

Significant Economic Industries In the Cudgegong BFMC



Introduction

There are a number of key economic industries within the Mid-Western Regional Council Area that are at risk of damage or loss from a high-severity bush fire. These widespread economic assets have not been identified as Focus Areas in the Bush Fire Risk Management Plan, however the BFMC has identified a number of BFMC Wide treatment strategies which aim to reduce the bush fire risk to these assets across the BFMC area.

Key Economic Assets and Bush Fire Risks

The Mudgee region is renowned for its vineyard industry, with over 60 wineries and 35 cellar doors contributing significantly to the local economy through wine production and tourism. Smoke from bush fires presents a major threat to grape quality, potentially leading to smoke taint, which can render entire harvests unsuitable for wine production and result in substantial economic losses for producers.

Cherry farms also form an important part of the local agricultural industry. Bush fire smoke and extreme heat conditions can impact fruit quality and yield, causing economic setbacks for growers.

The Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), has more than 20 solar and wind farm projects either operational or under development in the area. The presence of large-scale renewable energy installations requires careful fire management to prevent damage to infrastructure and ensure continued operation. Mining operations in the region, including both open-cut and underground ventures, play a critical role in the local economy.

Major operators include Yancoal's Moolarben mine, Glencore's Ulan No.3 and Ulan West, and Peabody's Wilpinjong mine. Bush fire smoke can impact underground mine ventilation shafts, affecting air quality and operational safety, and in extreme cases, fires can pose a direct threat to mining infrastructure.

BFMC Wide Treatment Strategies

There are a number of BFMC wide treatments identified in the Cudgegong Bush Fire Risk Management Plan that aim to reduce the bush fire risk to all assets across the region. In relation to the economic assets identified above, the BFMC will continue to work with key industry providers to discuss bush fire risk and potential strategies for risk mitigation.

The BFMC Plan of Operations will also consider whether Pre-Incident Plans and specific operational response strategies are required for these economic industries. Community engagement activities in the area will also aim to increase bush fire awareness and enhance the region's resilience, ensuring that industries and residents are equipped to respond effectively to bush fire threats.

Conclusion

The Cudgegong Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) recognises the essential role of economic assets such as vineyards, cherry farms, renewable energy installations, and mining operations in the local economy. The BFMC will continue to address the risk to these industries through BFMC Wide treatment strategies and will support the continued economic prosperity of the Mid Western Regional Council Area.