Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2025

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

Accessibility

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Minister's Foreword

Bushfires are a fundamental part of Victoria's history and a certain part of our future. In the past decade we have learned a lot about bushfire management. We have seen climate change cause disruption to weather patterns and complicate established approaches, and we have found increasing challenges through more frequent and more intense bushfires. We are also seeing an increasing need to manage the effects of climate change on ecosystems, through our bushfire management actions and by using fire to achieve land management outcomes.

The Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2025 reflects modern and evolving ways of considering and balancing the range of things Victorians care about in the management of fire on public land.

The preservation of human life must be the most important consideration when we're preparing for and responding to bushfires, but there are other critical factors we need to think about, too. These include:

- protecting residential property, critical infrastructure, industries and regional economies on which Victorian communities depend

- protecting threatened species and the resilience of Victoria's valuable natural ecosystems

- supporting self-determination of Traditional Owners and their cultural obligations to care for Country, and

- working with communities, businesses and industries and reflecting their interests and priorities in the management of fire.

In 2024, we released Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy. The Strategy is a Victorian Government commitment on the direction of bushfire management for Victoria over the next 10 years – for all Victorians and for all types of land.

Around one third of Victoria's land is State forests, national parks, or other protected public land. On these lands, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is responsible for bushfire management and is able to apply and use fire for land and resource management. The Code of Practice is the foundational document for how DEECA delivers bushfire management and uses fire on this land. It translates the desired outcomes of the Strategy into the objectives, principles and strategic actions that guide DEECA's fire management program.

At the heart of DEECA's approach is the integration of fire management with broader forest and park management. This ensures that the actions taken to prevent and suppress bushfires, and the deliberate application of fire, support the management objectives for a given landscape determined in partnership with Traditional Owners and communities.

Our climate is changing the frequency and intensity of bushfires in Victoria, and the risk of major impacts on communities and ecosystems. We must rise to the challenge while acknowledging the uncertainty and accepting that we don't have all the answers. That's why it's essential that our approach is based on the best available evidence and that as we learn, we adapt. The evidence underpinning our approach to fire management comes from science, and monitoring and evaluation, but it also comes from our communities, the experience of our boots on the ground, and from Traditional Owners and First Peoples, who've cared for Country for many thousands of years.

This Code of Practice sets out how we will undertake fire management on relevant public land and provides the framework for detailed operational documents that guide the everyday, year-round, critically important work of preventing and suppressing bushfires and maintaining healthy ecosystems and the benefits they provide for Victorian communities.

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Environment
June 2025

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1. Introduction

Background

1. The Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2025 (the Code) is a Code of Practice for the purposes of section 31(1) of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*. The relevant law for which this Code of Practice is made is the *Forests Act 1958*.

2. The Code specifies the standards and procedures for the Secretary to carry out its fire management responsibilities under the *Forests Act 1958* on relevant public land in Victoria (being State forests, national parks and protected public land), with appropriate links to private land.

3. The Code replaces the Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2012 (amended 2022).

4. The Code aligns with and supports legislative, policy and operational frameworks, including:

   - Victorian and Commonwealth legislation, including those that establish objectives for the management of relevant public land (being State forests, national parks and protected public land), and those that place obligations on the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (the Department) to minimise and avoid impacts of bushfires and fire management activities to human life, critical infrastructure, cultural, environmental, and other assets and values.

   - The *Natural Environment Climate Change Adaption Action Plan 2022 – 2026*, which establishes practices, systems and knowledge to enable Victoria's natural systems to manage its response to climate impacts.

   - *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037,* Victoria's plan to stop the decline of native plants and animals and improve the natural environment.

   - The State Emergency Management Plan and Bushfire Sub-Plan which provide more details on each agency's bushfire management roles and responsibilities.

   - Whole-of-government emergency management outcomes outlined in the *Victorian Emergency Management Sector Outcomes Framework*.

   - The *Strategic Roadmap for Emergency Management in Victoria 2022-28,* which sets the strategic directions and priorities for the emergency management sector – including bushfire.

   - *Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy* which articulates a 10-year vision and outcomes for bushfire management in Victoria.

Purpose of the Code

5. The purpose of the Code is to support the Secretary to the Department to meet its legislative responsibilities relating to the management of fire on relevant public land in Victoria (being State forests, national parks and protected public land).

6. The Code is intended to promote the efficient, effective, integrated and consistent management of fire and fire related activities on relevant public land for the purpose of protecting human life, assets and other values from the harmful effects of bushfire and to promote appropriate fire regimes, as well as to achieve land and resource management objectives, through the establishment of objectives and principles, standards and procedures.

7. It is intended that any plan, instruction, prescription or guideline developed for fire management activities on relevant public land in Victoria will be consistent with the Code.

Scope of the Code

8. Under the *Forests Act 1958*, in State forests, national parks and on protected public land, the Secretary:

    *   is required to carry out proper and sufficient work for the immediate prevention and suppression of fire, and for the planned prevention of fire, and

    *   may apply and use fire for land and resource management.

9. The Code sets objectives, standards and procedures for fire management in State forests, national parks and on protected public land, providing further detail about how the Secretary discharges its powers and obligations relating to fire management under the *Forests Act 1958*. The Secretary to the Department is the body corporate established under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

10. The Code is not regulatory in nature and does not prescribe the operational detail for how the Secretary to DEECA, through the Department, will achieve the Code's objectives. This detail will be specified in manuals, guidelines, strategies and plans, which will be consistent with the Code.

11. While the Secretary is responsible for the discharge of powers and obligations relating to fire management under the *Forests Act 1958*, the Code refers to the Department taking actions, to better reflect how the Secretary's powers and duties are practically discharged.

Organisation of the Code

12. Fire management involves managing the threat and occurrence of bushfires and the use of planned fire to achieve specific land and resource management objectives. This is reflected in the organisation of this Code.

13. Chapter 1 provides background and defines the scope and purpose of the Code. Chapter 2 outlines the objectives and principles that guide DEECA's approach to fire management. Chapter 3 describes the fire management planning framework, including the integration of fire management planning with broader land management planning frameworks. Chapters 4-7 addresses all aspects of bushfire management including prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Chapter 8 provides a framework for the planned use of fire to achieve various land and resource management objectives. Chapter 9 describes the fire management monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework. Chapter 10 provides definitions of key terms used in the Code.

Application of the Code

14. Under the *Forests Act 1958*, in State forests, national parks and on protected public land, the Secretary is required to carry out proper and sufficient work to prevent and suppress fire, and may apply and use fire for land and resource management. In applying and using fire for land and resource management under s 62A of the *Forests Act 1958*, the Secretary must have regard to any relevant Code of Practice.

15. The Code is otherwise not intended to create any legal rights or give rise to any cause of action.

Legislative responsibilities

16. The Code supports the Department's legislative responsibilities, which include:

Fire prevention and suppression obligations

17. The *Forests Act 1958* states that notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any other Act or law, it shall be the duty of the Secretary to carry out proper and sufficient works in State forests, national parks and on protected public land for the immediate prevention and suppression of, and for the planned prevention of, fire.

Emergency management obligations

18. The *Emergency Management Act 2013*, State Emergency Management Plan and associated documents establish a framework to support an integrated, coordinated and comprehensive approach to emergency management in Victoria.

19. While the Code sets standards and procedures for carrying out the objects or purposes of a relevant law (being the *Forests Act 1958*), relevant requirements of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, State Emergency Management Plan and associated documents have also been reflected throughout the Code, as they are crucial elements of the Victorian Government's approach to bushfire management.

20. The Code is not intended to duplicate information contained in the State Emergency Management Plan and associated documents (such as the Agency Role Statement and the Bushfire Sub-Plan), including outlining the roles and responsibilities of agencies during the phases of emergency management.

Occupational health and safety obligations

21. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain for employees a working environment that is safe and without risks to health. Employers must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons other than employees of the employer are not exposed to risks to their health or safety arising from the conduct of the undertaking of the employer.

22. The Department will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of its employees and the employees of partner agencies responding to emergencies, including through developing and maintaining policies, procedures and guidelines on safety and wellbeing.

Traditional Owner obligations

23. In accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006,* the Department will assess any relevant impact to Aboriginal cultural heritage from fire management activities on relevant public land. Authorisations under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006,* such as cultural heritage permits, may be required for mitigation, planning, preparedness, rehabilitation, and recovery activities that may impact Aboriginal places or objects.

24. The Department will comply with any requirements under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth).*

25. The Department will adhere to commitments made between the Victorian Government and Traditional Owners under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, including Recognition Settlement Agreements, Natural Resource Agreements and Land Use Activity Agreements, where applicable.

Environmental obligations

26. The Department will act in accordance with all relevant environmental and biodiversity legislation including the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Human rights

27. The Department will act in accordance with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Review of the Code

28. The Code must be reviewed within ten years of its approval, or sooner if necessary to take account of changes in legislation or management policy, new information, field experience or community and stakeholder feedback. The Code will remain current until revoked or replaced with a revised Code.

29. The process for review is outlined in the *Conservation*, *Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

Chapter 2:
Objectives and principles for fire management
on relevant public land

What we prioritise and how we approach fire management

Chapter 3: Planning

The integrated range of processes used to devise an effective suite of management strategies and actions to support delivery of the objectives of the Code at a range of spatial and temporal scales during fire management.

Chapter 4: Mitigation	**Chapter 5: Preparedness**	**Chapter 6: Response**	**Chapter 7: Recovery**	**Chapter 8: Land and Resource Management**
What we do to reduce the incidence and impact of bushfires	What we do to prepare for bushfire response	What we do in immediate anticipation to respond to and during bushfire response	What we do to support recovery of communities, infrastructure, the economy and ecosystems	What we do when applying fire for land and resource management

Chapter 9: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

How we assess the performance of fire management activities to make sure they achieve the desired outcomes and the Code objectives
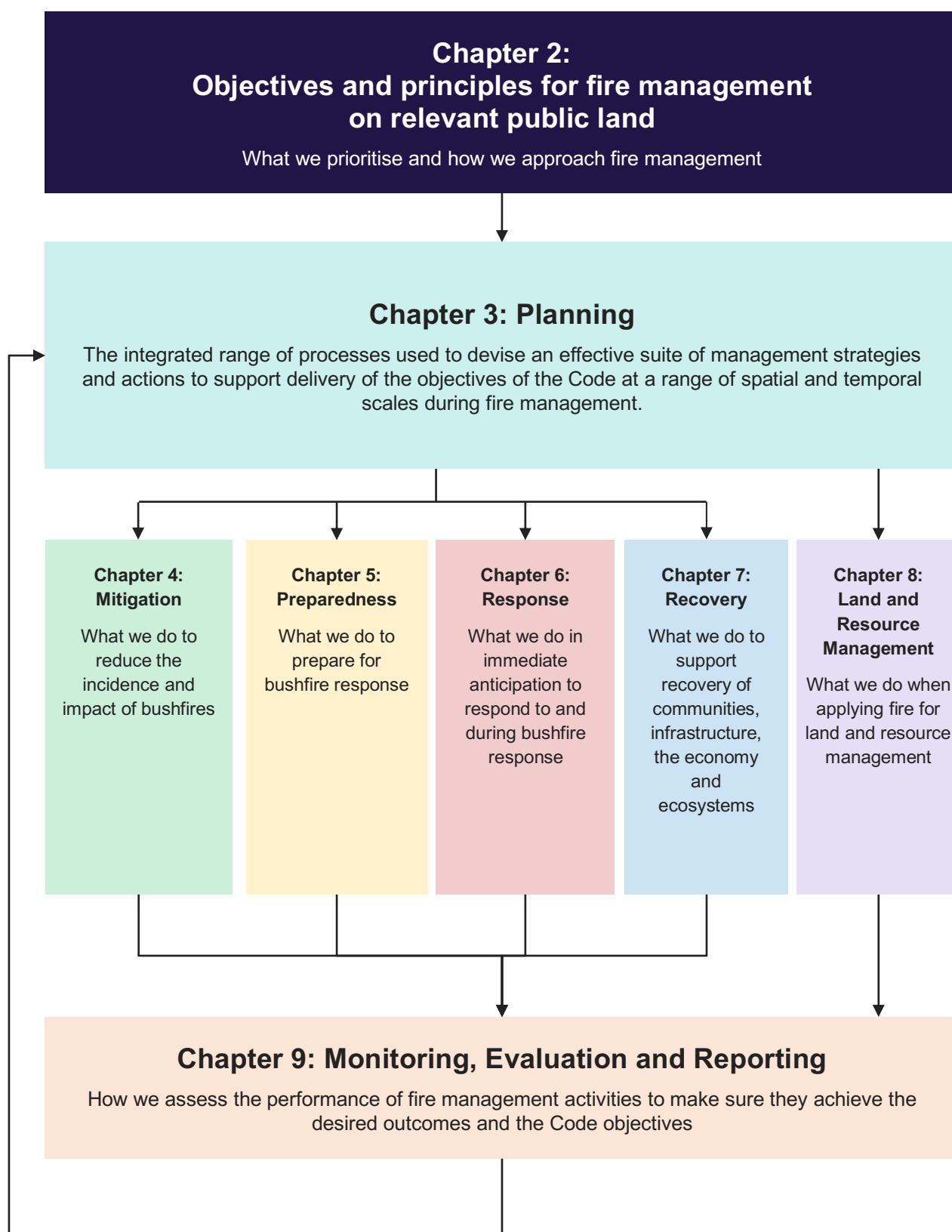
Figure 1 Key elements and structure of Victoria's Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2025.

2. Objectives and Principles

30. The Victorian landscape has been shaped by fire over thousands of years through naturally occurring bushfires, Traditional burning and post European settlement fire management practices. The management of land and fire are closely entwined.

31. Our State is one of the most bushfire-prone regions in the world. Over the past century, major bushfires have had devastating impacts on people, communities, economies, critical infrastructure, essential services, cultural heritage and the environment.

32. Bushfire risk is increasing as climate change increases the frequency and intensity of bushfires and shifting demographics are leading to larger regional populations unaccustomed to living with bushfires.

33. It is essential to continuously learn and adapt management approaches to address the increasing risk of bushfires to Victorian communities and community values.

34. While Victoria has some fire sensitive ecosystems, fire is a critically important ecological process for most Victorian biodiversity.

35. Appropriate fire regimes benefit species and ecosystems by promoting the regeneration of plants and maintaining a diversity of habitats for animals, which in turn leads to a healthy and resilient natural environment able to support the health and wellbeing of communities.

36. The Department proactively applies fire in the landscape to promote regeneration, manage pests and weeds, maintain healthy and resilient ecosystems and achieve other land management objectives.

37. The Department recognises the cultural importance and responsibilities Traditional Owners have to care for Country. The Department acknowledges self-determined ways Traditional Owners want to use cultural fire and undertake land management on Country. The Department also recognises the wide range of land and fire management objectives that can be achieved through cultural burning, including the reduction of fuels and bushfire risk.

Objectives for fire management on public land in Victoria

38. There are multiple objectives for fire management on relevant public land in Victoria.

39. In delivering a fire management program, the protection and preservation of human life (including emergency services personnel and the community) will be given priority over all other objectives. This does not supersede or alter the department's legislative or regulatory obligations. The remaining objectives are listed below in no priority order.

40. The State Emergency Management Priorities underpin and guide all decisions during a response to any bushfire emergency.

41. The objectives of the Code are:

Objective 1: People and community safety

- Minimise adverse impacts of bushfires and fire management activities on human life, health, communities and residential property.
- Increase community resilience to the impacts of bushfires and fire management activities.
- Increase the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities though the promotion of healthy ecosystems and landscapes.

Objective 2: Critical infrastructure and economic resilience

- Minimise adverse impacts of bushfires and fire management activities on critical infrastructure, essential services, industries (including agriculture), businesses and community assets.

Objective 3: Aboriginal Self-Determination in cultural fire and bushfire management

- Continue to learn from and incorporate Traditional Owner knowledge and practice into the overall approach to integrated land and fire management.
- Minimise adverse impacts of bushfires and fire management activities on Country, including on Aboriginal cultural heritage values.
- Reduce and remove barriers to partnering with Traditional Owners to support the further use of cultural fire on Country.
- Increase opportunities for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to self-determine and participate in fire management, including developing employment opportunities for Traditional Owners.

Objective 4: Ecosystem resilience and nature conservation

- Maximise the resilience of natural ecosystems to future bushfire under a changing climate and to preserve biodiversity, clean water, and carbon storage.
- Minimise adverse impacts of fire management activities on environmental values.

42. To achieve these objectives, the Department will:
- plan and implement the management strategies and actions as described in the Code
- monitor, evaluate and report on progress
- practice adaptive management, and
- comply with relevant laws.

43. To pursue these objectives, the Department will:
- use the best available science, innovation and knowledge to support evidence-based decisions
- work together effectively and share responsibility with sector partners, land managers, communities and industry across public and private land
- maintain the skills, equipment, capability, and systems to safely and effectively manage bushfire.

44. Bushfire management strategies and actions can have positive and negative impacts on different objectives across spatial scales and timeframes. The multiple objectives of the Code will be achieved at a programmatic level. All objectives may not be achieved through a single action or activity.

Principles to guide fire management on public land

45. The following principles will guide the Department's approach to fire management:

Integrated land and fire management

46. Fire management will be delivered as part of a broader strategy for the management of national parks, State forests and protected public land ensuring the effective integration of forest and fire management.

Cultural fire can support improved land and fire management outcomes

47. Cultural burns delivered by Traditional Owners can support a wide range of land and fire management objectives, including the reduction of fuels and bushfire risk. Cultural burns also create opportunities to embed culture and Traditional knowledge within land management processes.

Cross-tenure fire management

48. Fire management planning and decision-making will be undertaken in consultation with other land managers, private landholders and fire agencies to support an integrated approach to fire management across public and private land.

Risk-based approach to prioritisation

49. Fire management will be risk-based, ensuring that trade-offs across multiple objectives are appropriately considered, and actions are prioritised where they will have the greatest impact in reducing bushfire risk and delivering on the multiple objectives of the Code.

Future focussed

50. The changing climate is leading to more frequent and intense bushfires which is increasing bushfire risk to Victorian communities and ecosystems. Addressing this challenge requires active management and new approaches.

Evidence-based and adaptive

51. Fire management will be evidence-based and informed by science from a range of disciplines, expert and local knowledge, citizen science, Traditional knowledge (as is appropriate and agreed with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians), best practice nationally and internationally, operational experience and reconstructions of historical bushfire events.

52. The Department will invest in new research and modelling tools, pilots and monitoring programs to generate new knowledge and insights and continuously improve its practices.

Reflective of community priorities

53. Fire management will reflect the self-determined priorities and perspectives of Traditional Owners and local communities. Decisions will have regard to impacts on both current and future generations.

Shared responsibility

54. Bushfire management is a shared responsibility between the community, industries, land managers and fire agencies. The Department will work with sector partners to identify and

progress opportunities to build the capability and capacity of communities, industries and private landholders to share responsibility for the management of bushfire risk.

Transparent and accountable

55. The effectiveness of fire management strategies and actions in progressing outcomes and objectives will be measured, evaluated and publicly reported on to provide for accountability, transparency and continuous improvement.

3. Planning

Overview

56. The *Forests Act 1958* requires the Secretary to carry out proper and sufficient work in State forests, national parks and on protected public land for the planned prevention of fire and the immediate prevention and suppression of fire. The Act also enables the Secretary to apply and use fire for land and resource management. Planning activities contribute to meeting these obligations and delivering these functions.

57. This section outlines the Department's approach to fire management planning. Planning applies to the following chapters of the Code: Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Application of Fire for Land and Resource Management. Note that planning arrangements for Recovery are outlined in Chapter 7 – Recovery.

58. Planning covers the range of strategic, operational and tactical planning processes and products to pursue the objectives of the Code across spatial and temporal scales.

59. Planning for fire management will be integrated with planning for the management of national parks, State forests and protected public land ensuring that planning for the prevention and suppression of bushfires, and deliberate application of fire for land and resource management, pursue broader land management objectives.

60. When planning, the Department will work with the sector, community (including neighbouring landowners), industry, business and Traditional Owners as appropriate to determine the most appropriate strategies and actions for achieving the objectives of the Code.

61. Planning and decision-making will be informed by and guide monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement processes.

Planning outcomes

62. Fire management planning will:

- pursue the objectives of the Code

- be integrated as part of a broader land management strategy

- be undertaken at the strategic, operational and tactical planning tiers, with a clear translation of strategies and actions into the next planning tier

- be spatially explicit wherever possible

- be developed in collaboration with the sector, community, industry, business and Traditional Owners, and reflect shared priorities and approaches for fire management across public and private land

- use science, risk analysis and knowledge of community values and priorities to guide strategies and actions

- be risk-based and enable investment to be directed where it will best support the reduction of bushfire risk and achievement of the objectives of the Code

- enable performance against objectives to be transparently measured, evaluated and reported

- be dynamic and adaptive, with regular review to respond to new knowledge, changing circumstances and contemporary priorities

- improve understanding of bushfire management strategies and trade-offs

- provide for continuous improvement in Departmental capabilities, tools and systems for fire management.

Planning approach, actions and processes

Evidence, knowledge and values in decision-making

63. The Department will consult with land managers and consider relevant land management plans and strategies (such as State forest management plans, Parks Victoria's Conservation Action Plans and Fire Ecology Plans).

64. Planning will draw on multiple knowledge sources and new approaches underpinned by the best available scientific evidence, practitioner knowledge and experience. The Department will draw upon a range of scientific evidence including biophysical, environmental, social, behavioural and psychological as well as cultural and Traditional knowledge (as is appropriate and agreed with Traditional Owners).

65. The Department will work collaboratively with the sector to draw on and incorporate local knowledge into decision-making processes, and facilitate consistency in planning across agencies and tenures.

66. The Department will engage with communities, industries and business to ensure community knowledge and values inform planning decisions.

67. The Department will partner with Traditional Owners to ensure that planning decisions are made collaboratively and are informed by Traditional Owner knowledge, values and aspirations, including those outlined in Traditional Owner strategies and plans.

68. The Department will undertake values assessments (including environmental and cultural heritage values assessments) at each planning tier in accordance with the relevant procedural guidelines to inform the development of strategies and actions and to support compliance with relevant legislation.

69. Planning will use risk analysis to identify where objectives are most at risk across the landscape. This will enable the Department to assess and compare the effectiveness of different management strategies and actions in pursuing the objectives of the Code.

70. The Department will use relevant and appropriate science and technology to inform risk analysis at all planning tiers.

71. The Department will continuously improve its state-wide risk analysis framework incorporating the best available evidence, knowledge and values. Risk analysis will be consistent with Australian Standards relevant to risk management.

72. The Department will consider climate change and future climate risks in developing long-term strategies and actions for the management of fire.

Fire management planning tiers and processes

73. The Department will maintain and continuously improve a framework and suite of doctrine including policies, procedures, instructions and guidance to support delivery of fire management planning at each planning tier and to deliver the planning outcomes outlined in the Code.

74. The suite of doctrine and guidance will outline minimum standards for planning to promote a level of state-wide consistency and equity in service to communities across Victoria, while allowing flexibility beyond minimum standards for place-based planning.

Planning tiers

75. Fire management planning will be undertaken at three tiers: strategic, operational and tactical.

Strategic planning

76. Strategic planning considers long-term, multi-decadal timeframes (10-40 years), and broad landscape scales (e.g. state, regional). Strategic planning outputs are reviewed and updated as required (including in response to significant changes), or on a cycle of 5-10 years.

77. Strategic planning supports decision-making and management action prioritisation to pursue of the objectives of the Code.

78. Strategic planning and derived strategies and actions for the management of fire on relevant public land will seek to deliver a net positive impact for Victorian ecosystems. Both the direct impacts of fire management, including planned burning and other activities, and the avoided impacts of future bushfires will be taken into consideration.

79. Strategic planning is conducted by the Department in collaboration with partner agencies, land managers, Traditional Owners, business, industry and community to fulfil both individual and shared responsibilities.

80. Strategic planning outputs will:

    - be informed by the best available evidence and tools and reflect community priorities

    - outline the current and future landscape context

    - outline spatially explicit fire management strategies and associated actions across bushfire mitigation (including fuel management), preparedness, response and recovery and for the application of fire for land and resource management

    - outline management strategies and actions to be prioritised relative to funding

    - outline how the strategies and actions are anticipated to reduce bushfire risk, and pursue the objectives of the Code and any relevant metrics, targets and outcomes

    - outline the expected effectiveness of the strategic plan against the objectives of the Code and any relevant performance metrics or targets

    - be compiled into, or supplement, regional or state-wide strategies

    - be developed in accordance with relevant policy and procedures, including Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy

    - be informed by relevant land management strategies and plans, to drive integrated forest and fire outcomes

    - outline the approach to updating strategies based on new information and learnings

    - inform more detailed operational level planning.

81. The strategic planning process will include:

- strategic values assessments to determine the current extent, condition, quality and potential future trends of relevant values over a multi-decadal timeframe, including considering the potential impacts and benefits for threatened species and ecosystems listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)* and cultural heritage values under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*

- strategic risk analysis to consider long-term projections, identify and analyse risks to objectives and areas of focus to inform development of strategy options

- strategy development which assesses and compares multiple alternate strategy options, including a 'base case' strategy, against performance indicators and targets as outlined in the relevant procedural guidelines. Strategies and actions targeting the same value between different bushfire and land management plans should complement each other

- strategy evaluation and selection that involves collective decision-making to prioritise strategies that pursue the objectives of the Code. Where necessary, the Department may determine the loss of performance in one objective that should be tolerated to gain improved performance in one or more other objectives. This will be considered at the landscape level over a long-term spatial scale

- working with Traditional Owners to support their rights, objectives and self-determined goals and aspirations.

82. Community and stakeholder engagement, partnership and education support strategic planning by:

- improving the Department's understanding of local values and priorities related to fire management as they change over time

- informing the design and assessment of strategy options based on a variety of knowledge sources

- informing the selection of strategies and actions

- improving community understanding of bushfire risk and the Department's management approach, including understanding links between strategies and actions, outcomes and achievements

- promoting shared responsibility and community-driven bushfire risk reduction activities.

Operational planning

83. Operational planning considers medium-term timeframes, which can vary depending on the management action or program of work and are typically between 1-5 years. Operational planning is typically undertaken at regional scale and may be compiled into a state-wide program or plan.

84. Operational planning translates fire management strategies (the output of strategic planning) and other relevant strategic documents into a program of activities to be delivered at a specific location and time. Operational planning should also account for the current landscape context.

85. Operational planning is undertaken for bushfire management activities and the application of fire for land and resource management. This includes for fuel management, readiness and response, road and track maintenance, ecological burning, regeneration, engagement, and other fire management activities.

86. Operational planning outputs will:

- outline the activities planned to be delivered, the anticipated timing and location

- outline the objectives of the activity, and how they align with and support implementation of the relevant fire management strategy

- outline the expected effectiveness of the operational plan against relevant performance metrics, targets and Code objectives

- be made publicly available where appropriate.

87. Operational planning processes will involve:

- values assessments that consider the overall or cumulative impacts of proposed operational plans on environmental and cultural values, considering the current landscape context

- engagement with sector partners to identify opportunities for cross-tenure delivery of activities

- the prioritisation of management actions across Victoria, with scheduling designed to pursue the objectives of the Code. Risk analysis will be used to understand performance of the operational plan against relevant performance metrics and targets as appropriate.

88. The Department engages with Traditional Owners, partner agencies, stakeholders, the community, industry and business about proposed operational plans. Engagement includes:

- inclusion of local knowledge and experience for identification of issues and needs

- determining the type and location of fire management activities to be delivered on public land.

Tactical planning

89. Tactical planning is done at a district level. It includes planning for individual activities, as specified in operational plans. It considers short-term timeframes (for the period of a single operation – i.e. a single burn). These tactical plans may be complied into a district work program or schedule.

90. Tactical planning involves the nomination and planning of individual management activities through the consideration of relevant strategies and may support operational planning.

91. Tactical planning involves values assessments to determine the values present, risks to those values of the proposed management action, and identification of appropriate mitigations to prevent or minimise adverse impacts of activities on values. Values assessments will be undertaken as specified in the relevant procedural guidelines.

92. Tactical planning outputs include detailed delivery plans about how an activity, such as a planned burn or incident management for a bushfire, will be conducted to meet objectives.

93. Community and stakeholder engagement at the tactical planning level will focus on notification and advice.

Zoning

Fuel Management Zones (FMZs)

94. The Department will prepare fuel management strategies (a strategic planning output) which specify how bushfire fuels will be managed across different parts of the landscape to meet the objectives of the Code and any relevant targets. Fuel Management Zones (FMZs) will support the effective implementation of these strategies.

95. FMZs are areas of relevant public land where fuel management is used for specified objectives. Each of the four FMZs differs in its intended fuel treatment aims and associated performance measures.

96. Although the name of the zone indicates the primary purpose for that zone, it is recognised that multiple goals can be achieved when undertaking activities in a given zone. For example, a burn undertaken primarily for land management purposes may also have asset protection benefits. Likewise, a burn delivered for bushfire moderation may have ecosystem resilience benefits. FMZs describe fuel treatment aims (with associated performance measures) in a particular area.

97. The four Fuel Management Zones are:

- Asset Protection Zone (APZ)

- Bushfire Moderation Zone (BMZ)

- Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)

- Planned Burn Exclusion Zone (PBEZ).

98. The Department will maintain a spatial data layer recording the location of all Fuel Management Zones.

99. Fuel management zoning is intended to be adaptive. As fuel management strategies are updated to reflect changing circumstances (e.g. unplanned bushfires), new information and changing priorities, corresponding updates will be made to FMZs.

100. The delivery of fuel management activities may cause localised negative impacts. The Department will seek to moderate these as far as practicable.

Zone placement

101. FMZ placement is determined through analysis conducted in the development of fuel management strategies. This must occur in consultation with Traditional Owners, stakeholders and communities.

102. Minor amendments to zone placement may occur without a full strategic planning process and without consultation.

103. Zone placement considerations may include: achieving the objectives of the Code (including bushfire risk reduction and ecosystem resilience); practical and achievable fuel management outcomes; appropriate fire regimes for vegetation types; maximum overall fuel hazard ratings; topographical alignments; and bushfire behaviour.

104. The Department has a sophisticated and continuously improving set of tools for modelling and assessing risk and that these tools are applied to these critically important planning processes such as zoning, where the high level objectives and principles of the Code get translated into spatially explicit arrangements which in turn drive on-ground decisions and operations

105. When determining the placement of FMZs, the Department will consider relevant park, forest and land management strategies and plans.

106. In developing fuel management strategies and associated FMZs, consideration will be given to requirements under relevant laws including the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

107. Traditional Owner cultural burning may be undertaken in all zone types, except Planned Burn Exclusion Zones, subject to ordinary Departmental planning and approval processes.

Asset Protection Zone (APZ)

108. *Fundamental aim*: To provide the highest level of localised protection from bushfire to human life, residential property and other key community values (including critical infrastructure, industry and economic assets, agricultural assets, water catchments, environmental and cultural values).

109. *Operational aim*: To apply intensive planned burning and/or non-burn fuel treatment to modify bushfire fuels to reduce radiant heat and ember generation near assets and values in the event of a bushfire.

Bushfire Moderation Zone (BMZ)

110. *Fundamental aim*: To reduce the size, spread and intensity of bushfires as they move through the landscape. This zone complements the APZ in that the use of planned burning in the BMZ is designed to protect nearby assets, particularly from ember spotting during a bushfire.

111. *Operational aim*: To apply planned burning and/or non-burn fuel treatment to modify bushfire fuels to reduce the size, spread and intensity of bushfires as they move through the landscape. Where practicable, planned burning in BMZ will seek to maintain an ecologically desirable fire regime, provided bushfire moderation objectives can still be met. This may include using non-burn fuel treatment methods.

Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)

112. *Fundamental aim*: To prevent bushfires and support their safe and effective suppression and apply fire for other land and resource management outcomes.

113. *Operational aim*: To apply planned burning and/or non-burn fuel treatment to support the following outcomes:

- reduce the overall fuel hazard in the landscape to support bushfire ignition prevention, suppression effectiveness, community and firefighter safety, and minimise impacts of large, complex bushfires on human life, residential property and other community values

- maintain or improve ecosystem resilience, through the deliberate application of fire for ecological purposes and protection of ecosystems from large, complex bushfires

- management of the land for particular values and outcomes, including forest regeneration and protection of water catchments.

Planned Burn Exclusion Zone (PBEZ)

114. *Fundamental aim*: To prevent direct impacts of planned burning in areas which are intolerant to fire and/or to prevent planned burning being applied in areas which are not considered suitable for safe and effective delivery.

115. *Operational aim*: To exclude the application of all planned fire. Fuel management activities that do not include the application of fire (i.e. non-burn fuel treatments) may be applied in this zone.

4. Mitigation

Overview

116. The *Forests Act 1958* requires the Secretary to carry out proper and sufficient works in State forests, national parks and on protected public land for the planned prevention and immediate prevention and suppression of fire. Mitigation activities contribute to meeting these obligations.

117. The Department undertakes a broad range of mitigation activities to reduce the incidence and severity of bushfires, minimise their effects and improve the resilience of communities and ecosystems.

118. Mitigation activities undertaken by the Department include:

- community education, compliance and enforcement activities to prevent or reduce human ignitions

- closures of State forests, national parks and other protected public land on Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days to prevent or reduce human ignitions and reduce community exposure to bushfires

- fuel management – including planned burning, non-burn fuel treatments, management of storm debris, and construction and maintenance of strategic fuel breaks, to prevent or reduce ignitions, reduce bushfire size, spread and intensity, support safe and effective bushfire suppression, and reduce impacts on communities and community values

- ecological burning, threatened species and biodiversity programs to increase the resilience of species and ecosystems to future disturbances

- working with local communities, businesses and industry to build understanding of bushfire risk and promote shared responsibility.

119. Mitigation activities undertaken by the Department and sector partners do not replace the need for individual and community level actions to manage bushfire risks associated with their own personal and local circumstances. Overall actions to prevent and mitigate the risk of bushfires do not eliminate fully risk for people and assets, which is why shared responsibility is critical.

Mitigation outcomes

120. The outcomes sought through the Department's mitigation activities include:

- reduced incidence of bushfires originating from relevant public land

- reduced size and intensity of bushfires

- reduced adverse impacts of bushfires on communities, residential property and other key community values, including critical infrastructure, water catchments, environmental and cultural values, on both public and private land

- maintained or increased resilience of ecosystems on relevant public land to withstand future bushfires

- minimise adverse impacts of mitigation activities on communities and ecosystems

- increased community understanding of bushfire risk and actions taken by communities, business and industry to share responsibility for bushfire risk mitigation.

Mitigation strategies

121. Formulate and implement policy that supports an enabling environment for reduction of the incidence, size and intensity of bushfires, subject to requirements of legislation and regulations.

122. Implement compliance and enforcement, education, engagement, partnership and awareness strategies to ensure policy, legislation and regulations are followed and reduce the incidence of bushfires.

123. Reduce the risk posed by bushfire fuels to communities and ecosystems in accordance with relevant procedures and guidelines. In planning and delivering fuel management strategies and actions, the Department will seek to achieve the objectives of the Code and relevant land management strategies and plans.

124. Consider longer term climate change scenarios, the need for climate adaptation, and demographic shifts when planning and delivering mitigation activities.

125. Comply with relevant laws, including the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* when planning and delivering mitigation activities.

126. Undertake community engagement and participatory approaches to build resilience and awareness of risks and increase the uptake of protective actions.

Mitigation actions

Regulate the use of fire

127. The responsible Minister under the *Forests Act 1958* regulates the use of fire within the fire protected area through fire restrictions. The period in which these restrictions apply is called the prohibited period.

128. On relevant public land, the prohibited period is year-round. On private land within the fire protected area, the prohibited period is declared seasonally.

129. Members of the public can only use fire in accordance with relevant legal requirements. There may be times when a total fire ban is declared, and fire is not permitted.

Compliance and public safety

130. The Department, with other fire agencies and Victoria Police, will develop and implement compliance and enforcement approaches, including patrols to monitor compliance with fire legislation and regulations, to reduce the incidence of human ignitions.

131. The Secretary and Parks Victoria have the authority to prohibit or restrict access to State forests, national parks and other protected public land in accordance with relevant legislation and procedural guidelines, including for public safety.

132. State forests, national parks and other protected public land may be closed on Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days and may be closed on other days where necessary to maintain public safety as per land management agency arrangements. Information on closures will be provided to the public.

Education, engagement and enablement

133. The Department will deliver, support and participate in programs which:

- increase public awareness of fire restrictions, and encourage the legal and responsible use of fire by the community

- enhance public awareness of bushfires and bushfire risk, facilitate knowledge sharing, promote the importance of shared responsibility and encourage community-led bushfire risk reduction actions

- support and enable communities, business and industry to share responsibility for the mitigation of bushfire risk

- enhance public awareness and understanding of the function of fire in the Victorian landscape and how appropriate fire regimes promote biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

Reduce ignition risk on public land

134. The Department will support, participate in and deliver programs to reduce ignition risk on public land (e.g. powerline safety).

Deliver fuel management activities

Undertake planning for fuel management

135. The Department will undertake strategic, operational and tactical planning for fuel management (see Chapter 3 – Planning). In some cases, joint planning is undertaken in collaboration with bushfire management sector partners (e.g. the Joint Fuel Management Program).

Fuel Treatment Delivery Plans

136. Planned burns and non-burn fuel treatment operations will be undertaken in accordance with an approved Fuel Treatment Delivery Plan. This is a plan prepared according to relevant procedural guidelines which identifies the area to be treated, fuel treatment objectives, and includes other specifications and conditions under which the operation is to be conducted.

137. The Fuel Treatment Delivery Plan will include specific actions to be implemented in delivering the burn to mitigate risks to any environmental or cultural values identified in the burn area.

Authorisation and direction of a planned burn

138. Only the Secretary or its delegate may authorise the ignition of a planned burn. Approval to ignite a planned burn will occur via the approval process outlined in the relevant procedural guidelines. This will include obtaining any required consents.

139. On ground operations of a planned burn will be carried out under the direction of an endorsed Planned Burn Operations Officer.

Notifications

140. To assist businesses and individuals which may be affected by a fuel treatment activity, the Department will aim to provide relevant, useful and timely information. This will include, but not be limited to, information about the location and timing of fuel management on relevant public land.

141. Prior to the commencement of a planned burn on public land, the Department will seek to notify the affected neighbours and interested or affected stakeholders in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

142. In areas subject to a Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) or a registered native title claim or determination, the LUAA or the future acts regime must be complied with, as applicable, before fuel management takes place.

Private property and/or assets within/adjoining planned burn area (e.g. bees/stock)

143. The Department will seek to notify the owners (where identifiable) of private property or assets such as, but not limited to, machinery, beehives, livestock or harvested forest produce contained within or adjoining the Fuel Treatment Area in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines. The Department may request that such assets are removed to assist with protection where practicable, or that the owners have appropriate risk mitigation measures in place.

144. The Department may work with property owners, public authorities, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and councils to extend a fuel treatment area from public land to land under their responsibility where it improves overall bushfire management outcomes. Such activity should be undertaken in accordance with the powers available to the Secretary under the *Forests Act 1958*, or as agreed cooperatively, and undertaken in partnership with another fire agency, such as the CFA.

Working with landowners and land managers on adjoining land to reduce fuel hazard

145. The Department may work with landowners or land managers on adjoining land as set out in the *Forests Act 1958* and may take enforcement action where appropriate and in accordance with the Act.

Smoke management

146. The Department will work with sector partners, agencies and industry to:

- support research into the effects and impacts of smoke from planned burns and bushfires

- support the development of tools to model and monitor the impacts of smoke from planned burns and bushfires

- maintain and periodically review and improve policies and guidelines covering smoke management

- inform, educate and engage with the community, businesses and industry about potential smoke impacts to identify opportunities to mitigate smoke impacts and support individual and community risk reduction actions

- where possible, reduce impacts of smoke from planned burns through a range of measures.

147. Implementation of planned burns will be in accordance with approved smoke management guidelines.

Breaches of planned burn control lines

148. The Department will take prompt and safe action to assess and manage planned burns that breach the control line in accordance with relevant procedures and guidelines.

149. The Department may declare a planned burn to be a bushfire, where it has breached or has the potential to breach the control line, in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

150. Breaches of control lines and planned burns declared as bushfires will be investigated in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines and opportunities for improvement identified and implemented.

151. Investigation and assurance activities and outcomes relating to breaches of planned burn control lines and planned burns declared as bushfires will be publicly reported.

5. Preparedness

Overview

152. The *Forests Act 1958* requires the Secretary to carry out proper and sufficient work in State forests, national parks and on protected public land for the immediate prevention and suppression of fire and for the planned prevention of fire. Preparedness activities contribute to meeting these obligations.

153. Preparedness actions are undertaken in anticipation of bushfires. Effective preparedness arrangements are implemented to improve bushfire response performance. Preparedness actions will be planned and implemented in accordance with the Mitigation and Response chapters of the Code.

154. The Department undertakes a broad range of preparedness activities to ensure it has the capability (people, resources, governance, systems and processes) and capacity in place to meet its Control Agency responsibilities for bushfire emergencies as outlined in the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and SEMP Bushfire Sub-plan.

155. While the Code is focused on the Department's preparedness activities, there are other related processes that are critical to individual and community preparedness that the Department supports. These include multi-agency and multi-level planning processes at the municipal, regional and state levels. Bushfire preparedness issues such as evacuation planning in high risk areas are covered through these planning processes.

Preparedness outcomes

156. The outcomes sought through the Department's preparedness activities include:

- the Department has a bushfire management workforce of sufficient scale, and with the requisite skills and capabilities, to safely and effectively meet its bushfire management obligations and effectively allocates staff to deliver the objectives of the Code

- the Department has effective recruitment, retention and succession planning arrangements in place to ensure it has the workforce capability and capacity required in both the immediate and longer term

- the Department has the resources (including infrastructure, equipment, plant, vehicles), data and systems required to safely and effectively meet its bushfire management obligations and effectively allocates these to deliver the objectives of the Code

- the Department has the governance arrangements and documented processes in place to enable clear accountability and effective decision-making, promote consistency, and ensure that management meets legislative requirements and support achievement of the objectives of the Code

- the Department has long term strategies in place to maintain and enhance its capabilities and capacity for bushfire management required to address increased bushfire risks under a changing climate

- the Department has long term strategies in place to maintain and develop partnerships with the sector (including nationally and internationally), Traditional Owners, community, stakeholders and industry to enhance bushfire management outcomes.

Preparedness strategies

157. Maintain and enhance, as required, workforce capacity and capability to safely and effectively manage bushfires under a changing climate according to existing and forecast bushfire risk.

158. Maintain and enhance, as required, non-workforce capabilities (resources, governance, systems and processes) to safely and effectively manage bushfires under a changing climate according to existing and forecast bushfire risk.

159. Continuously improve the science, knowledge and tools that support evidence-based bushfire management planning and decision-making, in the context of climate and demographic change, including models to analyse bushfire risk at different spatial and temporal scales.

160. Develop and maintain effective partnerships with the sector (including nationally and internationally), Traditional Owners, community, stakeholders and industry that support achievement of the objectives of the Code and support the effective management of bushfire risk across public and private land.

Preparedness actions

161. In accordance with relevant procedural guidelines, standards, strategies and statutory requirements, the Department will:

People

162. Comply with statutory occupational health and safety requirements, including those relating to the training of personnel in accordance with required standards.

163. Identify and plan for long term workforce needs (capability and capacity) to ensure the Department can continue to meet its bushfire management responsibilities and progress the objectives of the Code in the context of increasing bushfire risk under a changing climate.

164. Ensure decisions and processes to recruit, train and promote staff are based on capability, resource and readiness requirements.

165. Build workforce capability through education, coaching and mentoring programs.

166. Embed consideration of the physical and mental health, wellbeing and safety of staff in preparedness activities and training programs.

167. Increase diversity at all levels of fire management through the development of training programs and recruitment processes, including attraction and retention of First Nations people, women, culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community, and people with diverse lived experiences.

Resources

168. Develop, apply and continuously improve bushfire risk analysis products, data and decision support tools, to inform bushfire management planning and decision-making.

169. Annually set and deliver the recommended workforce and non-workforce capabilities and resources using bushfire risk analysis, in accordance with the relevant procedural guidelines.

170. Develop and implement strategies for the long-term development and improvement of non-workforce capabilities (resources, governance, systems and processes) to enable the safe and effective management of bushfires in a changing climate.

171. Develop readiness and response plans that will set the required readiness levels for workforce and non-workforce capabilities and resources for bushfire response. This will be in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

172. Provide appropriate work centres, vehicles, plant and equipment based on capability, resource and readiness requirements. This will be in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

173. Maintain a strategic fire access road network to enable the safe and effective delivery of bushfire prevention and suppression activities on relevant public land.

174. Develop and maintain aircraft support facilities which meet statewide capability and operational needs.

175. Source and apply science and knowledge, from a variety of disciplines and knowledge systems, to support evidence-based planning and decision-making for preparedness arrangements.

Governance

176. Ensure accountability for bushfire management decisions and associated governance arrangements is documented in relevant procedural guidance and regularly communicated to staff.

177. Develop and maintain strategies and joint partnership arrangements that assist interagency interoperability.

Systems

178. Monitor bushfire danger, behaviour and bushfire damage potential by measuring and modelling fuel hazard, and using a network of weather stations in partnership with the Bureau of Meteorology and the Country Fire Authority.

179. Develop and implement strategies for the long-term maintenance and improvement in existing systems, and the adoption of new systems, to support achievement of the objectives of the Code in the context of a changing climate. Systems include:

   - fire management systems, to support operational planning and delivery

   - communication systems

   - information technology systems (including to support financial management and workforce management)

   - data and information management systems

   - monitoring and improvement systems

   - decision support systems

   - bushfire detection systems

   - knowledge systems

   - to support achievement of the objectives of the Code in the context of a changing climate.

180. Maintain and continuously improve bushfire detection, suppression and surveillance mechanisms, technologies and systems across the State, and maintain them to required standards, and identify and develop solutions to rectify identified gaps.

181. Maintain and continuously improve state-wide communications systems in collaboration with other agencies and liaise with interstate counterparts to enhance effective cross-border communications.

182. Draw on multiple knowledge systems, including the best available scientific evidence and traditional knowledge, to inform preparedness programs and activities. The knowledge will come from a diverse range of disciplines, including, but not limited to biophysical and environmental sciences, social sciences and behavioural science, as well as cultural knowledge (as is appropriate and agreed with Traditional Owners).

Processes

183. The Department will document and periodically review its key bushfire management processes to ensure they are efficient and effective, meet legislative obligations, clearly outline accountabilities and requirements, and accessible and fit for purpose.

6. Response

Overview

184. Under the *Forests Act 1958*, the Secretary must carry out proper and sufficient work for the immediate prevention and suppression of bushfires in State forests, national parks and protected public land. Response activities contribute to meeting this obligation.

185. Under the State Emergency Management Plan (which is prepared in accordance with the *Emergency Management Act 2013*), the Department is the Control Agency for bushfires on relevant public land (State forests, national parks and protected public land) and may be supported by other agencies. The Department may, on occasion, provide support to other fire agencies for the management of bushfires on other public land or private land. Such activities are supported by Victorian legislation and by memoranda of understanding and agreements entered into with those fire agencies.

186. Under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the Emergency Management Commissioner may take overall control of response activities in relation to a bushfire, if the Emergency Management Commissioner considers the bushfire has become, or reasonably believes it has the potential to become a major bushfire, as defined in the *Emergency Management Act 2013*. When responding to bushfires on relevant public land, the State Emergency Management Priorities set out in the State Emergency Management Plan will guide planning and operational decisions made by command and control personnel.

187. This chapter outlines activities that will be undertaken by the Department in the event of a bushfire. It includes responsibilities and considerations of the Incident Controller during bushfire suppression and the emergency stabilisation and early recovery phase of the bushfire.

Response outcome

188. Bushfires are suppressed and managed to pursue the objectives of the Code. Protection and preservation of human life (including emergency services personnel and communities) and relief of suffering will be afforded priority over all other considerations, consistent with the State Emergency Management Priorities.

Response strategies

189. The Department will respond to bushfires on or threatening relevant public land in a safe, efficient and effective manner.

190. The Department will determine the most appropriate suppression tactics for bushfires on or threatening relevant public land taking into account all relevant factors, including risk and resources.

191. The Department will identify and consider actions to reduce bushfire impacts to communities, residential property and other key community values including key environmental and cultural assets on relevant public land (such as water catchments, key threatened species populations, high-quality old growth forest, Aboriginal cultural heritage sites) and critical infrastructure, industry and agricultural assets on adjacent private land.

192. The Department will monitor and manage bushfires in a manner that supports the objectives of the Code.

193. In collaboration with other fire and emergency services agencies, the Department will maintain messaging systems to deliver advice and warnings to communities.

194. The Department will rehabilitate bushfire suppression works following a bushfire where the Department is the lead agency, as outlined in the State Emergency Management Plan.

Response actions

Priority of bushfire response actions

195. The Secretary may, at its discretion, prioritise response activities and the allocation of resources to bushfire response over other Departmental activities.

Incident coordination arrangements

196. The Department will comply with inter-agency coordination arrangements in accordance with:

- relevant legislation
- the State Emergency Management Plan (including relevant sub-plans)
- State command and control arrangements
- reciprocal and interoperability arrangements
- standard operating procedures and guidelines.

Incident management

197. Incident management will be carried out by the Department in accordance with the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (or its successor).

198. The suppression of bushfires will occur based on the most appropriate approach as approved by the Incident Controller and in accordance with relevant policies, procedures and guidelines.

Response will be in accordance with State Emergency Management Priorities

199. When responding to bushfires on public land, the Department will operate consistently with the State Emergency Management Priorities to:

- develop and implement tactics to bring the bushfire under control, with the protection and preservation of human life and the relief of suffering as the highest priority
- allocate resources to the bushfire commensurate with bushfire risk
- manage the response efficiently and effectively to pursue the objectives of the Code.

200. Upon detection of a bushfire the Secretary, the Chief Fire Officer or their delegate will:

Prepare an incident action plan

201. The decision and process to prepare an incident action plan will be conducted in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

202. The incident action plan will prioritise the protection of human life (including the safety and wellbeing of emergency services personnel and community) over all other fire suppression considerations.

Inform the community

203. The Department will provide information about bushfire management activities on relevant public land. This will include, but not be limited to, information about the location of bushfires on relevant public land.

204. The Department will issue public information and warnings as necessary for the purpose of protecting human life. The decision and process to issue public information and warnings will be conducted in accordance with relevant legislation and procedural guidelines, including joint emergency management procedures.

Consider whether to recommend evacuation to threatened communities

205. Where appropriate, recommend evacuation to threatened communities, with co-ordination by Victoria Police.

206. The decision and process to recommend evacuation will be conducted in accordance with relevant joint emergency management procedural guidelines.

Consequence management

207. The Department will undertake a coordinated approach to consequence management with other agencies responsible for services or infrastructure that are or may be affected by a bushfire to implement appropriate actions with the intent of:

- minimising adverse consequences to the community

- preventing escalation and concurrent emergencies where possible.

Consider local and Traditional Owner knowledge

208. Where possible, the Department will involve people who can contribute local knowledge in planning response actions, including the CFA, local land managers and Traditional Owners.

Bushfire investigation

209. The Department will investigate the origin and cause of bushfires on public land. If necessary, the Department may involve other agencies including Victoria Police and the CFA when investigating the origin and cause of bushfires.

210. Investigations to determine the origin and cause of bushfires will be conducted in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

Emergency stabilisation and early recovery phase

211. The Incident Controller is responsible for managing the response to bushfires on relevant public land until the land manager resumes day-to-day management. The Incident Controller will initiate bushfire response actions, emergency stabilisation and early recovery actions. The land manager will resume day-to-day management responsibilities by agreement with the Incident Controller.

212. Where appropriate, the Incident Management Team (IMT) will remain active during the emergency stabilisation and early recovery phase to support emergency services personnel and manage fatigue.

213. Where appropriate, recovery personnel should be embedded in the IMT to support information sharing, effective and timely delivery of recovery activities.

214. Where appropriate, Traditional Owners, should be embedded in the IMT to support information sharing, effective and timely delivery of recovery activities on Country.

215. Emergency stabilisation and early recovery will commence as soon as practicable after the risk to human life has been minimised. Where it is safe to do so, emergency stabilisation and early recovery activities may commence when a bushfire is still going.

216. Emergency stabilisation and early recovery includes, but is not limited to:

- identifying, assessing and treating emerging risks to human life, property and other community values on relevant public land

- identifying emerging risks to human life and community values on adjacent land (other public land and private land) and ensuring these are appropriately addressed

- rehabilitating damage caused by suppression works

- commencing emergency stabilisation activities

- understanding loss and damage to relevant public land

- understanding loss and damage to adjacent land (other public land and private land) in partnership with the sector, communities, industries and businesses, where appropriate.

217. The Incident Controller is responsible for ensuring that the tasks listed above are undertaken, in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

218. Emergency stabilisation and early recovery will be conducted in accordance with any relevant procedural guidelines and legislative requirements, including under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

219. The Incident Controller's handover to the land manager will include details of the emergency stabilisation and early recovery works that have been undertaken or agreed, and the residual risks to public land values and adjoining land.
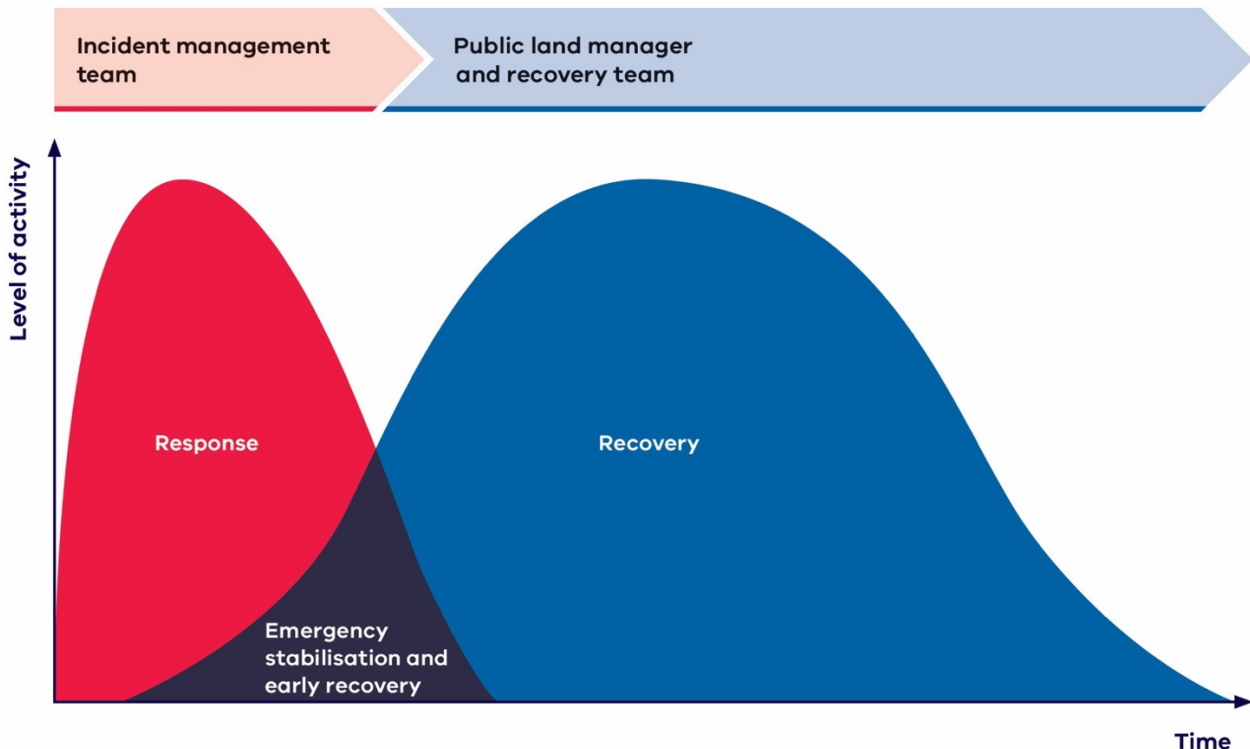

Figure 2. Phases of recovery

Response debriefing

220. At the end of each bushfire season, the Department will conduct a debrief which may include:

    - investigation of safety issues which emerged during the season
    - the level of resources used
    - damage to assets or values from bushfires
    - strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement
    - partner, stakeholder, Traditional Owner and community feedback.

221. Information from this debrief will be used to improve subsequent bushfire management actions and strategies.

222. At the end of each bushfire the Department will conduct an after-action review covering:

    - tactics
    - performance
    - cost control
    - resource use
    - communication and collaboration
    - safety.

7. Recovery

Overview

223. Under the State Emergency Management Plan, the Department is the Recovery Coordinating Agency for specified recovery activities on relevant public land and has a range of Recovery Lead Agency responsibilities. The Department will also support other Recovery Coordinating Agencies where relevant.

224. If requested, the Department may contribute to broader community recovery managed by other government agencies.

225. The Department commits to supporting Traditional Owners to self-determine recovery priorities.

226. Recovery of relevant public land may be integrated with recovery activities on other public land and private land as appropriate, acknowledging that legislation and incident-specific initiatives will direct recovery activities.

227. The bushfire recovery phase on relevant public land transitions from the emergency stabilisation and early recovery phase (see Chapter 6 – Response) to longer-term recovery which is the responsibility of the land manager.

228. Recovery will be cost effective and provide value to partners, stakeholders and the community.

229. Relevant procedural guidelines provide the specific instruction in relation to these activities.

Recovery outcomes

230. The outcomes sought through the Department's recovery activities include that:

   - risks to the achievement of objectives of the Code are considered and addressed following bushfire

   - the recovery of fire-impacted communities is supported by re-establishing safe access to State forests, national parks and protected public land impacted by bushfire for a range of activities and uses

   - the recovery of cultural values is supported by involving Traditional Owners in the determination and implementation of recovery priorities on Country, including as identified under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*

   - recovery resources are allocated to priorities to deliver the best outcomes for communities and ecosystems

   - recovery activities strengthen resilience to future bushfire emergencies.

Recovery strategies

231. Support achievement of the objectives of the Code by effectively prioritising and delivering works to stabilise public land, repair damage and treat impacts that have resulted from bushfires.

232. Prioritise and treat risks to reestablish safe access for communities to relevant public land for a range of activities and uses in a timely manner to support their recovery.

233. Consider opportunities to improve the resilience of infrastructure, communities, ecosystems and other values and assets to future bushfires.

Recovery actions

234. There are two main bushfire recovery phases specific to bushfires on relevant public land:

    - emergency stabilisation and early recovery (see Chapter 6 – Response)

    - longer-term recovery.

Longer-term Recovery

235. This phase commences after the land manager has agreed with the Incident Controller to resume day-to-day management responsibilities. The phase is a continuation of activities undertaken during emergency stabilisation and early recovery and may continue for an extended period.

236. During this phase, the land manager will work towards:

    - continuing stabilisation and recovery activities

    - continuing risk treatment in priority order

    - managing loss and damage to relevant public land

    - identifying, assessing and treating any further risks to the objectives of the Code that were not identified or mitigated in the emergency stabilisation and early recovery phase

    - acting upon any opportunities that have emerged as a result of the bushfire (e.g. weed removal and pest plant and animal management works)

    - undertaking works that facilitate safe access to relevant public land

    - undertaking activities to support the recovery of environmental, cultural and built assets

    - supporting Traditional Owners to implement their self-determined recovery priorities for relevant public land.

Recovery plans

237. Recovery plans will identify:

    - priorities to stabilise relevant public land, treat key risks to values and assets, manage loss and damage and support communities' safe access to relevant public land

    - opportunities for betterment, resilience and restoration activities.

238. Recovery plans may identify workforce planning requirements and treatment costs.

239. To identify priorities, recovery plans will consider:

    - evidence and risk-based assessments

    - the objectives of the Code

    - place-based objectives of local communities and Traditional Owners outlined in relevant strategies and plans, including under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

240. The decision and process to prepare a recovery plan will be conducted in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

Public information and communications

241. The Department will support recovery coordinators at state, regional and municipal levels to provide clear and timely public information and communications in relation to recovery, including the re-opening of relevant public land.

242. The Department will utilise a range of systems and tools to support effective and efficient communication regarding recovery activities.

Transition to business-as-usual

243. Transition from recovery to business-as-usual will be undertaken in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines.

244. Key principles for transition include the following:

- once the IMT has been disbanded, the land manager resumes responsibility for relevant public land, including any residual risks

- if recovery needs have been identified, the land manager will develop a recovery plan to address those needs, collaborating with Traditional Owners where appropriate

- the recovery phase ends once those needs are addressed or risks have been appropriately mitigated, where possible.

8. Application of Fire for Land and Resource Management

Overview

245. Under section 62A of the *Forests Act 1958*, the Secretary may apply and use fire for land and resource management, for the purpose of silvicultural activities undertaken in State forests or on protected public land, to control pest animals or pest plants, and to maintain, manage, protect or enhance the ecology of State forests, national parks or protected public land, or land and vegetation in these areas. The Secretary must not use or apply fire under this section unless the relevant land manager agrees to its application or use. The Secretary must have regard to any relevant Code of Practice, including the Code, when applying fire under this section.

246. Alongside the bushfire management outcomes, strategies and actions identified throughout the Code, land and resource management outcomes can be progressed through the specific application of fire for land or resource management purposes. This section outlines these applications.

247. In doing so, this may overlap with the planning, mitigation and recovery sections of the Code, as fire may be applied for bushfire management purposes that also benefit ecological values or land and resource management outcomes. For example:

- planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of fire for land and resource management should consider relevant chapters of the Code; and

- burns undertaken for land and resource management reasons may also contribute to bushfire risk reduction or recovery. In this case, relevant chapters of the Code may include Chapter 4 – Mitigation and Chapter 7 – Recovery.

248. Climate change is causing large-scale changes to Victorian ecosystems and increasing the complexity of managing fire impacts – that is, the impacts of both unplanned bushfires and the planned application of fire - on biodiversity, including threatened species and ecosystems. Healthy and resilient ecosystems is a fundamental outcome of successful fire management.

249. There are many fire-dependent Victorian ecosystems that need appropriate fire regimes to persist and thrive. Where these regimes do not or cannot naturally occur, fire needs to be applied to prevent these ecosystems from being lost, and to promote their resilience.

Application of fire for land and resource management outcomes

250. The outcomes sought through the Department's application of fire for land and resource management include to:

    - pursue the objectives of the Code and other relevant land management strategies and plans, in partnership with relevant land managers and Traditional Owners

    - support Traditional Owners to practise cultural fire, as relevant to the purposes for which fire may be applied and used for land and resource management. This may include cultural fire for regeneration, management of pest plants and animals, and promotion of healthy ecosystems that provide habitat for key species and produce a range of resources including food, fibre and medicines

    - contribute to positive outcomes for biodiversity and/or threatened species, including those listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*, including to give effect to *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*

    - support the adaptation of ecosystems to climate change, including in accordance with the *Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026* or its successor.

251. As climate change accelerates, the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on vegetation communities – including changes in temperature and rainfall, pests and disease, and species interactions – will become increasingly important to manage. The appropriate application of fire in these vegetation communities has an important role to play in supporting climate change adaptation.

Application of fire for land and resource management strategies

252. The Department will

    a) apply fire to relevant public land for land and resource management purposes to support achievement of the objectives of the Code, with the agreement of the relevant land manager

    b) maintain processes to support prioritisation of the use of fire for land and resource management purposes, in the context of other bushfire and land management activities

    c) support the self-determined reintroduction of cultural fire on Country by Traditional Owners for land and resource management purposes (and for the reduction of fuels and bushfire risk, see Chapter 4 – Mitigation).

Application of fire for land and resource management actions

253. In accordance with relevant procedural guidelines, standards, strategies and statutory requirements, the Department will:

Ecological burning

254. Undertake ecological burning, by applying fire to deliver pre-determined ecological outcomes within the relevant burn unit, including for the purposes of controlling pest animals or plants, or to maintain, manage, protect or enhance the ecology, land or vegetation of a relevant area. Ecological burning may be undertaken for many purposes including, for example, to maintain fire-dependent ecosystems, manage pest plants and animals, enhance biodiversity, promote regeneration and improve wildlife habitat.

255. Planned burns undertaken primarily for ecological purposes may have an ancillary fuel reduction purpose or benefit, as noted in Chapter 4 – Mitigation. Similarly, planned burns undertaken for bushfire risk reduction purposes (the planned prevention of fire) may have an ancillary ecological, land or resource management purpose or benefit.

Cultural burning

256. Support Traditional Owners to practise cultural fire on relevant public land, where the cultural burn is carried out in accordance with the fire prevention purposes permitted by section 62(2) of the *Forests Act 1958* or the land and resource management purposes permitted by section 62A of the *Forests Act 1958*.

257. Cultural burns may be undertaken in any zone type, except for Planned Burn Exclusion Zone, if the objectives of the burn are consistent with the aims of that zone. See Chapter 3 – Planning for further detail.

Application of fire for research purposes

258. Permit the application of fire, or apply fire, for the purposes of research, when related to the application and use of fire for the following purposes:

- as part of silvicultural activities undertaken in State forest or on protected public land
- to control pest animals and pest plants in the State forest, national park or on protected public land
- to maintain, manage, protect or enhance the ecology of, or land or vegetation in, State forests, national parks or on protected public land.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement

Overview

259. The performance of bushfire management actions and the application of fire for land and resource management will be monitored, evaluated and reported to assess how well actions are supporting achievement of the objectives of the Code and other relevant strategies and targets.

260. Information and learnings from monitoring and evaluation will support review of fire management policy, strategies and actions to improve the extent to which they achieve the desired outcomes. This adaptive management approach is integral for enabling the Department to adapt and continuously improve fire management in a changing climate.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) outcomes

261. The outcomes sought through the Department's MERI activities include:

- continual learning and a shared understanding of bushfires and fire management activities and their effectiveness at achieving the objectives of the Code at different spatial and temporal scales

- transparent and accountable implementation of fire management policy, strategies and actions on relevant public land

- new knowledge and insights drive adaptation of fire management strategies and actions and continuous improvement in fire management outcomes.

MERI strategies

262. The Department will:

a) implement and continuously improve a monitoring, evaluation and reporting program to assess the performance of fire management policy, strategies and actions on relevant public land in achieving the objectives of the Code

b) contribute to relevant sector-wide monitoring, evaluation and reporting programs to transparently track the effectiveness of activities in progressing shared sector outcomes for bushfire management and support continuous improvement

c) undertake research to fill knowledge gaps and refine fire management science and tools

d) monitor the delivery and impacts of fire management policy, strategies and actions

e) use data from monitoring and research to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of fire management strategies and actions and identify opportunities for improvement

f) develop reporting materials that meet legislative accountability and compliance requirements

g) use knowledge and learnings from evaluation and assurance processes to improve fire management outcomes, and to support decision making and continuous improvement

h) use the knowledge and learnings from research, monitoring and evaluation to test and refine scientific and other models that support decision-making

i)   build the capability of fire agency staff and interested parties and partners to interpret the results of monitoring and evaluation in the context of fire management actions, strategies and objectives.

MERI actions

263. The Department will maintain and continuously improve a framework/s for monitoring, evaluating, reporting and improvement of its fire management program.

264. The framework will:

- be consistent with the Victorian Government outcomes approach to enable clear linkages to other land, bushfire and emergency management MERI programs

- identify program level outcomes for monitoring, evaluating, reporting and improvement on fire management, and explain how those outcomes link with the objectives of the Code

- assess fire management performance under the themes of Impact, Effectiveness, Appropriateness, Efficiency and Sustainability through the identification of key evaluation questions for their assessment

- specify how MER program outputs will be used to (1) inform and improve fire management and (2) ensure transparency and accountability

- contain the following elements: governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities for delivering MERI activities, key outcome indicators and measures to monitor progress towards outcomes, a program logic that outlines how fire management activities lead to program level outcomes, resource, training and support requirements for effective delivery of MERI programs, key stakeholders and audiences.

265. The Department will support the implementation of the MERI framework/s to ensure transparency, accountability and continuous improvement of the fire management program.

266. The Department will involve Traditional Owners, partner agencies and key stakeholders to the extent possible, in the development and implementation of the MERI framework/s.

Monitoring

267. The Department will undertake monitoring aligned with the MERI framework/s to assess performance against the objectives of the Code, to answer key evaluation questions, and to assist the Department's understanding of the impact of fire management policy, strategies and actions at a range of spatial and temporal scales.

268. Monitoring will be supported by scientific research. The focus of research will be informed by identified knowledge gaps and priority improvement opportunities.

269. The Department will aim to inform and be informed by monitoring programs that other agencies undertake across public and private land.

Evaluation

270. The Department will undertake evaluation aligned with the MERI framework/s to assess performance against the objectives of the Code and to answer key evaluation questions.

271. The Department will utilise quantitative and qualitative data from monitoring and research to evaluate key evaluation questions outlined in the framework/s. These will include key evaluation questions developed within the evaluation themes of: Impact, Effectiveness, Appropriateness, Efficiency and Sustainability.

272. The Department will use benchmark data from other jurisdictions to assist in evaluating its fire management program where appropriate.

Reporting

273. The Department will report in a manner that is clear, transparent, and appropriate to relevant audiences.

274. Public reporting on the outcomes and effectiveness of the fire management program will seek to strengthen community awareness and understanding of bushfire risk and its management and increase community capacity to interpret the information as relevant to their local situation.

275. The Department will prepare reports over various timeframes focusing on different aspects of its work, including:

   - annual reporting that addresses the Impact and Effectiveness evaluation themes, including the delivery of the fuel management program and performance against outcomes established for fire management as outlined in the MERI framework/s

   - periodic reporting (at a maximum three-year interval) that addresses the Appropriateness, Efficiency and Sustainability evaluation themes as outlined in the MERI framework/s.

276. The Department will develop reporting materials for a range of purposes including:

   - ensuring transparency and accountability by informing the public of the delivery of fire management actions and performance against bushfire management outcomes established in the MERI framework/s, including the objectives of the Code

   - facilitating in-depth evaluation of the impact, effectiveness, appropriateness, efficiency and sustainability of the fire management program and the ability of strategies and actions to achieve the objectives of the Code

   - enabling the Department, fire practitioners and interested parties to continually learn from and improve fire management practices.

277. The Secretary will provide reports as required by legislation, such as reports to the Emergency Management Commissioner required under the *Emergency Management Act 2013* and the *Forests Act 1958*.

Improvement

278. The Department will embed continuous improvement and adaptive management into its fire management program, including through considering inputs from:

- scientific research
- monitoring and evaluation
- response debriefing (See Chapter 6 – Response)
- bushfire reconstructions
- internal and independent assurance programs
- findings and recommendations of relevant inquiries
- feedback and advice from Traditional Owners, sector partners, key stakeholders and communities
- any other relevant information.

279. By embedding adaptive management to continuously improve the fire management program, the Department will:

- improve the fire management program to support achievement of the multiple objectives of the Code, including in the context of a changing climate
- test and refine scientific and management decision support models
- enhance fire management planning, strategies and actions.

280. The Department will enable adaptation and improvement into its fire management program by clearly identifying decision-making processes and pathways.

281. The Department will embed adaptation and improvement into its fire management program by establishing participatory forums and learning opportunities.

282. The Department will develop information in formats that enable interested parties to interpret the information and apply it to their local situation.

10. Definitions

Assurance

283. Assurance is an expression or statement designed to increase the confidence of the government, the sector, and the community in the ability of systems and processes to achieve intended outcomes. Assurance encompasses the identification and management of risks that may hinder the achievement of outcomes and objectives.

Bushfire

284. A general term used to describe a fire in any vegetation, not including planned burning.

Bushfire management

285. Bushfire management incorporates all activities undertaken to reduce bushfire risk and impacts on communities, industries and the environment. This includes:

- actions directed to planning, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- actions under legislation, policy, planning, community engagement, training, equipment, communications, and research

286. More specifically, as the purpose of this Code is to specify standards and procedures for the carrying out of the objects and purposes of the *Forests Act 1958*, bushfire management incorporates all activities undertaken as part of exercising relevant duties and functions of the Secretary under that Act, including the duty to carry out proper and sufficient works for the planned prevention and the immediate prevention and suppression of fire on State forests, national parks and protected public land (section 62(2) of the *Forests Act 1958*) and other relevant provisions.

Bushfire risk

287. Bushfire risk is the likelihood of a fire starting, spreading, and impacting people, property and the environment. This includes houses, critical infrastructure, water supply catchments, agricultural assets, environmental and cultural values.

288. Victoria is particularly susceptible to large and intense bushfires that can spread across landscapes due to Victoria's terrain, naturally flammable vegetation and frequent exposure to hot, dry and windy weather.

289. Bushfire risk is affected by factors including the weather, the type and condition of bushfire fuels in the location and its topography, the location of people and assets, and the ability to prevent fires from igniting, suppress them once they ignite and avoid or reduce impacts to communities.

Community values

290. A term to describe the broad range of assets, features and processes that Victorians care about and depend upon. DEECA seeks to reduce bushfire risk to community values through its bushfire management activities. Community values include:

- human life
- residential property
- critical infrastructure, essential services and community assets
- industry including agriculture, business and economic assets
- ecosystem services including water supply and carbon storage
- environmental values
- social and cultural values.

291. Community values can vary across the State and may change over time.

Consequence management

292. Consequence management has the meaning provided by section 45 of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, which defines this term as meaning the coordination of agencies, including agencies who engage the skills and services of non-government organisations, which are responsible for managing or regulating services or infrastructure which is, or may be, affected by a major emergency.

Control line

293. A natural or constructed barrier, or treated fire edge, used in fire suppression and planned burning to limit/prevent the spread of fire.

Cultural burn

294. One of many land management tools used by Traditional Owners to manage Country for thousands of years. The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy defines cultural burning as '*Right Fire, Right Time, Right Way and for the right (cultural) reasons according to Lore*' (Aboriginal traditions and knowledge).

Department

295. The Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action or its future equivalent.

Ecological burn

296. Planned burns designed and delivered for the primary purpose of achieving specified ecological objectives. While not the primary purpose, ecological burns may have bushfire management benefits, including the reduction of fuels and bushfire risk.

Ecosystem resilience

297. Ecosystem resilience is the capacity of an area to absorb natural and management-imposed disturbance, but still retain its basic structure (the abundance and composition of its species, the function of its vegetation and its types of vegetation) over time.

Fire for land and resource management

298. The deliberate application of fire in the landscape for land and resource management purposes, as permitted under section 62A of the *Forests Act 1958*.

Fire protected area

299. Fire protected area has the meaning provided to it in section 3 of the *Forests Act 1958*. In summary, it means:

   a) land within any State forest, national park, or protected public land. This area is referred to as 'public land' or 'relevant public land' throughout the Code.

   b) unless excised in accordance with the *Forests Act 1958*, land within 1.5 km of any reserved forest or area of unoccupied Crown land proclaimed as a protected forest, any national park, or any protected public land. Note that 'protected forest' includes all unoccupied Crown land proclaimed as such under the *Forests Act 1958* or any corresponding previous enactment, and every unused road and every water frontage as defined in the *Land Act 1958*.

Fuels

300. Bushfire fuels are the leaves, bark, twigs and shrubs that are burnt by fire. The fuel type, dryness, size, moisture content and arrangement can all affect the speed, size and intensity of a bushfire.

Fuel management

301. Fuel management activities include:

   - planned burning (see definition)
   - mechanical and other non-burn fuel treatments (see definition)
   - management of coarse heavy fuels, including storm debris
   - construction and upgrades of strategic fuel breaks

302. Fuel management activities alter the amount and structure of bushfire fuel, reducing the likelihood of ignition, helping limit their spread and intensity when they occur, making it easier for firefighters to control them, and/or lessen their impacts.

Fuel Treatment Area

303. The area of land for which a Fuel Treatment Delivery Plan has been prepared and fuel management is planned to be delivered to achieve a pre-defined fuel treatment objective.

Fuel Treatment Delivery Plan

304. The plan (in the required departmental format) that is approved for the conduct of fuel management in a Fuel Treatment Area in accordance with relevant procedural guidelines, identifying the area to be treated and incorporating the specifications and conditions under which the fuel treatment operation is to be conducted.

Incident Controller

305. As defined in the *State Emergency Management Plan*.

Incident Management Team

306. As defined in the *State Emergency Management Plan*.

Land manager

307. As defined in section 3 of the *Forests Act 1958*.

Mechanical and other non-burn fuel treatment

308. Mechanical and other non-burn fuel treatments are used to manage bushfire fuels through activities other than planned burning. Examples include mowing, slashing, mulching and spraying.

309. Mechanical fuel treatments are used to maintain the network of fuel breaks or to treat small, discrete, or complex areas that may be difficult to burn safely (such as in steep gullies) or to complement planned burning where the geography (community, vegetation, terrain) is complex, and planned burning opportunities are very limited. Mechanical fuel treatments are more expensive than planned burning and the area that can be treated each year is usually much less than through planned burning.

Planned burning

310. The deliberate application of fire under specified conditions to a predetermined area to achieve planned bushfire management or land and resource management objectives.

311. Planned burns may be ignited all year round including over summer, but most occur in autumn and spring.

Protected public land

312. Any lands of the Crown other than State forest or national park, declared or deemed to be protected public land under section 62 of the *Forests Act 1958*.

Public land (or relevant public land)

313. All State forest, national park and protected public land as defined under the *Forests Act 1958* (or its future equivalent).

Relevant procedural guidelines

314. Documents of an operational nature including Department guidelines, manuals, policies and procedures.

Secretary

315. The Secretary to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, a body corporate established under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

Self-determination

316. While Aboriginal self-determination means different things to different people, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* described self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. It also describes self-determination as a right that relates to groups of people, not individuals.[1]

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[1] As outlined in the Victorian Government's *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*.

Shared responsibility

317. Shared responsibility refers to the collective obligations and accountabilities held by a range of actors. A commitment to shared responsibility recognises that no single actor can be responsible for emergency mitigation, preparedness, response or recovery. Individuals, communities, businesses, all levels of government and the not-for-profit sector all have a role to play.

Traditional Owner

318. An Aboriginal person who has traditional connection(s) to an identified geographical area of Country.[2]

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[2] As defined in DEECA's *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu 'Owning Our Future' Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025* (PDF)

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