

BUSH FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are provided to assist you, the landowner and/or contractor to comply with the conditions required by a notice issued under Section 66 of the Rural Fires Act. By carefully following these simple instructions, your obligation as a member of this community will not only be met, but the balance between bush fire safety and environmental responsibility, will be maintained.

Bulldozing or clearance of the block to bare earth is not acceptable. Unless otherwise specified, all trees covered by Council's Tree Preservation Policy are to be retained.

These processes require development consent and are not considered necessary. Severe penalties are applicable for acts of environmental degradation. The use of bulldozers, other track type machinery or skid steer loaders is not acceptable except to load logs, stumps and heaps onto trucks for transport to Council garbage tips. Rubber tyred wheel type agricultural tractors with slashers, walk-behind mower slasher, scrub cutters and hand tools are the most satisfactory equipment for clearing on the fragile soil types of the Blue Mountains. Only this type of minimum impact equipment is approved for use.

The understorey vegetation from about 50mm above ground level should be cut, thinned, removed or mulched. Single specimens or groups of plants not exceeding 3 square metres in area may be left in an undisturbed condition provided a break of at least 3 metres is maintained between these islands. By this method both habitat and species diversity will be maintained whilst the overall fire threat will be reduced. Where possible such islands should be located around retained semi-mature trees.

Small saplings and vegetation under the proportions specified by Council's Tree Preservation Policy may be removed, lopped or thinned (preference should be given to smooth barked species when retaining trees). As stated earlier the removal of any tree covered by Council's Tree Preservation Order requires Council inspection and approval.

Cut vegetative material and ground fuel, leaves, bark, twigs, grass tussocks etc. may be mulched and spread over the block to help prevent weed invasion and soil erosion. Such mulch must not exceed 100mm in depth or 50mm square in size. Additional care must be exercised on steep slopes, near watercourses and swamp areas. Once the land has been cleared, no material is to be heaped and left. **The work on the block and therefore compliance with any notice issued will not be considered complete until this process has been finalised.**

If material is heaped during the clearing process, it must be disposed of by one of the following methods, removal to the local garbage tip or by returning it to the site in the form of mulch. Burning is not recommended and will only be permitted subject to all of the usual restrictions and conditions. Written permission for the use of fire to reduce fuel levels on privately owned land is required in all cases and subject to approval.

In addition to any specific requirements listed under environmental considerations in the notice, all legislation regarding protected and endangered species and pollution control must be complied with.

Should you have any uncertainty regarding your particular property or the requirements of any bush fire notice, inspectors are available for consultation prior to 10.00 am weekdays on (02) 4780-5541. On site meetings with owners are available if required. Your co-operation is sought in providing a safe and enjoyable environment on the Blue Mountains.

