

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bigger Picture:

Point Henry is in the Fitzgerald Biosphere which means we need to balance man's activities with nature. The Shire's Community Strategic Plan and Local Planning Strategy acknowledge the same. The Local Planning Scheme zoning objectives for Point Henry discuss protection of landscape and amenity.

On the other hand, many State Strategies clearly prioritise human life and property above the environment, and Fire management policies, both existing and draft, require new development to be located in areas where the bushfire risk is low to moderate or require substantial clearing as an option to achieve this.

Therefore, we know:

Point Henry has a unique environment in terms of topography, ecology, soil types and vegetation communities and it is part of a recognised Biosphere listing. Wholesale clearing to achieve fire safety is not acceptable.

Fire Management policies and practices require low fuel areas around housing, amongst other things. These areas need to be safe for residents, visitors, fire fighters and future landowners.

Therefore we cannot advocate wholesale clearing of the Point or allow people to live in the trees. A balance must be struck.

We also know that local government needs to decide where the balance is. DFES, OBRM and a proportion of the community will advocate largely on the side of more clearing and active fire management measures. EPA, DPAW and a proportion of the community will advocate on the side of retaining more vegetation with solutions including higher building standards and people just being prepared to lose their housing.

The recently released State Planning Policy leaves local government as the decision maker for development proposals. Therefore the local government to make a decision on where the balance lies and this must be backed up by state planning strategy, local planning strategy, scheme and policy if it is to stand up to future scrutiny.

Any measures need to be able to be resourced by the Shire in terms of money, time and people.

Therefore the report proposes to reduce the advertised Strategy to a Policy that addresses the main issues with clear requirements. It has been reduced in scope to focus on the land use and Shire controlled matters.

Other future studies will continue to improve the fire management for the Point and other areas of the Shire including the OBRM municipal Bushfire Risk Management Plan.

Many of the submissions discussed operational matters that fall to other organisations and should not be commented on by a Shire Strategy.

PRIVATE PROPERTY:

New dwellings need to:

Be constructed in accordance with AS3959, have a dedicated water supply, driveway, turnaround and 20m BPZ. They must avoid areas of Kwongkan Shrubland wherever practical. All variations to this require a Fire Management Plan prepared by a qualified practitioner.

Where development needs to be constructed at BAL40 or FZ then it needs a FMP from a level 3 practitioner (who can effectively sign off on it).

Existing dwellings:

will have a dedicated water supply, driveway, turnaround and 20m BPZ phased in over time through the fire break notice. All variations to this will be assessed as a variation to the Fire Break Notice with an extended approval period.

Clearing around the house is permitted up to 30m without further approval. Any more requires planning application and assessment.

Building Envelopes are to be reassessed when a dwelling is proposed to ensure that fire management and environmental qualities can coexist.

SHIRE LAND

- Prepare and implement a management plan for Reserve 511;
- Create Neighbourhood Safer Places at Blossoms and Short beaches
- Slash the full width of the road reserves throughout the Point
- Investigate improvements to the road network eg line marking, pull over bays, etc

Future studies

As pointed out by many submissions the draft Strategy failed to provide an ongoing plan of attack to progressively improve fire management over time. A number of actions are marked

1. Municipal Bushfire Risk Management Plan, a requirement for all local governments, a Shire-wide mitigation plan based on risk assessment, in a tenure blind methodology and signed off by all government departments.
2. An asset Plan updated annually listing the fire management elements at each property; and
3. A Vegetation Management Plan that maps vegetation communities and makes recommendations as to weed management and fire management measures.