

CONFIDENTIAL



Our Ref:
Enquiries:
Telephone:
Fax:

NK:LW
Neil Bibby
(03) 9262 8444
(03) 9262 8399

12 August 2003

Ms Catherine Dale
CEO
Nillumbik Shire Council
PO Box 476
Greensborough VIC 3088

RECEIVED
NILLUMBİK SHIRE COUNCIL
Original to CEO
13 AUG 2003
Action/Response by
Copy for Information to
File No. 50/20/007
..... 110258

13/8
Please circulate
to Crs, Bill
& Margaret

Thanks
Caldern

Dear Ms Dale,

RE: Fire Risk Reports in the Shire of Nillumbik

I refer to the request made by Ms Margaret Abbey on 1 August 2003 seeking CFA's view on two reports commissioned by the Ratepayers Association relating to the fire risk in the Shire of Nillumbik.

1. It is my opinion that both of the independent experts have considerable and appropriate expertise in the subject matter.
2. CFA, of course, has a charter to protect life and property and is an advocate for community safety.
3. The Council should note that it has a Municipal Fire Prevention Plan that has been formed partly on the advice of the Municipal Fire Prevention Committee, and that it is the responsibility of the Council to maintain this Plan under Section 55 of the CFA Act. The Municipal Fire Prevention Plan should 'identify areas, buildings and land use in the municipal district, which are at particular risk in case of fire', and how these risks are to be treated.
4. The Council should also note that CFA have advocated for the introduction of a Wildfire Management Overlay that specifically places vegetation management requirements on new dwellings in the overlay area. CFA believes the proposed Wildfire Management Overlay reflects areas of private land that have the potential to carry a crown fire and thus threaten life and property.
5. CFA also draws the attention of the Nillumbik Shire Council to the recommendations of the Auditor General's Report on Fire Prevention and Preparedness, which was tabled in Parliament in May 2003. Specifically, attention is drawn to recommendation 13: suggesting DSE, CFA and "municipalities give high priority to meeting the fire protection requirements of the State Planning Policy Framework and to continue to work to improve the standard of municipal fire prevention planning".
6. In relation to the reports provided to the Nillumbik Ratepayers Association I support the following general points:
 - a. Both reports are based on an analysis of the potential fire behaviour and highlight the critical role of fuels;

Headquarters: 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, Victoria
Postal Address: PO Box 701, Mount Waverley, Victoria. 3149
Telephone: (03) 9262 8444 Fax: (03) 9264 6200

Creating a safer community

- b. Both reports refer to the importance of vegetation management in the moderation of fire behaviour;
 - c. Both reports note the importance of the need to manage vegetation, some of which may currently be exempt from planning permit requirements, in the areas immediately around houses (such as proposed by the WMO);
 - d. The Packham report refers to strategic fuel management of forested areas where approaching fires may impact onto residential areas; and
 - e. Both reports refer to linear fuel breaks (which tend to be along roadsides), and indicate a need for them to be fit for their intended purpose (CFA has Roadside Fire Management Guidelines to assist with this process).
7. In recognition of the fire risk in Nillumbik Shire, CFA supports a range of treatments to mitigate the risk and improve community safety, some of which are focused on fuel management:
- a. Support of the Municipal Fire Prevention Planning Process through MFPO training, input to the MFPC and audit of the plans;
 - b. Advocacy of the introduction and alignment of Bushfire Prone Areas (under the Building Regulations) and Wildfire Management Overlay Areas;
 - c. Community education programs such as Community Fireguard;
 - d. Specific Summer wildfire awareness and education programs such as bushfire blitz and community meetings; and
 - e. A substantial wildfire response service based on volunteer fire brigades.

In relation to Amendment C12 - please refer to the CFA's previous advice.

Whilst the reports provided may appear alarmist, I think it is nature of the way they are used that is most important.

I recommend that council continue to take a positive approach to this matter and to recognise that there is a fire risk and that a lot is being done to mitigate it.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Noreen Krusel
Manager Natural Environment