

**Flinders Fire Management Area
Fire Protection Plan**

This report summarises the findings contained in the Fire Protection Plan for the Flinders Fire Management Area 2016 review.

The purpose of Fire Protection Plans is to identify and priorities bushfire risks in the landscape and strategically identify work that can be done to mitigate that risk.

Fire Protection Plans have been prepared for each of the ten fire management areas in Tasmania in accordance with the requirements of the *Fire Service Act 1979*. These plans were developed for the first time in 2014 in a collaborative effort by members of Fire Management Area Committees made up of local stakeholders.

The objective of the Fire Protection Plan is to effectively manage bushfire related risk within the Flinders Fire Management Area in order to protect people, assets and other things valuable to the community.

In preparing the Fire Protection Plan, a tenure blind approach to strategic fuel management was taken. The identification of areas and communities at risk from bushfire together with the identification of areas of potential strategic value for undertaking risk mitigation activities was undertaken by Fire Management Area Committee members without regard to land tenure/ownership.

In taking this approach, Fire Management Area Committees have recognised that strategic fuel management needs to occur across public and private property boundaries in order to be effective.

The management of bushfire related risk is not the sole responsibility of any one land manager or agency. It is a shared responsibility of the whole community.

The tenure blind approach to bushfire risk mitigation planning as undertaken by Fire Management Area Committees creates opportunities for collaboration between public and private land managers and owners and promotes the development of a centrally coordinated bushfire risk mitigation program.

Flinders Fire Management Area Background

- The Flinders Fire Protection Plan covers an area of approximately 206,046 hectares which includes the whole Flinders local government area and encompasses all the islands of the Furneaux Group. The Furneaux Island Group is an archipelago of approximately 50 islands located in Bass Strait between mainland Australia and Tasmania. The largest island is Flinders Island followed by Cape Barren and Clarke Island.
- The Furneaux Islands have an estimated resident population of 784.

Key findings for the Flinders Fire Management Area

- Approximately 63% of land within the Flinders Fire Management Area is private/freehold land and 37% is public land with the Parks and Wildlife Service being the main public land manager.
- The management of bushfire risk on private land is a significant issue within the Flinders Fire Management Area.
- A total of 4.7% (9,684 hectares) of the fire management area was identified as being at extreme risk from fire under current fuel loads. A total of 15.1% (31,112 hectares) is identified as high risk, 49.2% (101,374 hectares) as moderate risk and 25.1% (51,717 hectares) as low risk from fire under current fuel loads.
- The majority of the vegetation groups in the Flinders Fire Management Area can be considered to be of a high to very high flammability class with a low to moderate sensitivity to fire. The exceptions are the rainforest complexes on Mt Strzelecki and the Melaleuca ericifolia swamp forest scattered around the island which are both very sensitive to fire and have a low flammability classing.
- The majority of vegetation on the islands (approximately 66% or 134,883 hectares) is considered to be treatable using fuel reduction burning. Only 7% of vegetation coverage (14,576 hectares) is considered untreatable using fuel reduction burning whilst the remaining 23% is classified as agricultural area which is not considered treatable due to its land use purpose. Field inspections will be required to properly determine whether areas are suitable for fuel reduction burning.

Special issues for the Flinders Fire Management Area

- The Furneaux Islands have an increasing level of absentee landowners and an increasing number of temporary holiday visitors. Vegetation management of unattended properties is an issue as are community expectations regarding the level of service available from the Tasmania Fire Service. Coinciding with the decrease in population of the Furneaux Islands has been a loss of knowledge and experience in relation to fire management over time.

- Agricultural grassland is economically very significant for the community of Flinders Island and the Furneaux Group. The loss of extensive grassland through bushfires would impact on the immediate viability of farming enterprises. This is compounded by the difficulty and cost in transporting stock feed to the island following a major bushfire event. The value of agricultural grassland was not included in the values used for producing the bushfire risk analysis for the Flinders Fire Management Area.
- Fuel reduction burning on the outer islands of the Furneaux Group is not considered necessary as the majority of islands are uninhabited or are conservation areas and there is no risk posed to communities from bushfires. In addition the thin alluvial soils of the islands are susceptible to erosion following fire.

Bushfire threat in the Flinders Fire Management Area

- The fire season for the Flinders Fire Management Area is traditionally from November through to March although fires can and do occur outside this peak season.
- The Furneaux islands are in the path of the “roaring forties” with a prevailing westerly wind particularly during the summer. The winds are persistent reaching their maximum in the afternoon.
- The majority of the broad vegetation groups in the Furneaux group of Islands can be considered to be of a high to very high flammability class with a low to moderate sensitivity to fire.
- The islands have been subject to a range of fires with analysis indicating that the majority of incidents are located either near communities or in the agricultural landscape. The cause of the majority of fires (60%) is unknown. Lightning strikes have accounted for 23% of fires, arson 10% and escapes from planned burns 6%.

Bushfire risk analysis for the Flinders Fire Management Area

Computer based fire behaviour tools were used to conduct an initial broad scale assessment across the Flinders Fire Management Area to identify communities most vulnerable to bushfire. A more detailed assessment was then conducted by members of the Fire Management Area Committee.

Tools that were used by the Fire Management Area Committee to identify communities vulnerable to bushfire include:

- Consultation of Local Government and Emergency Services Risk Registers
- Local knowledge from Tas Fire Service District Officers and brigades
- Consultation with Tasmania Fire Service Community Protection Planners and Community Development Officers
- Expert opinion of fire practitioners
- Identification and consideration of existing and past fire management actions, plans and incidents

High risk areas for Bushfire

Computer modelling results indicate that areas of highest bushfire risk identified for the Flinders Fire Management Area are located:

- In the north western area of Cape Barren Island
- In the south western corner of Flinders Island
- In the central and central northern part of Flinders Island

High risk ignition point locations

Computer bushfire simulation modelling indicates that within the Flinders Fire Management Area bushfire ignition points of potential concern under current fuel loads are located in the vicinity of:

- The Bootjack Flats area north west of the township of Lady Barron
- North of Lady Barron Road in the Shag Lagoon area

Community Risk Assessment

Following group analysis and discussion of the preliminary risk assessment results (detailed above), together with input gathered from local knowledge, 'at risk' communities were then prioritised by members of the Flinders Fire Management Area Committee in terms of requiring mitigation actions.

Mitigation activities may include:

- Fuel reduction burning
- Fire trail and fire break construction/maintenance
- Mechanical fuel reduction through slashing, trittering or mulching
- Community education
- Other prescribed activities specific to community needs

Some of these activities can be implemented in a relatively short time frame whilst others will need careful planning and consultation with the relevant stakeholders which will need to be done over a longer time frame.

Community Risk Assessment results

The following communities were identified as being at risk and having priority for bushfire risk mitigation activities within the Flinders Fire Management Area:

- Lady Barron
- Emita
- Cape Barren (the Corner)
- Big River
- West End
- Killiecrankie
- Palana
- Whitemark

Areas of strategic importance within the Flinders Fire Management Area

A number of areas of potential strategic importance for bushfire risk mitigation were identified within the Fire Management Area including:

- The Darling Range;
- Mt Strzelecki;
- The east coast (down to Lady Barron and the Pot Boil);
- Mt Tanner

Other areas to be targeted for bushfire risk mitigation, including fuel reduction burning are Castle Rock, Shag Lagoon and the Dutchman and selected blocks of native vegetation on private property.

These potential strategic areas will require further detailed investigation in the field to more accurately determine their potential for use as treatment areas with strategic value.

Strzelecki National Park and Wingaroo Nature Reserve were identified as high risk areas although not with regard to community protection. The Parks and Wildlife Service are planning to develop a fuel reduction strategy for Mt Strzelecki and Wingaroo Nature Reserve.

Maps showing the location of communities and areas at high risk from bushfires, together with a map showing areas of potential strategic importance within the Flinders Fire Management Area are contained below.

- Map 1 - Areas identified in the Flinders Fire Protection Plan for mitigation activities
- Map 2 - Community Risk Assessment results

For further information please contact
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Map 1 - Areas identified in the Flinders Fire Protection Plan for mitigation activities



