considered in identifying, designating, establishing and maintaining BPLRs within the municipality.

This Plan contains a step-by-step methodology for the council to follow in identifying, designating, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning BPLRs. Council must consider each of the factors set out in this Plan. It should also consider other factors which are specific to the council's circumstances, including the resources available to the council.

Once this Plan has been adopted, council must make it, and any documents incorporated into it, available at the council's municipal offices for public inspection during normal office hours free of charge under section 50F(4)(b) of the CFA Act. It must also be published on council's website under section 50F(4)(a) of the CFA Act.

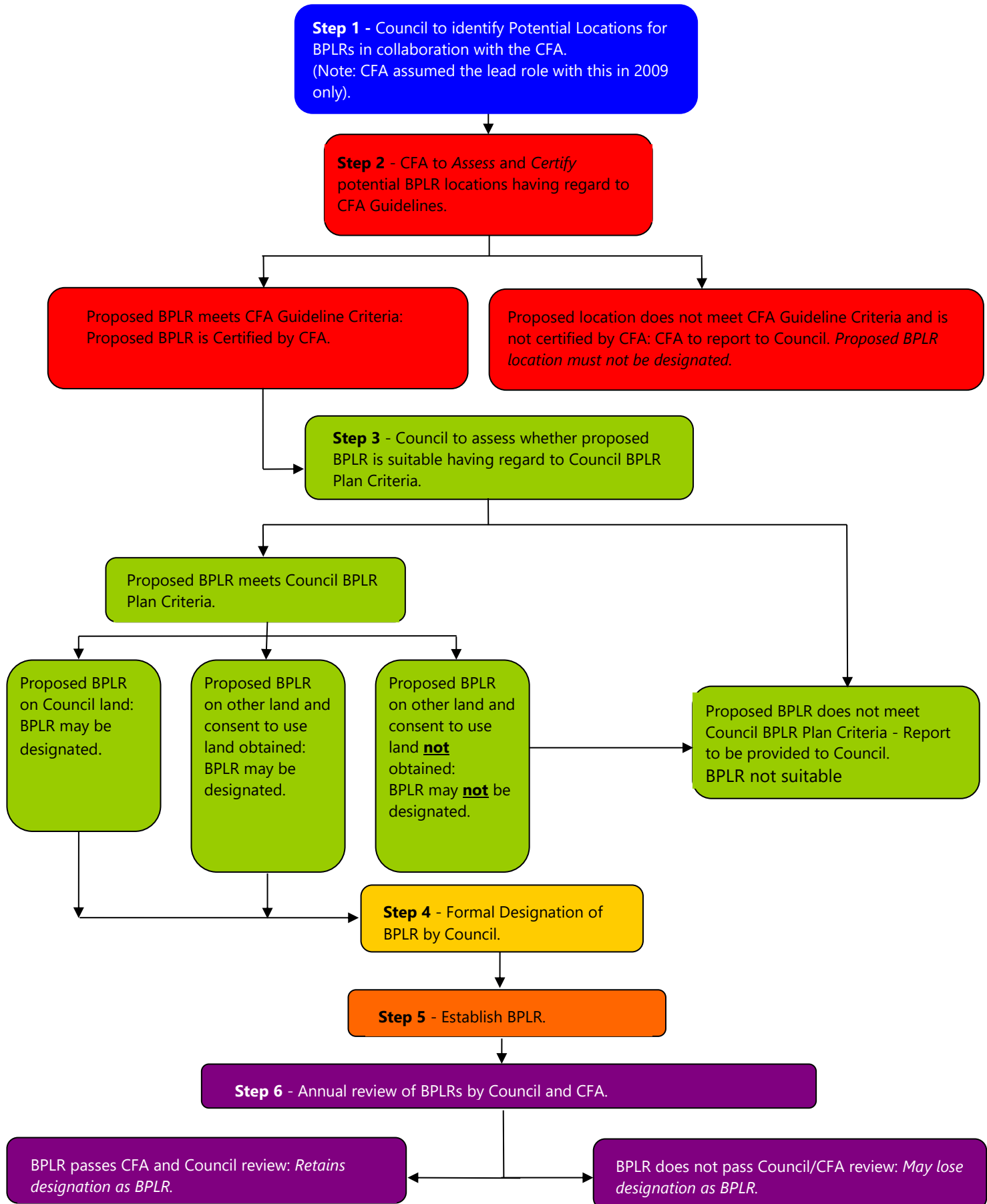
1.4 Plan review

This Plan will be reviewed and updated as required to reflect any changes to the CFA or Council assessment processes for designated sites.

This version of the Plan has been revised to align with the *CFA Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort Assessment Guideline (2025)*. The principal amendment is the adoption of updated Fire Danger Rating terminology, including the use of *Catastrophic* in place of *Code Red*.

This Plan also reflects Council's preference for the term *Bushfire Place of Last Resort (BPLR)* rather than the historical term *Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP)*. This approach is supported by the CFA and is increasingly being used by municipal councils across Victoria. Council acknowledges that the official legislative and policy terminology has not yet been formally amended. However, the use of *Bushfire Place of Last Resort* throughout this Plan is intended to improve community understanding of the purpose of these sites and to reduce confusion regarding the level of protection they may provide during a bushfire emergency. The term more accurately conveys that these locations are intended as a place of last resort and do not guarantee safety.

2. PROCESS FLOWCHART



3. ESTABLISHING BUSHFIRE PLACES OF LAST RESORT

3.1 Identification of potential BPLR locations

3.1.1 Responsibility for identifying BPLRs

For the 2009-2010 fire season, the CFA assumed lead responsibility for identifying potential locations for BPLRs. This was done in consultation with Councils. The initial focus was upon the identification of proposed BPLRs within those municipalities with CFA Township Protection Plan (TPP) areas in place.

However, identification efforts have now expanded beyond these localities. From 2010 onwards, Council is responsible for identifying potential places as BPLRs within its municipal district, as per Section 50G of the CFA Act.

Northern Grampians Shire Council will undertake identification, management and the decommissioning of BPLRs via consultation with the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMP) and Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC).

Generally, establishment of a new BPLR or decommissioning of an existing BPLR will be discussed with the MFMP and any decisions submitted to the MEMPC for approval. Council is not required to consult with the MFMP or MEMPC regarding the annual review and redesignation of existing BPLR sites.

3.1.2 Identification timing

Northern Grampians Shire Council will identify and assess any potential places as BPLRs by 31 May each year. This will allow sufficient time for designation of the potential BPLR location by council, and assessment and certification of the BPLR by the CFA.

Subject to the outcome of the assessment and designation process, council will undertake establishment of the BPLRs (including the installation of signage and other actions).

The process of BPLR identification is ongoing with council's Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO), in consultation with council's Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO), CFA, the MFMP and MEMPC.

3.1.3 Criteria for identifying BPLR locations

As part of the initial identification of BPLRs, the following criteria is used in assessing suitability.

- The environment surrounding the potential BPLR.
- What other uses are made of the potential BPLR and whether those uses could be inconsistent with its designation as a BPLR.
- Whether the land on which the potential BPLR is located is council-owned or non-council owned land.
- An assessment of the fire risk of the neighbourhood to assess the need for a BPLR, including:
 - whether there are clear means of access and egress to and from the potential BPLR
 - whether the potential BPLR is near population centres
 - the adequacy of egress routes out of the area being considered for a BPLR (including number of egress routes, whether major or minor roadway, type and amount of vegetation along key egress routes; capacity of egress routes to accommodate potentially large numbers of vehicles and to accommodate potential vehicle breakdowns).

3.2 Council assessment of BPLRs

Council must assess the site in accordance with the factors outlined below to determine whether it is suitable to be designated as a BPLR. Unless a potential BPLR satisfies each of the criteria outlined below, it should not be designated by council as a BPLR.

The MFPO and MEMO are responsible for the inspection process using existing expertise within the MFMPCC to assist with the audit and assessment of potential BPLRs.

The factors to determine the suitability of the place as a BPLR are as follows.

3.2.1 Consent and rights of access

There must be appropriate land access and tenure arrangements so that council has the right to:

- use the place as a BPLR
- access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance, and
- erect appropriate signage at the BPLR, which includes approved additional BPLR information as described in section 5 of this Plan.

3.2.2 Council land

If the potential BPLR is on land owned or controlled by council, appropriate rights of land access and tenure are unlikely to be an issue. However, council will need to ensure that where council land is leased or licensed to a third party; it must be possible to put in place appropriate arrangements on reasonably satisfactory and acceptable terms with the tenant or licensee permitting council to use the land as a potential BPLR. In taking these matters into account, council should consider what alternative uses may be made, whether temporarily or semi-permanently, of land under council control or management.

3.2.3 Crown land

If the potential BPLR is on Crown land not owned or controlled by council, then the consent of the Crown land manager is likely to be required. If the land has been leased or licensed to a third party, such as a caravan park operator, then the consent of the tenant or licensee to use the place as a potential BPLR will also be required. In obtaining the consent of the relevant Crown land manager, it will be necessary to consider whether the Crown Grant or reservation authorises the place to be used as a potential BPLR.

3.2.4 Private land

Where it is proposed that a place on privately-owned land is to be used as a BPLR, then the consent of the relevant landowner (and, where applicable, occupier) for the place to be designated and used as a BPLR is required. If the landowner (or occupier) does not consent to the place being designated and used as a BPLR on terms which are reasonably satisfactory and acceptable to the council, it must not be so designated and used.

3.2.5 Deed of consent

Where a potential BPLR is located on non-council land, with the result that consent and rights of access need to be negotiated with the owner and (where necessary) occupier, council officers responsible for negotiating such consent and rights of access should provide a draft form of consent to the owner/occupier for their consideration. The form of consent will be required to be approved either by council (through a formal resolution), or by the CEO acting under delegation.

Any amendments to the form of consent which may be requested by the landowner or occupier will need to be thoroughly considered before they are agreed to by council. If it is not possible or appropriate for council to agree on amendments that may be requested to the consent document, then the proposed BPLR should not be designated by council.

3.2.6 Access and egress

Council must assess whether there is sufficient access to the potential BPLR which will allow:

- anticipated potential numbers of people to move to and from the place
- the CFA and other emergency services to attend the place for asset and personnel protection activities and operations.

Council must assess potential access and egress routes, bearing in mind the fact that BPLRs are places of last resort. As people may be seeking access to a BPLR in a rushed or panicked state, a number of people could be seeking access in a relatively short time and visibility could be affected by smoke, easily navigable routes to and from a BPLR are crucial.

In considering whether access and egress routes are adequate, consideration should be given to issues such as:

- the condition of the road surface
- the proximity of the BPLR to major roadways and population centres
- the type and amount of vegetation along any access routes, and whether that vegetation could be affected by fire and pose a risk of harm to those seeking access to the potential BPLR, or otherwise block access to the BPLR
- the capacity of access routes to accommodate potentially large numbers of vehicles, and to accommodate potential vehicle breakdowns
- parking at the place
- any hazards that may exist for persons accessing the place by foot, including in the buffer zone
- any relevant matter contained in council's Road Management Plan prepared pursuant to the Road Management Act 2004 (Vic); and
- the number of access points to any potential BPLR.

If appropriate and satisfactory access and egress routes are not available, then the proposed BPLR should not be designated by council.

3.3 Opening of a BPLR

3.3.1 Council considerations

In deciding whether to open a site as a BPLR, council must consider:

- whether it will be possible or practicable to open the potential BPLR or otherwise make it available for use on a 24-hour basis during the declared Fire Danger Period
- the potential for damage to the place during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as a BPLR
- the potential cost to council associated with the above points
- the possibility that the potential BPLR could be used for unintended purposes, such as a refuge and,
- if it is appropriate to open or make available BPLRs only on Catastrophic days.

3.3.2 Defendable space

The CFA has advised that there is no guarantee that fire units will attend a BPLR, and that individuals that use BPLRs are doing so at their own risk. There should be **no expectations** that fire units or other emergency services personnel will attend a BPLR during a bushfire.

Despite this, the potential BPLR should be surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA and other fire services to conduct asset protection and fire suppression activities around the place.

Any open space should be reasonably free of obstacles that could hinder fire suppression activities. These obstacles may include but are not limited to:

- fences
- buildings and sheds
- steep inclines in close proximity to the potential BPLR
- vegetation, especially large trees
- other landforms such as rocks, boulders and knolls which could substantially hinder fire suppression activities.

If necessary, advice from CFA should be sought regarding their defensible space and fire vehicle access requirements. When assessing the defensible space factor, council must consider whether approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna is required, under legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth), *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) or the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic). If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential BPLR location is designated.

If the proposed BPLR does not have adequate space around it or if approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna is required but cannot be obtained before the BPLR is required to be established, or cannot be obtained on reasonably satisfactory conditions, it should not be designated as a BPLR by council.

3.3.3 Defendability of buildings

If the potential BPLR is a building, council must consider whether it is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack. As the CFA is not required to assess the risk of ember attack to a building in undertaking the CFA fire rating assessment when certifying BPLRs, the council should consider this issue. In considering this issue, Council may need to seek expert advice from appropriately qualified CFA personnel.

If there is an appreciable risk of the proposed BPLR being compromised by ember attack, which cannot be satisfactorily defended, then the building is unlikely to be suitable as an BPLR and should not be designated by Council.

3.3.4 Signage

Council must assess whether it will be possible to have signage at the entry to, and in the vicinity of, the potential BPLR. Such signage must be in accordance with the *EMV Neighbourhood Safer Places – Bushfire Place of Last Resort Signage Manual (2015)*.

Council must refer to the Manual when considering whether appropriate signage can be erected. Council may also wish to provide further signage and information at the location to inform and support potential users of the BPLR.

If signage must be placed on private land, then the consent of the landowner will be required.

3.3.5 Maintenance and maintainability

Council must assess whether ongoing maintenance of the proposed BPLR, and the surrounding area, is both possible and practical, having regard to the resources reasonably available to the council. This factor should be considered by the council not only in relation to the suitability of a proposed BPLR, but also as to the total number of proposed BPLRs that can be reasonably maintained within the municipal district. This is needed to ensure that the place remains suitable for use as an BPLR during each fire season.

Specifically, the place must be capable of being maintained to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Guideline Criteria and the council BPLR Plan Criteria. If it is council policy that if it is not possible to maintain a potential BPLR, then it must not be designated as such.

When assessing the maintainability of the potential BPLR, both the BPLR and the Buffer Zone may require various maintenance activities to be undertaken on a periodic basis.

There may be cases where maintenance activities can only be undertaken by, or with the consent of, an adjoining landowner. This may, in turn, require assurances from such landowners that the place, and areas surrounding it, will be maintained to a satisfactory level.

If the proposed BPLR is not capable of being satisfactorily maintained, then it should not be designated by council.

3.3.6 Separation and demarcation area

If the BPLR is to be in an open area, it must be possible to identify the area that is the BPLR. This may best be achieved by signage and or some sort of boundary or perimeter marking. In the example of an oval this may be the boundary fence.

Although not always possible, areas that enable separation or enable enough room to move away from other forms of potential hazard such as vehicles, buildings and animals are preferred.

3.3.7 Alternative uses of a potential BPLR

Council must consider what other uses may be made of the potential BPLR which could impact upon its ability to properly function as a BPLR.

If the place is used for other uses which could compromise its ability to be used as a BPLR, and these activities cannot be managed so that they do not impact on the operation of the BPLR then a BPLR should not be designated by council.

3.3.8 Communication with the community

Council must be able to communicate the location of the potential BPLR to the community. There should be good community awareness of the location of the place, together with the risks that relate to the use of the potential BPLR, and the risks associated with travelling to the potential BPLR in the event of a bushfire.

3.3.9 Public liability insurance

As a matter of prudent risk management, council should have regard to:

- any additional factors which are relevant to council's maintenance of insurance coverage for legal claims relating to the identification, designation, establishment, maintenance and decommissioning of a place as a BPLR, as well as travel to a BPLR
- any indemnity provided by the State of Victoria, and
- any statutory defences to claims.

3.4 CFA assessment and certification of potential BPLR locations

3.4.1 Introduction

Under section 50G(5) of the CFA Act, the CFA is responsible for assessing potential BPLR locations against the [CFA Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort Assessment Guideline](#).

This will be done by appropriately qualified and experienced CFA personnel.

Council is not responsible for the assessment and certification of potential BPLRs by the CFA but must request CFA undertake their assessment prior to requesting that council designate / not designate and establish / not establish a BPLR.

3.4.2 CFA assessment criteria

In assessing potential BPLR locations, the CFA must consider the criteria and other considerations as set out in the CFA guidelines as issued from time to time by the CFA. The key matters to be considered under the current guidelines are:

- For open spaces:
 - the appropriate separation distance between the outer edge of the potential BPLR and the nearest fire hazard (Buffer Zone) should be at least 310 metres; or
 - an alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the site is no more than 2 kw/m2.
- For buildings:
 - The Buffer Zone between the outer edge of the building and the nearest fire hazard should be at least 140 metres; or
 - an alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the building is no more than 10 kw/m2.

3.4.3 Assessment exclusions

The Guideline criteria do not consider other potential bushfire attack mechanisms (e.g. ember attack), non-vegetation hazards or structural aspects of a building. These matters may, where applicable, be considered within council's further risk assessment which may be initiated through the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) or relevant sub-committee of the MEMPC.

This broader risk assessment considers criteria outlined in the council BPLR Plan or municipal emergency management planning processes which may include: the environment surrounding the potential BPLR site, access and egress, other uses of the site and whether those uses could be inconsistent with its designation as an BPLR, building accessibility (if applicable), traffic management, etc. Council may seek advice from appropriately qualified CFA personnel and other relevant parties.

CFA's delegated officer may independently identify other non-vegetation hazards or risk concerns in the immediate or broader landscape and provide recommendations to council through the MEMPC or relevant sub-committee due process.

Council must also secure consents and rights of access from the landholder(s) where land is not council owned or managed; and agreed terms where compliance with the radiant heat criteria is based on grassland management of the site and/or land abutting the site during the FDP. If a landholder does not consent to the place being designated and used as a BPLR or a grassland management agreement cannot be secured, the site must not be designated.

Following identification of a place which may be suitable as a BPLR, the potential BPLR is assessed by the CFA as soon as practicable. This is likely to occur shortly after identification.

3.4.4 Informing council of CFA assessment

Once the assessment of a potential BPLR is completed by the CFA, the CFA will certify the potential BPLR if the place meets the CFA Guideline Criteria. The CFA will provide a copy of the CFA certification in relation to a potential BPLR to Council upon completion of certification, and a summary of the criteria and assumptions upon which the assessment is based.

Council should ensure that the boundaries of both the potential BPLR as certified by the CFA, and any Buffer Zone surrounding it, are clearly defined in the CFA assessment.

For reasons of community safety, it is a requirement of the CFA Act, and it is also council policy, that only those places assessed and certified by the CFA may be considered for designation as BPLRs by the council. The council must not designate a place as a BPLR unless it has CFA certification.

3.5 Council designation of BPLRs

Council must formally determine whether to designate a place as a BPLR. Council should not designate a place as a BPLR unless it is satisfied that the place is suitable, having regard to the Council BPLR Criteria. A BPLR may only be designated by a resolution of the council.

Following preparation of an assessment of a potential BPLR, council should determine whether to designate a potential BPLR location by no later than 31 July. This will enable any necessary establishment works to be undertaken.

Once the council has designated a place as an BPLR, the MFPO must provide an updated list of all designated BPLRs within the municipality to the CFA under section 50K of the CFA Act. This updated list must be provided by no later than 30 September in each year.

3.5.1 Establishment and maintenance of BPLRs following designation

Following designation, council will establish all designated BPLRs within the municipal district. To establish a BPLR after its designation, council must:

- erect appropriate signage at and near the BPLR
- undertake any necessary preparatory works, including the construction or establishment of any required infrastructure and the clearance of vegetation, to enable the area to be used as a BPLR
- publish the location of the BPLR on the council website
- update council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan to include the location of the BPLR.

The MFPO must provide an up-to-date list of BPLRs to the CFA no later than 30 September each year under section 50K of the CFA Act.

Council is responsible for maintaining all designated BPLRs within its municipal district. This includes vegetation management, maintenance of access and egress points and signage required for the functioning of the site as a BPLR.

3.6 Annual inspections and decommissioning of BPLRs

3.6.1 Responsibility for annual review of BPLRs

Pursuant to s.50J of the CFA Act a municipal council must, by 31 August in each year, conduct a review of each designated BPLR in its municipal district to determine if it is still suitable to be designated as a BPLR. This council annual review, or review of a designated site at any time of year, must include a request to CFA for reassessment.

3.6.2 Considerations when undertaking inspections

If a BPLR no longer meets Council's BPLR Criteria, Council must determine if it has the capacity to address the identified non compliances. If it does not, then the BPLR must be decommissioned.

If a BPLR no longer satisfies the CFA Guideline assessment criteria, the site must be decommissioned. The CFA may also certify that the site meets the assessment criteria but also provide additional advice pertaining to grassland management.

3.6.3 Decommissioning of BPLRs

By Council Resolution only.

- Council must decommission a BPLR if the CFA assessment determines the site is no longer suitable.
- Council may decommission a BPLR even if it has CFA certification, if council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that it is not appropriate for the site to continue to be designated a BPLR.
- Council will decommission a BPLR that is not on council land if the occupier or the person in control of the land has withdrawn consent to the designation of the site as a BPLR.

4 COUNCIL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR POTENTIAL BPLR LOCATIONS

Council BPLR Plan Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Consents and rights of access See section 2.1(a)	If the potential BPLR is located on Council-owned land, can Council use the land as a BPLR if required? Consider whether Council allows the land to be used for potentially inconsistent purposes, such as for farmers' markets, fetes, circuses etc.		
	If the potential BPLR is on private land, or public land under the control of a Crown Land Manager (other than Council), can Council enter into arrangements which allow it to use the land as a potential BPLR on reasonably satisfactory terms? Also consider whether Council has the right to: - access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance; and - erect appropriate signage at the BPLR.		
Access and egress See section 2.1(b)	Do access routes to the potential BPLR allow for: - the anticipated potential number of people to move to and from the place; and - the CFA and other emergency services to attend the place for asset and personnel protection activities?		
	Are access routes easily navigable, bearing in mind they could be affected by smoke? Consider the condition of the road surface, proximity to population centres and major roads, capacity of access routes to accommodate large numbers of vehicles, the availability of car parking at the place and any other relevant matters.		
Maintenance of BPLR in accordance with CFA assessment See section 2.1(c)	Can Council maintain the potential BPLR in accordance with the criteria considered by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment? If the CFA have not provided sufficient information in relation to the criteria it has taken into account in arriving at its fire rating assessment, it may be necessary for Council to seek further information from the CFA.		

Council BPLR Plan Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Opening of the BPLR See section 2.1(d)	Will it be possible and practicable to make the potential BPLR available for use on a 24-hour basis during the declared fire danger period? This is a particular issue where the potential BPLR is a building. Consider the potential for damage to the BPLR which could result during times that it is open and available for use but is not being used as a BPLR.		
	What costs could be incurred by Council in making the potential BPLR available on a 24-hour basis during the declared fire danger period? Are these costs reasonable, and capable of being borne by Council?		
	Could the potential BPLR be used for an unintended purpose which could impact upon its use as an BPLR (such as an emergency relief centre)?		
Defendable space and fire suppression activities See section 2.1(e)	Is the potential BPLR surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA to conduct asset protection and fire suppression operations? Is that open space reasonably free of obstacles (such as fences, buildings, steep gradients, vegetation and other land formations)? Council should seek CFA advice concerning the defendability of the potential BPLR and the Buffer Zone, including in relation to fire vehicle access requirements.		
	Will approval be required under legislation such as the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cwlth), <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i> (Vic) and the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> (Vic)? Can such approval be obtained before the BPLR is established?		
Defendability of buildings See section 2.1(f)	If the potential BPLR is a building, has Council sought expert advice from the CFA to determine whether the BPLR is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack? If it is subject to such a risk, can that risk be safely managed?		
Signage See section 2.1(g)	Can appropriate signage be erected at the entry to the potential BPLR, and in its vicinity?		
	If signage needs to be placed on private land, can Council obtain the consent of the relevant landowner to the erection of the signage?		
Maintenance and maintainability See section 2.1(h)	Is the potential BPLR capable of being maintained to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Assessment Guideline Criteria and the Council BPLR Plan Criteria?		

Council BPLR Plan Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
	Where relevant, consider whether adjoining landowners and occupiers will provide Council with an assurance that both the potential BPLR and the Buffer Zone can be maintained to a satisfactory level.		
Disabled access See section 2.1(i)	Are there are means of access for disabled and mobility-impaired persons to the potential BPLR, including vehicle access to drop off people with disabilities?		
Alternative uses of potential BPLR See section 2.1(j)	Can Council manage alternative uses which may be made of the potential BPLR to ensure that those uses will not compromise the function of the place as a potential BPLR? The CFA has advised that where a potential BPLR which is used for an operational purpose at many times meets the CFA Assessment Guideline Criteria, then the CFA considers that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as a BPLR.		
Community Communication See section 2.1(k)	Will it be possible to ensure that there will be good community awareness of the location of the potential BPLR, and the risks associated with using the potential BPLR?		

5 BPLR SIGNAGE

Under section 50H of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, municipal councils are required to:

- (1) *Ensure that appropriate signs are provided at each designated neighbourhood safer place in its municipal district; and in meeting that obligation*
- (2) *Have regard for signage guidelines published from time to time on the Internet site of Emergency Management Victoria (EMV).*

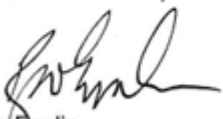
EMV's *Neighbourhood Safer Places - Bushfire Place of Last Resort Signage Manual* (2015) outlines the signage requirements for Bushfire Places of Last Resort.

Country Fire Authority Act 1958

Section 50H

Signage Guidelines for Neighbourhood Safer Places

1. Under section 50H of the **Country Fire Authority Act 1958**, municipal councils are required to:
 - (1) ensure that appropriate signs are provided at each designated neighbourhood safer place in its municipal district; and in meeting that obligation; and
 - (2) have regard to signage guidelines issued from time to time on the Internet site of the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC).
2. The OESC has, in consultation with the Country Fire Authority and the Municipal Association of Victoria, developed a standard sign for designated neighbourhood safer places.
3. The specifications for the standard sign are set out in Schedule 1.
4. Nothing in these guidelines prevents a municipal council from providing additional information on the sign post displaying the standard sign. For example, such information may relate to the capacity or use of the place.
5. These guidelines come into effect on the date below and continue to apply until otherwise replaced or varied.


Bruce Esplin
Emergency Services Commissioner

Dated: 9 December 2009.

- This NSP may not prevent death or injury from fire, embers or radiant heat when you get here.
- You should only use this NSP when your primary bushfire plan has failed or cannot be implemented.
- This NSP only has limited capacity.
- There is no guarantee that CFA or other emergency services will be present at this NSP during a bushfire.
- No facilities are provided for people with special needs, including those requiring medical attention.
- This NSP may be uncomfortable, and no amenities such as food and drinks will be provided.
- There is no provision for animals.

6 DESIGNATED BPLR LOCATIONS IN THE NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Township	Location	Original designation date
St Arnaud	Lord Nelson Park 10 Dunstan Street, St Arnaud	14/10/2010
Stawell	Cato Park Victoria Street, Stawell	09/11/2010
Halls Gap	Halls Gap Playground and Picnic Area Grampians Road, Halls Gap	10/03/2023

7 REFERENCES

Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort Assessment Guideline (CFA, July 2020)

Municipal Council Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan Template (Municipal Association of Victoria, June 2010)

Neighbourhood Safer Places – Bushfire Place of Last Resort Signage Manual (Emergency Management Victoria, October 2015)

Victorian State Emergency Management Plan (Emergency Management Victoria, October 2024)