

Shared responsibility: what does it mean?

The following tables explain responsibilities of residents, council and other organisations in fire mitigation. These are broken into four different land use classifications. At the end of each table you will find helpful resources with further information.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Responsibilities: Private Property Preparation	
Council responsibilities	<p>Under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105F), <i>Authorized officers, including certain Council staff, may request in writing that private landholders rectify issues on their properties relating to bushfire preparedness and prevention. Maximum penalty for failing to comply is \$10,000.</i></p> <p>Council has a role to play in clearly informing residents of their obligations according to relevant legislation. Our public-facing resources will be updated regularly to reflect this.</p>
Resident responsibilities	<p>Under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105F): <i>Owners of private land must take reasonable steps to prevent or inhibit the outbreak or spread of fire through the land.</i></p> <p>This involves clearing a defensible space around your dwelling, clearing away fine fuels in the lead up to fire season, and thinning particularly dense vegetation that is likely to carry fire quickly. Any new buildings on your property, including sheds and carports, may require approval under the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016. See Plan SA Wizard for details.</p> <p>The most important factor in protecting a home is to appropriately manage vegetation within 20m of the building. Further details at https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/native-vegetation/clearing/fire-prevention</p> <p>Residents may at times be requested to clear a fire break on their property, where fuel loads exceed safe thresholds. It's important to note that while fire breaks can slow or halt lower intensity fires, they don't offer protection against ember attack- so clearing a break as a standalone action is not enough to mitigate risk.</p> <p>You can find more information at https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/services/waste-and-recycling/free-green-organics-drop-off-days</p>

Responsibilities: Private Property Preparation

<p>Other agencies</p>	<p>DEW delivers the Burning on Private Lands (BoPL) program, supporting public and private land managers to conduct prescribed burns on private properties identified as containing high fuel loads and providing strategic connectivity of other fuel reduced buffer zones at a landscape level.</p> <p>SA Power Networks conducts tree trimming around and under powerlines in the leadup to fire danger season, on private properties as well as roadsides. For more information, visit their website: Bushfire safety - SA Power Networks</p> <p>SA CFS is the lead agency when it comes to community education regarding bushfire mitigation.</p>
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Help: Private Property Preparation

<p>What Council is doing</p>	<p>Council is developing a series of case studies with photographic and visual elements to demonstrate good property preparation and share information on how this is achieved. This will cover a range of different property types.</p> <p>AHC works in partnership with the CFS wherever possible to deliver educational sessions and workshops- including “Bushfire Ready” (both online and in person), Firey Women, and targeted awareness campaigns.</p> <p>To assist with private property preparation, Council offers up to 24 free green waste drop off days per annum. You can check dates on the website here: https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/services/waste-and-recycling/free-green-organics-drop-off-days</p>
<p>How Council can help</p>	<p>Council’s Regulatory Services team can provide advice on regulatory obligations and site-specific requirements as needed. For more information contact AHC on 8408 0400.</p> <p>Council also administers burning permits to help residents with the reduction of fuel loads on private properties.</p> <p>Strategic planting around homes and assets can be a great way to maintain biodiversity and help address fire risk. AHC has a low flammability planting guide that can be used to determine the best native species for your area. Find it here: https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/environment/ENVIRONMENT-Low-Flammability-species_2020.pdf</p>

Help: Private Property Preparation

Further information

For new homes and developments, the clearance of native vegetation may require approval from the Native Vegetation Council. Council approval may also be required for removal of trees with a circumference greater than 2m in some cases. If you are building or developing in the AHC, it is advisable to check with the Duty Planner before proceeding. Call AHC on 8408 0400 and ask to be put through.

Property owners wanting more information about the BoPL program can contact DEW fire management staff following the links at [Department for Environment and Water - Burning on private lands](#)

Bushfire Resilience Inc. based in Victoria has a great selection of webinars and other resources about preparing private property. You can browse and watch them here: <https://bushfireresilience.org.au/resource-hub/>

The Climate Wise communities website also has a range of very useful information about how residents can manage their vegetation effectively. You can find it at <https://climatewisecommunities.com.au/>

FIRE TRACKS

Responsibilities: Fire Track Maintenance	
Council responsibilities	<p>There are several different categories of fire tracks, with responsibility for their management falling to various organisations and land managers.</p> <p>While this is a complex space to manage, Council is committed to supporting the community in maintaining fire access tracks and will work closely with the CFS to ensure this is done.</p> <p>Fire tracks deemed to be the responsibility of Council are maintained by Council staff, regardless of the ownership of land they traverse.</p>
Resident responsibilities	<p>Where fire tracks traverse private land, Council does rely on landowners to maintain clear passage where possible, and to report any issues to Council.</p> <p>Council can provide assistance to maintain fire tracks on private property where the track is identified as high priority and the landowner is unable to manage without support.</p>
Other agencies	<p>CFS has its own Group Response Plans which contain information about fire tracks in each area. Any new tracks should complement those which already exist.</p> <p>Forestry SA maintains a network of fire tracks in forest reserves (plantation and native forest) under its jurisdiction.</p> <p>SA Water maintains a network of fire tracks in land under its jurisdiction (including reservoir reserves).</p> <p>DEW maintains a network of fire tracks in land under its jurisdiction (including Conservation Parks and National Parks).</p> <p>The removal of any native vegetation at a distance greater than 5m from fire tracks, is subject to approval through the Native Vegetation Council. This is regardless of who owns the land.</p>

Help: Fire Track Maintenance

What Council is doing	Council is currently working with the support of the CFS to design an audit process for all fire tracks in the AHC district, and to determine how best to manage them into the future.
How Council can help	If you do have a fire access track on your property and are unable to maintain it yourself, you can contact Council to notify of any maintenance required. Maintenance will be programmed if the condition of the track warrants it. Contact AHC's Technical Officer, Parks & Reserves through council's Customer Contact Centre 8408 0400.
Further information	For clear detail on types of fire access tracks and how they are constructed, visit www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/publications/bushfireprevention-constructing-fire-access-tracks You can also refer to Section 5.4 of SAFECOM's fire track guidelines here https://safecom-filesv8.s3.amazonaws.com/current/docs/fire_breaks_and_fire_access_tracks_2005%20%281%29.pdf

PUBLIC PARKS AND RESERVES

Responsibilities: Public Parks and Reserves	
Council responsibilities	<p>Under Section 105G of the Fire and Emergency Service Act 2005: <i>A council that manages land in a bushfire risk area must take appropriate steps to prevent and inhibit fires, and to minimize the risk to property and life.</i> To achieve this, AHC maintains fire breaks, fire access tracks and Asset Protection Zones in strategic areas across the district.</p> <p>Council is also an active participant in DEW’s Burning on Private Lands program, where sites containing remnant vegetation are assessed by DEW’s Fire Management Branch and prioritised for prescribed burning. Both Council and DEW then participate in an 8 year post burn weed control program to control fire responsive weeds that elevate fuel loads, and to support native vegetation recovery. To provide enough refuge for native animal species, these prescribed burns are often undertaken in small mosaic patches in 10-15 year intervals (depending on recovery) so that the program can be undertaken without serious impacts to threatened and declining species.</p> <p>AHC also undertakes monitoring and control measures for management of weeds that elevate fuel loads in conservation reserves and densely populated areas. These sites are independently assessed every 5 years using the Bushland Assessment Methodology to determine vegetation condition, identify weed outbreaks and infestations, and to attribute weed scores which are used to adjust annual works programs.</p>
Resident responsibilities	<p>A number of active volunteer bushcare groups assist Council with the management of natural area reserves through revegetation and weed control, as well as site monitoring which allows for early management interventions when issues arise.</p>

Responsibilities: Public Parks and Reserves

Other agencies

DEW has Fire Management Plans for 15 reserves across the Mt Lofty Ranges, 10 of which are located within the Adelaide Hills Council LGA. The responsibility for these reserves rests with state government. See the Fire Management Plans here: <https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/fire-management-plan-hills-face-zoneplan.pdf>

Local government has no authority to direct other government agencies to conduct any works on state government or Commonwealth land.

Forestry SA has Forest Management Plans for 19 forest reserves, including five (5) Native Forest Reserves, within the Adelaide Hills Council LGA. The responsibility for these reserves rests with state government. To see existing Forestry SA forest management plans, visit <https://www.forestrysa.com.au/forest-management/conservation/native-forest-reserves/>

Help: Public Parks and Reserves

<p>What Council is doing</p>	<p>AHC’s Biodiversity Strategy identifies that approximately fifty Council reserves and Crown land parcels in the AHC are managed for conservation. This involves active revegetation as well as threat abatement measures including pest plant management and fuel reduction burning. The Biodiversity Strategy is available on Council’s website.</p> <p>AHC also coordinates a Vegetation Monitoring and Management Program, where these sites are independently assessed every 5 years using the Bushland Assessment Method to determine vegetation condition, identify weed outbreaks and infestations, and attribute weed scores. Council uses this data, as well as annual contractor and volunteer reports to adjust the annual works program, to prevent weeds that elevate fuel loads from establishing in high quality remnant vegetation.</p> <p>Council has several Vegetation Management Plans for conservation sites, and is also currently assessing opportunities to enhance management options for natural area reserves, through development of formal site management plans where possible. A template is being developed to guide fire management across these sites also.</p>
<p>How Council can help</p>	<p>AHC supports volunteer Bushcare groups with on ground work to complement volunteer activities and goals, green waste collection, partnering in grant projects, equipment and material resources to conduct their on ground work.</p> <p>Council can support initiatives to engage traditional owners from the Kurna and Peramangk Nations to participate in natural area management and potentially incorporate cultural burning practises into prescribed burning programs. This will likely be most effective through partnering with DEW and the Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board to facilitate delivery of cultural burning programs, following a mosaic burning approach.</p>

Help: Public Parks and Reserves

Further information

For details on involvement in volunteer bushcare or restoration groups, contact AHCbiodiversity@ahc.sa.gov.au

To see existing National Parks and Wildlife Service park management plans, visit <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/park-management/management-plans>

To see park management plans from the Department of Environment and Water, visit <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/statewide-park-strategies/park-management-plans>

For details on weed control programs across the region, contact Hf.LandscapeBoard@sa.gov.au

ROADSIDE VERGES

Responsibilities: Roadside Verge Management	
Council responsibilities	<p>All native vegetation is protected under the Native Vegetation Act 1991 and may not be pruned or removed without formal approval. Fines of up to \$5000 can apply. Council must comply with this legislation when managing roadside reserves.</p> <p>Council has a Roadside Vegetation Management Framework (RVMF) 2024-2029, endorsed by the Native Vegetation Council, which guides our work on roadsides. The AHC commitment to roadside vegetation is <i>to maintain road traffic safety within legislative parameters while retaining remnant roadside vegetation of high biodiversity value</i>. All Council works conducted in accordance with the RVMF are already approved by the NVC, however proposed works that do not comply with the document will require NVC approval.</p> <p>According to the SA Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105G): <i>A council that manages land in a bushfire risk area must take appropriate steps to prevent and inhibit fires, and to minimize the risk to property and life.</i></p> <p>Whilst other Councils endeavour to maintain all verges in their district, AHC is in a unique position where this is not feasible due to topography, access restrictions and high levels of vegetation. Maintenance is prioritised based on set criteria, and where possible opportunities are identified for neighbouring Councils to assist with works along shared boundaries.</p> <p>AHC's Native Vegetation Marker sites are assessed every five years to determine vegetation condition and identify weed outbreaks and infestations. Weed scores are then attributed, which Council uses to adjust its annual works programs. The subsequent works schedule is documented in the Roadside Weed Control Program, which is updated annually, targeting weeds that elevate fuel loads.</p>

Responsibilities: Roadside Verge Management

<p>Resident responsibilities</p>	<p>All native vegetation is protected under the Native Vegetation Act 1999, and may not be pruned or removed without formal approval. Fines of up to \$5000 can apply. Therefore, any activity on a road verge undertaken by a resident requires permission from Council under Section 221 of the Local Government Act 1999. Application forms are found at https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/development/roads-and-construction/authorisation-to-alter-a-public-road</p> <p>Where verges have been identified as containing high biodiversity value, they are included in the Native Vegetation Marker System register and program, and works may only be carried out by Council or their approved contractors. Residents can contact Council’s Customer Contact Centre to request works as appropriate.</p> <p>Any work on roadside verges that are considered to be for amenity value or for general maintenance is the responsibility of the adjacent resident. In most cases, Council approval must be obtained under Section 221 of the Local Government Act 1999. Check the AHC website for details.</p>
<p>Other agencies</p>	<p>Neighbouring Councils collaborate and exchange information on roads where boundaries are shared. Staff from several Councils in the AMLR region, including AHC, are continually looking at scheduled maintenance works on these sites and assessing how best to share resources and carry out works in a timely and effective manner. Under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (Section 194), Landscape Boards are responsible for managing declared weeds on all roadsides regardless of who owns them. This includes Native Vegetation Marker System sites.</p>
	<p>DIT is responsible for maintaining their own roadside verges, but only to within 1.5m of the sealed road edge. The remainder of the verge is technically the responsibility of Council, with mitigation works carried out on those deemed highest priority according to data contained in the Bushfire Management Area Plan.</p> <p>The exception to this is the South Eastern Freeway, which is entirely the responsibility of DIT.</p>

Help: Roadside Verge Management

<p>What Council is doing</p>	<p>Council operates three programs to maintain road verges: the Roads and Reserves Annual Maintenance Program (RRAMP), which is focussed on fire mitigation & road safety; the Roadside Weed Control Work Program, which is focussed on biodiversity protection; and the Bushfire Fuel Reduction Program undertaken in Council managed reserves set aside for conservation.</p> <p>AHC has initiated a cross-council reference group with neighbouring Councils looking at best practise management for roadside verges.</p> <p>Council also intends to develop a verge policy outlining our responsibilities and approach to verge management, including the S221 process.</p> <p>According to roadside maintenance plans developed interstate, <i>supporting and promoting leave early messaging should be the key focus, as driving on any road during a bushfire is inherently dangerous.</i> https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/business-and-industry/design-and-management/bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines AHC is committed to sharing this message in the lead up to and during fire danger season each year via our website, social media, community education workshops run in partnership with the CFS.</p> <p>Where significant regrowth of native vegetation occurs following a fire event, Council assesses the need for fuel hazard reduction on a site-by-site basis. To preserve local biodiversity, works will only be undertaken where vegetation fuel loads present an unacceptable risk to public safety, or to infrastructure and assets.</p>
<p>How Council can help</p>	<p>When elevated fuel loads exist, and warrant Council action, mechanical slashing or chemical spraying may be undertaken. Council's approach is to prioritise verges that present the greatest fuel load risk to infrastructure and assets under the RRAMP, and to prioritise verges of highest biodiversity value under the Roadside Weed Control Program.</p> <p>Council will consider waiving the fee of any S221 application based on the nature of proposed works, or if it is proposed to establish revegetation with native species or to undertake woody weed control.</p>
<p>Further information</p>	<p>If you have specific questions around management of a verge adjacent your property, contact Council on 8408 0400.</p>

Help: Roadside Verge Management

According to extensive research by the [Resilient Hills and Coasts Bushfire & Biodiversity Group](#), there is not enough evidence to suggest that roadside vegetation, and native vegetation in general, is exclusively responsible for increasing or decreasing the landscape bushfire risk to life and assets; as fire behaviour is also determined by topography, weather, and environmental conditions.