Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan

Places of Last Resort during a Bushfire

July 2024

Introduction and Background

In late 2009, the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (CFA Act) was amended to make provision for **Neighbourhood Safer Place/Bushfire Place of Last Resort**. This change arose out of a Royal Commission interim report into the Black Saturday Bushfires of February 2009.

The purpose of a Neighbourhood Safer Place/Bushfire Place of Last Resort (**NSP-BPLR**) is to provide some protection from the effects of radiant heat during a bushfire, but not necessarily from other risks such as flying embers. It is not a community fire refuge or emergency relief centre. It is not meant to replace personal bushfire survival plans such as leaving early.

NSP-BPLRs are places of relative safety only and do not guarantee the survival of those who assemble there. There may be serious risks to safety encountered in travelling, and seeking access, to NSP-BPLRs during bushfire events. Furthermore, depending on the direction of a particular fire, there may be a safer place to assemble within the municipal district.

NSP-BPLRs are places of last resort during the passage of a bushfire, and are intended for use when all other plans have failed.

This Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Place/Bushfire Place of Last Resorts Plan (the Plan) meets the purposes of the legislation, and contains guidelines which have been developed by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to assist Council in identifying; designating; establishing; maintaining; and decommissioning places as NSP-BPLRs within its municipal district.

The Plan also takes into consideration other factors which are specific to the Council's circumstances, including the resources available to the Council.

The Plan and any documents incorporated into it are available at the Council's municipal offices for public inspection during normal office hours free of charge under section 50F(4)(b) of the CFA Act and published on Council's website under section 50F(4)(a) of the CFA Act.

Structure of this Plan

The Plan has been divided up into three distinct sections.

Section 1 contains a flow chart which summarises the process for councils to adopt in identifying, designating, establishing and maintaining NSP-BPLRs within their municipal district.

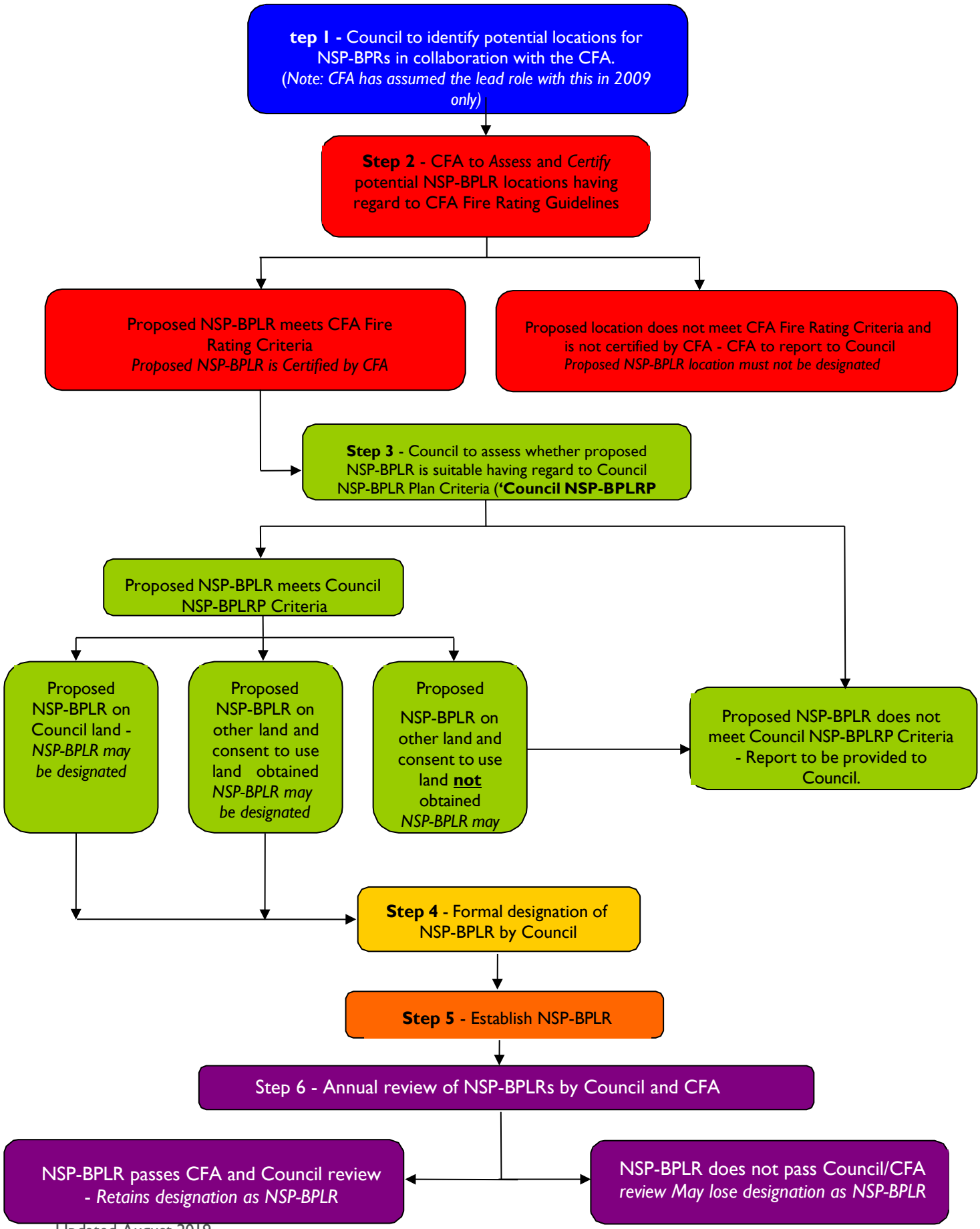
Section 2 contains a more detailed summary of the steps summarised in the flow chart found in Section 1.

Section 3 contains a summary of the factors for Council to consider in the required annual review and assessing potential, additional NSP-BPLR locations, prior to designation.

Section 4 contains details of content of signage that Council is required to erect at designated NSP-BPLR locations

Section 1

Overview of the process for establishing and maintaining NSP-BPLRs



Section 2

Overview of Steps Associated with Establishing NSP-BPLRs

1. Identification of Potential NSP-BPLR Locations

1.1 Who is responsible for identifying places as potential NSP-BPLRs?

Initially, the Country Fire Authority (**'CFA'**) assumed lead responsibility for identifying potential locations for NSP-BPLRs. This was done in consultation with Councils. The focus was on the identification of proposed NSP-BPLRs within CFA Community information guide (**'CIG'**) areas.

However, identification efforts have now expanded beyond these localities and since 2010, Council has been responsible for identifying potential places as NSP-BPLRs within its municipal district as required under Section 50G of the CFA Act.

1.2 When do potential NSP-BPLRs need to be identified?

Councils should identify potential additional places as NSP-BPLRs by 31 May in each year. This should allow sufficient time for:

a. Assessment and certification of the potential NSP-BPLR by the CFA
b. Designation of the potential NSP-BPLR location by the Council
c. Subject to the outcome of the assessment and designation process, establishing the NSP-BPLRs, including the erection of signage and other steps by Council

1.3 What factors should be considered when identifying potential NSP-BPLR locations?

When identifying potential NSP-BPLR locations, Council should consider matters such as:

- The environment surrounding the potential NSP-BPLR
- What other uses are made of the potential NSP-BPLR, and whether or not those uses could be inconsistent with its designation as an NSP-BPLR
- Whether the land on which the potential NSP-BPLR is located is Council-owned or non-Council owned land
- Whether there are clear means of access and egress to and from the potential NSP-BPLR
- Whether the potential NSP-BPLR is in close proximity to population centres

- For those Councils whose municipal district falls within both a CFA region and Fire Rescue Victoria District (FVRD), or borders the FRVD but is within the CFA region:
    - The risks involved in people staying in the area being considered for an NSP-BPLR, versus leaving the area and travelling to a nearby urban area
    - The adequacy of egress routes out of the area being considered for an NSP-BPLR (including number of egress routes, whether major or minor roadway, type and amount of vegetation along key egress routes; capacity of egress routes to accommodate potentially large numbers of vehicles and to accommodate potential vehicle breakdowns)

Additional management of a Neighbourhood Safer Place/Bushfire Place of Last Resort in grassland areas:

- Grasslands have a distinct place in the NSP-BPLR framework, due to:
    - The potential for rapid growth of grasslands in conditions of adequate warmth and moisture; and
    - The requirement under section 50J of the CFA Act for councils to review their NSP-BPLRs by 31 August each year.
- Councils may identify a suitable NSP-BPLR site in a grassland area that can only meet the assessment criteria with active management of the site, over the fire danger period, with treatments including slashing, mowing or grazing.
- In these circumstances CFA may certify the site as meeting the assessment criteria provided that appropriate, specified and prescribed treatments are in place throughout the fire danger period. This must include prescriptions for management of the grassland secured by agreed terms entered into by the landholder. The landholder may be the council, a public authority, an agency or a private person.
- The identified treatment of the grassland must be included within the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (whichever is relevant). Council has the role of facilitation and, if required, enforcement of the treatment(s) during the fire danger period. Fire Prevention Notices should not ordinarily be an appropriate method for achievement of management prescriptions in NSP-BPLRs. This method should only be used as a last resort by councils where a private landholder has reneged on their agreed conditions and the grassland condition constitutes, or may constitute, a danger to life or property from the threat of fire.

1.4 Who should undertake the identification of potential NSP-BPLRs?

The process of NSP-BPLR identification is ongoing. Following each fire season, Council should assess whether any additional potentially suitable NSP-BPLR locations can be identified within the municipal district.

Council should ensure that the following actions are completed prior to making any determinations regarding the assessment, designation and certification of NSP-BPLRs:

a. A risk assessment considering the matters outlined in section 1.3 (above) must be undertaken by Council's Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO) and Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO) (which may be initiated through the Fire Risk Reference Group or the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)), using appropriate available information such as Integrated Fire Management Planning data and/or Victorian Fire Risk Register data and any applicable Community information guides;

b. The MEMPC must review the results of the risk assessment, as summarised in the MEMOs and MFPOs report prepared under section 1.4a. above; and submit a written report to Council with a recommendation as to whether CFA assessment and Council designation of the potential NSP-BPLR is warranted in the area under consideration.

c. Council should formally review the MEMPC report. Council should only decide that NSP-BPLR assessment and designation is not warranted in the area under consideration where Council is satisfied that:

   - The risk assessment undertaken by the MEMO and MFPO has addressed the matters raised in sections 1.3 of the Plan; and
   - The MEMPC has recommended that assessment and designation of the NSP-BPLR is not warranted.

CFA to Assess and Certify Potential NSP-BPLR Locations

1.5 Who is responsible for assessing potential NSP-BPLRs against guidelines issued by the CFA ('CFA Fire Rating Guidelines')?

Under section 50G (5) of the CFA Act, the CFA is responsible for assessing potential NSP-BPLR locations against the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines.[1] This will be done by appropriately qualified and experienced CFA personnel.

Council is not responsible for the assessment and certification of potential NSP-BPLRs by the CFA.

[1] The CFA Act refers to "Country Fire Authority Assessment Guidelines". For ease of reference in the context of this MNSP-BPLR Plan, these guidelines are referred to as the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines.

1.6 What criteria must the CFA take into account in assessing potential NSP-BPLR locations?

In assessing potential NSP-BPLR locations, the CFA must consider the criteria and other considerations as set out in the CFA's Fire Rating Guidelines as issued from time to time by the CFA.

A NSP-BPLR should provide protection to people from lethal levels of radiant heat through an appropriate separation distance between fire hazards, particularly vegetation, and the site of the NSP-BPLR.

The critical criteria decided upon was radiant heat load with a maximum allowable load agreed upon for sites that are open spaces and those that are buildings.

The radiant heat criteria are:

1 If an NSP-BPLR-BPLR is an OPEN SPACE the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the site should be no more than 2kW/m²;
By way of example this equates to greater than 310 metres* separation distance from the outer edge of the NSP-BPLR-BPLR to a forest fire hazard.

2 If an NSP-BPLR-BPLR is a BUILDING, the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the building should be no more than
10kW/m²;
By way of example this equates to greater than 140 metres* separation distance from the outer edge of a building to a forest fire hazard.

1.7 When does the CFA assess a potential NSP-BPLR?

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

1.8 When does the CFA ***certify*** potential NSP-BPLR locations?

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

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

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

2. Council Assessment of NSP-BPLRs Following CFA Certification

2.1 What factors should be applied by Councils in assessing the suitability of a place as a potential NSP-BPLR location?

Following certification of a place as an NSP-BPLR by the CFA, and once Council has received the CFA assessment and any criteria and CFA assumptions which underpin the assessment, Council must assess the place in accordance with the factors outlined below to determine whether it is suitable to be designated as an NSP-BPLR. Unless a potential NSP-BPLR satisfies each of the criteria outlined below, it should not be designated by Council as an NSP-BPLR.

Council's assessment of CFA-certified potential NSP-BPLRs should be conducted by the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (**'MEMPC'**), with preliminary assessments to be provided to the MEMPC by the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (**'MEMO'**) and the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (**'MFPO'**).

The factors to determine the suitability of the place as an NSP-BPLR are as follows: (**'Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria**'):

- Consents and rights of access

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

  - Use the place as an NSP-BPLR;
  - Access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance; and
  - Erect appropriate signage at the NSP-BPLR, including the OESC signage and additional NSP-BPLR information signage.

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

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

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

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

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

- Access and Egress

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

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

  Council must assess potential access and egress routes, bearing in mind the fact that NSP-BPLRs are **places of last resort**.

  As people may be seeking access to an NSP-BPLR in a rushed or panicked state, a number of people could be seeking access in a relatively short time and visibility could be affected by smoke, easily navigable routes to and from an NSP-BPLR are crucial.

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

  - The condition of the road surface
  - The proximity of the NSP-BPLR to major roadways and population centres
  - The type and amount of vegetation along any access routes, and whether that vegetation could be affected by fire and pose a risk of harm to those seeking access to the potential NSP-BPLR, or otherwise block access to the NSP-BPLR

- The capacity of access routes to accommodate potentially large numbers of vehicles, and to accommodate potential vehicle break-downs
- Parking at the place, taking into account that it may not be appropriate for cars to be parked within an open space NSP-BPLR, or within the Buffer Zone adjoining the NSP-BPLR
- Any hazards that may exist for persons accessing the place by foot, including in the buffer zone
- Any relevant matter contained in Council's Road Management Plan prepared pursuant to the *Road Management Act 2004* (Vic)

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

- Maintenance of potential NSP-BPLR in accordance with CFA assessment criteria

  Council must ensure that the potential NSP-BPLR can be maintained in accordance with the criteria taken into account by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment.

  If additional information is required from the CFA to understand the criteria they have considered in arriving at their fire rating assessment, Council should seek this information from the CFA. If necessary, the CFA may choose to undertake a further assessment to provide Council with additional information.

- Opening of the NSP-BPLR

  Council must consider

  - Whether it will be possible or practicable to open the potential NSP-BPLR or otherwise make it available for use on a 24 hour basis during the declared fire danger period;
  - The potential for damage to the place during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as an NSP-BPLR;
  - The potential costs to Council associated with the first two points above; and
  - The possibility that a potential NSP-BPLR could be used for unintended purposes such as; an emergency relief centre.

- Defendable space

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

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

Any open space **should be reasonably** free of obstacles which could hinder fire suppression activities. Obstacles may include, amongst other things:

- Fences
- Buildings and sheds
- Steep inclines in close proximity to the potential NSP-BPLR
- Vegetation, particularly large trees
- Other land formations including: rocks, boulders or knolls which could substantially hinder fire suppression operations.

If necessary, advice should be sought from the CFA about their defendable space and fire vehicle access requirements.

When assessing the defendable space factor, Council must consider whether or not approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna could be required, whether under legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) ('EPBC Act'), *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) ('FFG Act') or the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) ('PE Act'). If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential NSP-BPLR location is designated.

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

- Defendability of Buildings

  If the potential NSP-BPLR is a building, Council must consider whether or not it is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack.

  As the CFA is not required to assess the risk of ember attack to a building in undertaking the CFA fire rating assessment when certifying NSP-BPLRs, the Council should consider this issue. In considering this issue, Council may need to seek expert advice from appropriately-qualified CFA personnel.

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

- Signage

  Council must assess whether it will be possible to have signage at the entry to, and in the vicinity of, the potential NSP-BPLR. Such signage must generally be in accordance with the Emergency Management Victoria Guidelines - Neighbourhood Safer Places - Bushfire Place of Last Resort Signage Manual (emv.vic.gov.au)

  Council must refer to the Signage Template when considering whether or not appropriate signage can be erected.

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

- Maintenance and maintainability

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

  Specifically, the place must be capable of being maintained so as to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Fire Rating Criteria and the Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria. It is Council policy that if it is not possible to maintain a potential NSP-BPLR, then it must not be designated as such.

  When assessing the maintainability of the potential NSP-BPLR, both the NSP-BPLR and the Buffer Zone may require various maintenance activities to be undertaken on a periodic basis. The potential introduction of hazards into the Buffer Zone, such as structures, animals and vehicles, should be taken into account.

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

  When assessing the maintainability of a potential NSP-BPLR, Council must consider whether or not approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna could be required, whether under legislation such as the EPBC Act, FFG Act or the PE Act. If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential NSP-BPLR location is designated.

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

- Disabled access

  Council must consider whether or not there are clear means of access for disabled and mobility-impaired persons to the potential NSP-BPLR.

  In considering this issue, regard should be had such matters as whether or not it would be necessary for cars or other vehicles to enter the NSP-BPLR area to allow persons with disabilities to be dropped off within the place.

- Alternative Uses of potential NSP-BPLR

  Council must consider what other uses may be made of the potential NSP-BPLR which could impact upon its ability to properly function as an NSP-BPLR. For example, if the place is commonly used for horse racing, or as a farmers market, then whether or not this could prevent, or

seriously hinder, the use of the place as an NSP-BPLR on days of extreme fire danger needs to be assessed.

If the place is used for other uses which could compromise its ability to be used as an NSP-BPLR, then it should not be designated by Council.

- Communication with the community

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

- Public liability insurance

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

  - any additional factors which are relevant to Council's maintenance of insurance coverage for legal claims relating to the identification, designation, establishment, maintenance and decommissioning of a place as an NSP-BPLR, as well as travel to an NSP-BPLR; and any statutory defences to claims.

2.2 Who is responsible for undertaking the Council assessment of potential NSP-BPLRs?

A report prepared by the MFPO/MEMO detailing whether or not the potential NSP-BPLR meets the above criteria should be prepared and provided to the MEMPC.

The MEMPC must assess the potential NSP-BPLR, taking into account the MFPO/MEMO's report, and make a recommendation to Council as to whether or not to designate the potential NSP-BPLR.

2.3 When are potential NSP-BPLR locations required to be assessed by Council?

Any potential NSP-BPLRs certified by the CFA should be assessed by Council no later than 30 June each year, so as to allow time for the places to be designated and established as NSP-BPLRs by Council, and for any appropriate amendments to be made to the MEMPC and Municipal Fire Risk Reference Group prior to the commencement of the bushfire season.

This timing is obviously subject to the CFA assessing and certifying the potential NSP-BPLR location in a timely manner.

3 Council Designation of NSP-BPLRs

3.1 Who is responsible for Council designation of NSP-BPLRs?

Council must formally determine whether or not to designate a place as an NSP-BPLR. Council should not designate a place as an NSP-BPLR unless it is satisfied that the place is suitable, having regard to:

- Council's NSP-BPLRP Criteria
- A NSP-BPLR may only be designated by a resolution of the Council.

3.2 When should Council consider the designation of a potential NSP-BPLR?

Following preparation of an assessment of a potential NSP-BPLR by the MEMPC, Council should determine whether or not to designate a potential NSP-BPLR location by no later than 31 July. This will enable any necessary establishment works to be undertaken.

3.3 What must the MFPO do once a potential NSP-BPLR is designated by Council?

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

4 Establishment and Maintenance of NSP-BPLRs Following Designation

4.1 Who is responsible for establishing NSP-BPLRs?

Following designation, Council will establish all designated NSP-BPLRs within the municipal district.

4.2 What must be done when establishing NSP-BPLRs?

To establish a NSP-BPLR after its designation, Council must:

- Erect appropriate signage at and near the NSP-BPLR
- Undertake any necessary preparatory works, including the construction or establishment of any required infrastructure and the clearance of vegetation, so as to enable the area to be used as an NSP-BPLR
- Publish the location of the NSP-BPLR on the Council website
- Update Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan and Municipal Fire Prevention Plan to include the location of the NSP-BPLR
- The MFPO must provide an up-to-date list of NSP-BPLRs to the CFA no later that 30 September each year under section 50K of the CFA Act

Following designation, all designated NSP-BPLRs within the municipality must be identified in the MEMP, under section 20(2) of the EM Act.

4.3 When must NSP-BPLRs be established?

NSP-BPLRs should be established no later than 30 October each year.

4.4 Maintenance of NSP-BPLRs

NSP-BPLRs within the municipality need to be maintained by Council. Maintenance activities must include vegetation management, hazardous tree removal and the maintenance of infrastructure required for the satisfactory functioning of the place as an NSP-BPLR. If additional works have been required to establish the NSP-BPLR, then those works should be subject to periodic review.

The fuel load in the vicinity of the NSP-BPLR must not increase so as to affect the fire rating of the NSP-BPLR.

Council must ensure that defendable spaces, the Buffer Zone and access and egress routes are appropriately maintained.

Council must inspect the NSP-BPLR, Buffer Zone and access and egress routes on a periodic basis, and in any event not less than once every month during the declared fire danger period, to ensure that the NSP-BPLR continues to be capable of functioning as an NSP-BPLR. If Council identifies issues that may impact upon the functioning of the place as an NSP-BPLR, then Council must:

- Address the issue;
- Take reasonable steps to have the issue addressed, such as requesting the owner of the land on which the NSP-BPLR or Buffer Zone is located to address the issue; or
- Consider decommissioning the NSP-BPLR and revoking the designation of the place as an NSP-BPLR.

5. Annual Inspections of NSP-BPLRs

5.1 Who is responsible for the annual review of NSP-BPLRs?

Council must undertake an annual review of all designated NSP-BPLRs within the municipality.

Council must also request the CFA to undertake an assessment against the CFA Fire Rating Criteria of each NSP-BPLR within the municipality on an annual basis.

These reviews are intended to ensure that each NSP-BPLR remains suitable for use as an NSP-BPLR during the up-coming fire season.

5.2 What must be considered when undertaking inspections?

NSP-BPLRs should be assessed annually against the Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria. The CFA will assess NSP-BPLRs against the CFA Fire Rating Criteria.

If an NSP-BPLR no longer meets:

- The CFA Fire Rating Criteria, then it must be decommissioned; and
- The Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria, then Council must determine whether or not it wishes to address any of the identified non-compliances. If it does not, then the NSP-BPLR must be decommissioned.

5.3 When must NSP-BPLR locations be inspected?

NSP-BPLRs must be inspected prior to 31 August each year under section 50J of the CFA Act.

Section 3

Summary of Factors for Council to Consider in Assessing Potential NSP-BPLR Locations Prior to Designation

Factors to Consider in Assessing Potential NSP-BPLRs

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

Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Maintenance of NSP-BPLR in accordance with CFA assessment criteria	Can Council maintain the potential NSP-BPLR in accordance with the criteria taken into account by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment? *If the CFA have not provided sufficient information in relation to the criteria it has taken into account in arriving at its fire rating assessment, it may be necessary for Council to seek further information from the CFA.*		
Opening of the NSP-BPLR	Will it be possible and practicable to make the potential NSP-BPLR available for use on a 24 hour basis during the declared fire danger period? This is a particular issue where the potential NSP-BPLR is a building. Consider the potential for damage to the NSP-BPLR which could result during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as an NSP-BPLR.		
	What costs could be incurred by Council in making the potential NSP-BPLR available on a 24 hour basis during the declared fire danger period? Are these costs reasonable, and capable of being borne by Council?		
	Could the potential NSP-BPLR be used for an unintended purpose which could impact upon its use as an NSP-BPLR (such as an emergency relief centre)?		
Defendable space	Is the potential NSP-BPLR surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA to conduct asset protection and fire suppression operations? Is that open space reasonably free of obstacles (such as fences, buildings, steep gradients, vegetation and other land formations)? *Council should seek CFA advice concerning the defendability of the potential NSP-BPLR and the Buffer Zone, including in relation to fire vehicle access requirements.*		

Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
	Will approval be required under legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth), *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic)*? Can such approval be obtained before the NSP-BPLR is established?		
Defendability of building	If the potential NSP-BPLR is a building, has Council has sought expert advice from the CFA to determine whether the NSP-BPLR is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack? If it is subject to such a risk, can that risk be safely managed?		
Signage	Can appropriate signage be erected at the entry to the potential NSP-BPLR, and in its vicinity?		
	If signage needs to be placed on private land, can Council obtained the consent of the relevant landowner to the erection of the signage?		
Maintenance and maintainability	Is the potential NSP-BPLR capable of being maintained to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Fire Rating Criteria and the Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria? Where relevant, consider whether adjoining land owners and occupiers will provide Council with an assurance that both the potential NSP-BPLR and the Buffer Zone can be maintained to a satisfactory level.		
Separation and demarcation of area	If the potential NSP-BPLR is located in an open area, it is possible to demarcate the boundaries of both the potential NSP-BPLR and the Buffer Zone? *Access to the potential NSP-BPLR may need to be restricted to people only, and it may be necessary to erect barriers around the Buffer Zone.*		
Disabled access	Are there are means of access for disabled and mobility-impaired persons to the potential NSP-BPLR, including vehicle access to drop off people with disabilities?		

Council NSP-BPLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Alternative uses of potential NSP-BPLR	Can Council manage alternative uses which may be made of the potential NSP-BPLR so as to ensure that those uses will not compromise the function of the place as a potential NSP-BPLR?		
Community Communication	Will it be possible to ensure that there will be good community awareness of the location of the potential NSP-BPLR, and the risks associated with using the potential NSP-BPLR?		

Section 4

NSP-BPLR Signage Template

Emergency Management Victoria Signage Template



Neighbourhood Safer Places - Bushfire Place of Last Resort Signage Manual | Emergency Management Victoria (emv.vic.gov.au)

Additional Signage Wording

Warning

This designated Neighbourhood Safer Place/Bushfire Place of Last Resort (NSP-BPLR) is a Place of Last Resort during the passage of a bushfire. Whilst it may offer some protection from bushfire, the safety or survival of those who assemble here is not guaranteed.

Before deciding to head towards, or enter, this NSP-BPLR in the event of bushfire, be aware that:

- Many houses may offer better protection than this NSP-BPLR
- Travelling to this NSP-BPLR when there is bushfire can be extremely dangerous. There is no guarantee that you will be safe doing so.
- This NSP-BPLR may not prevent death or injury from fire, embers or radiant heat when you get here
- You should only use this NSP-BPLR when your primary bushfire plan has failed or cannot be implemented
- This NSP-BPLR only has limited capacity
- There is no guarantee that CFA or other Emergency Services will be present at this NSP-BPLR during a bushfire
- No facilities are provided for people with special needs, including those requiring medical attention
- This NSP-BPLR may be uncomfortable and no amenities such as food and drinks will be provided
- There is no provision for animals

VicEmergency Hotline – 1800 226 226

Section 5

Current designated NSP-BPLR in Bass Coast

- Inverloch - Inverloch Community Hub grounds and footpath surrounding the hub at the intersection of A'Beckett Street and Reilly Street
- Grantville - Memorial Park - 1504-1510 Bass Highway
- Cowes/Silverleaves - Cowes Recreation Reserve - 1-15 Church Street
- Cape Woolamai - Woolamai Park - 11-19 Sunnyside Avenue
- Cape Paterson - Anchor Parade Road/Park Parade Road Reserve