



RFS

4.1.5A Area Mitigation AIDER & HFSV Manual

Document control

Release history

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1.0	Mar 2025	Area Mitigation Advisory Group	Reviewed to reflect current practice. Inclusion of SOP content from SS 4.1.5 AIDER

Reviewed by

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Related documents

Name
Rural Fires Act 1997
Rural Fires Regulation
Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics
Policy P1.1.3 Conflicts of Interest
Policy P1.1.4 Gifts and Benefits
Service Standard 4.1.5 AIDER & HFSV Programs
Service Standard 1.1.14 Personal Information and Privacy
Service Standard 1.1.34 Workplace Complaints Resolution

Name
P5.1.6 Records Management
P6.1.3 Environmental Assessment for Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Works
NSW Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code

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1

General overview



1. General overview

1.1. Purpose

This Manual outlines the programs delivered by Area Mitigation Crews, specifically Assist Infirm, Disabled and Elderly Residents (AIDER) and Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) programs. It provides direction on how to engage an Area Mitigation Crew within the Area Command for these programs.

This manual forms part and should be used alongside [Service Standard 4.1.5 AIDER & HFSV](#).

1.2. Organisational context

The Area Mitigation Crews are part of the RFS Area Management Model (AMM), seven Area Commands across New South Wales, each led by an Area Commander. Each Area Command oversees a cluster of District Offices.

Area Mitigation includes field crew of 2 to 4 personnel per crew, Operational Officers (Level 1) and Area Mitigation Coordinators. The 87 Area Mitigation Crews are stationed at various locations across the state, often co-located with District Offices.

Area Mitigation Crews operate a range of vehicles and use hand tools and small equipment, such as brush cutters, chainsaws, pole saws, and blowers. Crews travel from their base locations to different areas as needed, adapting their equipment to the specific requirements of each task.

1.3. Conduct & ethics

Area Mitigation Crew members delivering works are required to comply with:

- Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Policy P1.1.3 Conflicts of Interest
- Policy P1.1.4 Gifts and Benefits
- All other policies and service standards.

Action may be taken for breaches of service standards, policies and conduct in accordance with [Service Standard 1.1.34 Workplace Complaints Resolution](#).

1.4. AIDER and HFSV Programs

The RFS Area Command deliver two programs to help vulnerable community members enhance their own protection from fires:

- **Assist Infirm, Disabled, and Elderly Residents (AIDER) Program**

This **one-time, free service** is available to residents who are infirm, disabled, or elderly and have limited domestic support from family, friends, or other services.

The RFS Area Mitigation Crews manage vegetation and fuel on these residents' properties if they are at risk of bush fire and will also provide community engagement and referral assistance.

- **Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) Program:**

This free program involves RFS visits to homes to help residents improve their fire safety. It involves simple but critical home fire safety tips and the offer to test the resident's smoke alarm/s. If the smoke alarms are not working, RFS will either replace the battery or install a smoke alarm/s.

Note that the HFSV service is not available for landlords with vacant properties.

For more information on eligibility for the AIDER and HFSV programs, refer to [Service Standard 4.15 AIDER & HFSV Programs](#).

Detailed procedures for these programs are available in section 2 and 3 of this manual.

2

Assist Infirm, Disabled and Elderly Residents
Program



2. AIDER works

2.1. Overview

The Assist Infirm, Disabled or Elderly Resident (AIDER) Program is designed to enhance the level of protection for Infirm, Elderly or Disabled Residence living in a residence at risk of bush fire.

Improving the level of protection for an AIDER client includes:

- Assess risk levels using RFS planning and preparation tools.
- Providing a once-time service to managing vegetation and fuel hazards on their property
- Advising them of their responsibility to manage vegetation and fuel on their property
- Suggest ways to maintain their property once AIDER services are complete, and
- Connecting them to local RFS programs, plans, or initiatives.

While the AIDER program may include some protection for secondary assets or assets on adjoining properties, the programs primary focus is on the property of the client, particularly the residential property.

The AIDER Program is:

- A one-time service, not an ongoing maintenance activity
- Limited by available resources, funding, and operational needs, and
- Managed by the Area Command and the Area Mitigation Crews.

2.2. Scope of AIDER works

To mitigate the bush fire risk, the following works may be undertaken under the AIDER program:

- Establishing an Asset Protection Zone (APZ)
- Under scrubbing
- Thinning vegetation
- Trimming branches
- Removing leaf and tree debris
- Slashing or mowing long grass
- Tree removal, and
- Clearing gutters.

Where works have been undertaken as listed above, the following will be provided:

- Assistance with the use of planning and preparation tools to understand their level of risk including Bush Fire Survival Plan, and Bush Fire Safety Fact Sheets.
- A report for the client outlining:

- Works undertaken by the NSW RFS,
- Recommended ways to maintain their property once AIDER services are complete,
- Their responsibility to manage vegetation and fuel on their property, and
- Contact details for the local RFS District Office
- A report to the local RFS District Office outlining the works undertaken.

2.3. Limitation of works

The following works will not be undertaken:

- Major tree and stump removal
- Junk and rubbish removal.
- Weeding or garden maintenance
- Building repairs or site preparation works fence or storm water drain repairs.
- Vegetation Management on or around:
 - Vacant Land
 - Dwelling not occupied by the AIDER client (*note: can be more than 1*)
- Hazard reduction work on adjoining land, or
- Any works that are considered unreasonable or unsafe.

Area Command will notify the local RFS District Office of AIDER works that have been undertaken in the District area.

Where AIDER works are undertaken in a Fire District, the Area Command office will advise Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) of the need to undertake HFSV at this location.

2.4. Client confidentiality and consent

The personal information of AIDER clients is to be managed in accordance with [Service Standard 1.1.14 Personal Information and Privacy](#). This ensures compliance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*.

Eligible clients are notified in writing by the RFS that consent will be required for Area Mitigation crews to enter their property to undertake an inspection for the AIDER or HFSV programs. This process is outlined in Service Standard 4.1.5, SOP 4.1.5 -1 AIDER – Referrals and Assessing Eligibility.

At the time of inspection, the Area Command staff member/s will decide with the client what work are to be completed. The client is required to provide consent for works to take place under the Programs prior to work being undertaken. Consent for vegetation and fuel management works to be undertaken is sought through the *AIDER Owner's or Occupier's Consent Form* stored in *Guardian*.

Photographs of a property through the AIDER Program are required for planning purposes and are to be taken at the time of inspection. No identifiable feature (e.g. name of property or street number) is to be visible in any photograph. Photographs are also to be taken after

completion of work. These photographs are used for Program work purposes only and cannot be used for any other purpose. Consent for photographs to be taken is included in the *AIDER Owner's or Occupier's Consent Form*.

Photographs of an AIDER client and/or their property can only be used for promotional purposes if specific consent has been given under the *AIDER Owner's or Occupiers Consent Form*. The consent will remain valid for three years and must be completed and signed by the client.

2.5. Referrals & eligibility

All requests and referrals for the AIDER program are assessed for eligibility by the Area Command.

Residents or their carers can apply for the AIDER Program:

- through the AIDER page on the RFS website
- by phoning 1300 011 737 or
- emailing aider@rfs.nsw.gov.au

The flowchart at Appendix B illustrates the process for AIDER works.

Where it is identified that an AIDER client requires assistance with home fire safety advice, the Area Mitigation Crew will undertake a HFSV where they reside in a Rural Fire District or refer them to FRNSW if they are within the Fire District.

Once the Area Command has approved the AIDER request, eligible clients will receive a letter from the Area Command within 21 days of receiving the application confirming receipt of their request for assistance under the AIDER Program. They also receive the following information:

- How the inspection process is undertaken
- That written consent is required for Area Mitigation crews to undertake an inspection of their property
- A reminder that AIDER is a once-only free service
- A description of work which may be undertaken, and
- Notification of intent to forward their contact details to the local RFS District Office.

Residents not eligible for the AIDER Program will receive a letter from the Area Command within 21 days confirming receipt of their request and advising that they are not eligible for the AIDER Program. They will also receive:

- Information regarding the reason they are not eligible
- RFS Fact Sheets on bush fires, grass fires, home fire safety and Prepare Act Survive
- Contact details for Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)
- Contact details for NSW Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC)
- Contact details for Senior Services Guide, and
- A Community Services Directory for disabled and/or elderly residents within that Local Government Area.

2.6. Property inspection for AIDER works.

Area Commands are responsible for conducting a property inspection and completing works as part of the AIDER Program. An Area Command staff member will undertake the inspection.

[Policy P6.1.3 Environmental Assessment for Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Works](#) and its accompanying Guideline is used to assess bush fire risk for all AIDER clients.

The Area Command will provide the inspector with the following information for an inspection to be undertaken:

- Name, phone number, eligibility category and address of client
- Name, phone number and agency of referring officer (if any)
- Details of previous AIDER contact (if any)
- RFS District and Local Government Area, and
- Wildfire history of the area.

The Area Command will contact the AIDER client to schedule an inspection of the property.

An inspection of the property is undertaken by Area Command within 28 days of receipt of the request for assistance under the AIDER Program.

If this is not possible, the AIDER client must be contacted within the same 28-day period to make alternative arrangements for the inspection to be undertaken as soon as practicable.

The Area Command will use the AIDER consent form to obtain **written** consent from the AIDER client to undertake a property inspection.

Property inspection and the AIDER Tasking Form is to be completed for work to be scheduled. The Area Mitigation Crew assists the AIDER client with the use of planning and preparation tools to understand their level of risk including:

- a Bush Fire Survival Plan
- Bush Fire Safety Fact Sheets.

The Area Command will schedule AIDER works as soon as practical after the property inspection. The AIDER client is to be notified of the scheduled start and completion date of the works.

Any changes to the scheduled works date will be communicated to the AIDER client as soon as possible.

2.7. Environmental approvals and waste management

The Area Command will determine if any environmental approvals are required.

Environmental approvals will be undertaken by the AM Coordinator/OpO1, where required.

All mechanical hazard reduction will be conducted in accordance with the *NSW Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code, part 4.2 Standards to prevent soil erosion and instability*, unless otherwise specified in an environmental approval.

Vegetation waste management will be undertaken in compliance with the relevant environmental legislation and regulations, by one or more of the following methods:

- Removal from site
- Burn on site in accordance with the RFS Standards for Pile Burning if unable to remove waste from site, or
- Re-use vegetation on site where it is appropriate and does not pose a bush fire risk.

Vegetation waste management is the responsibility of the Area Mitigation Crew.

2.8. Completion of works

Prior to commencing the AIDER works, the Area Mitigation Crew Leader confirms with the AIDER client that the proposed work is in accordance with the client's wishes and a site risk assessment is undertaken with the crew.

All inspection and completion details are recorded by the Area Command within five working days of the end of the calendar month in which the work is carried out.

The Area Command provides the RFS District Office with a report outlining the works undertaken and contact details for the AIDER client so that they can be connected to any RFS Brigade, District or other local initiatives that may assist with improving their level of protection from bush fire.

The Area Command enters the AIDER works into the approved corporate register (currently Guardian).

Any damage to property that may occur because of works undertaken by an Area Mitigation Crew's will be repaired by the RFS. The Area Command will manage repair works.

During the process of assessing and undertaking AIDER services, hazards may be identified on adjoining land. Any identified hazards will be referred to the local RFS District Office for appropriate action.

During the process of assessing and undertaking AIDER services, other dangers or vulnerabilities may be identified. These will be reported to the relevant Area Command staff for appropriate action.

Note, the related forms section of this Manual refers to forms within the Guardian System:

- Owners Consent form
- Occupiers Consent form
- Site Risk Assessment form
- Completion Notice.

2.9. AIDER and other local programs, plans, or initiatives

Following the completion of the AIDER works it is the responsibility of the local Area Command to connect the client with any Brigade, District or other local initiatives that may assist with improving and maintaining their level of protection from bush fire.

2.10. Recordkeeping

Works and services that are completed as part of the AIDER and HFSV Programs are required to be recorded for reporting purposes. Recording and reporting of completed works is the

responsibility of Area Commands.

Area Commands will provide details of completed AIDER and HFSV works to the local RFS District Office.

All records are to be kept in accordance with [P5.1.6 Records Management](#).

3

Home Fire Safety Visit Program



3. Home Fire Safety Visits

The Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) program is a prevention program that empowers RFS members to make homes safer.

Improving the level of protection for a HFSV client includes:

- Using RFS planning and preparation tools to identify the level of vulnerability
- Undertaking a site visit to check that smoke alarms are in good condition and working order and are installed in suitable areas. If residents do not have a working smoke alarm RFS members will install a long-life battery-powered smoke alarm as well as replace existing smoke alarm batteries, all at no cost.
- Advising residents how to prepare for fires within their residences
- Recommending ways to maintain their safety, once the HFSV is complete, and
- Connecting them to local RFS programs, plans, or initiatives.

The HFSV program is:

- For people within the community who are statistically at higher risk of incidents occurring
- Limited by available resources, funding, and operational needs, and
- Managed by the RFS Area Commands.

The HFSV service is not available to landlords in untenanted premises. *Service Standard 4.1.5 AIDER & HFSV Programs* provides further information for landlords.

3.1. Requests

Generating requests and managing referrals for the HFSV Program is the responsibility of the Area Command.

Residents or their carers can apply for the HFSV Program:

- through the HFSV page on the RFS website
- by phoning 1300 011 737
- emailing aider@rfs.nsw.gov.au

HFSV applications are received and processed by the RFS for Rural Fire Districts and FRNSW for Fire Districts.

Appendix C illustrates the process for the HFSV process.

3.2. Property assessment & HFSV services

To mitigate the home fire risk, the following works may be undertaken:

- Check that the home has working smoke alarms
- Check that the smoke alarms are in good working order
- Check that the smoke alarms are installed in suitable areas

- If no smoke alarms are present, RFS members will install a long-life battery-powered smoke alarm as well as replace existing smoke alarm batteries (where applicable) at no cost, and
- Staff will provide personalised fire safety advice.

Where checks have been undertaken as listed in above, the following will be provided:

- Assistance in the development of a home escape plan using planning and preparation tools to understand their level of risk including Home Fire Safety Fact Sheets
- Community Engagement materials left with the client including:
 - Recommended ways to maintain their property once HFSV services are complete.
 - Contact details for the local NSW RFS District Office.

Area Command will notify the local RFS District Office of HFSV works that are to be undertaken in the area.

3.3. Exclusions

The following works will **not** be undertaken:

- Any works that are considered unreasonable or unsafe.

3.4. HFSV site visit

Conducting a home fire safety visit and completing works as part of the HFSV Program is the responsibility of the Area Command.

The Area Command will provide the relevant Area Mitigation Crew with the following information for an inspection to be undertaken:

- Name, phone number, and address of client
- Name, phone number and agency of referring officer (if any)
- Details of previous AIDER or HFSV contact (if any)
- RFS District and Local Government Area.

The Area Command will contact the HFSV client to schedule an inspection of the property.

The RFS will undertake the HFSV to the property within 28 days of receipt of the request for assistance under the HFSV Program. If this is not possible, the client must be contacted within the same 28-day period and alternative mutual arrangements made to visit the property as soon as practicable.

The Area Command will obtain written consent from the HFSV client to undertake a property visit.

Once the HFSV is undertaken, Area Command will assist the HFSV client with the use of planning and preparation tools to address their level of risk, including the Home Fire Safety Fact Sheets.

Before commencing the HFSV, the Area Mitigation Crew will confirm with the HFSV client that the proposed safety checks are in accordance with the client's wishes and a site risk assessment is undertaken.

Following completion of the HFSV, the Area Command provides the HFSV client with community engagement materials outlining:

- Recommended ways to maintain their property once HFSV services are complete.
- Contact details for the local RFS District Office or FRNSW station.

All inspection and completion details are recorded at the time of the inspection.

The Area Command may provide the RFS District Office with information confirming that the HFSV has been conducted and contact details for the HFSV client so that they can be connected to any RFS Brigade, District or other local initiatives that may assist with improving their level of protection from structure fires.

4

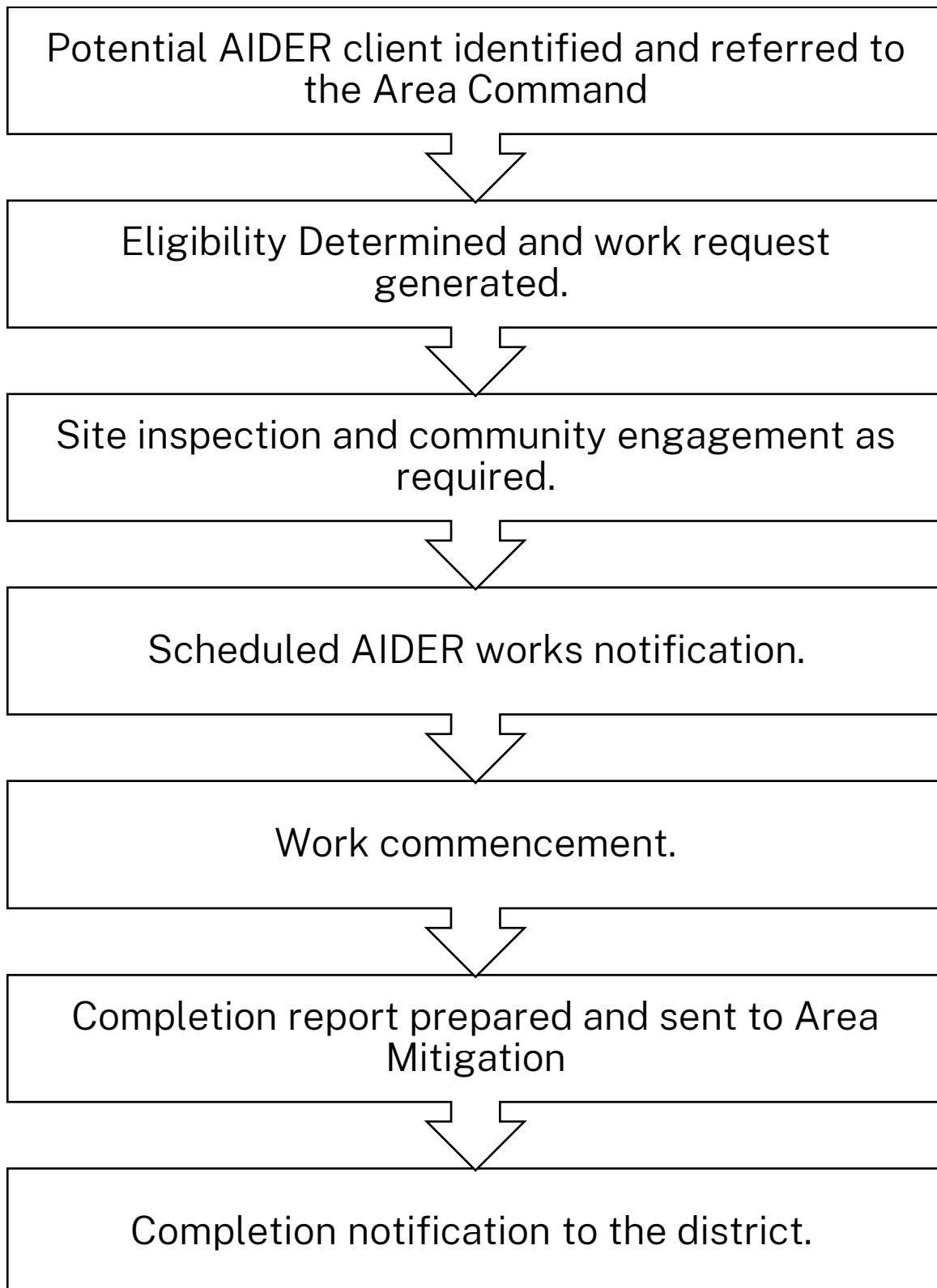
Appendices



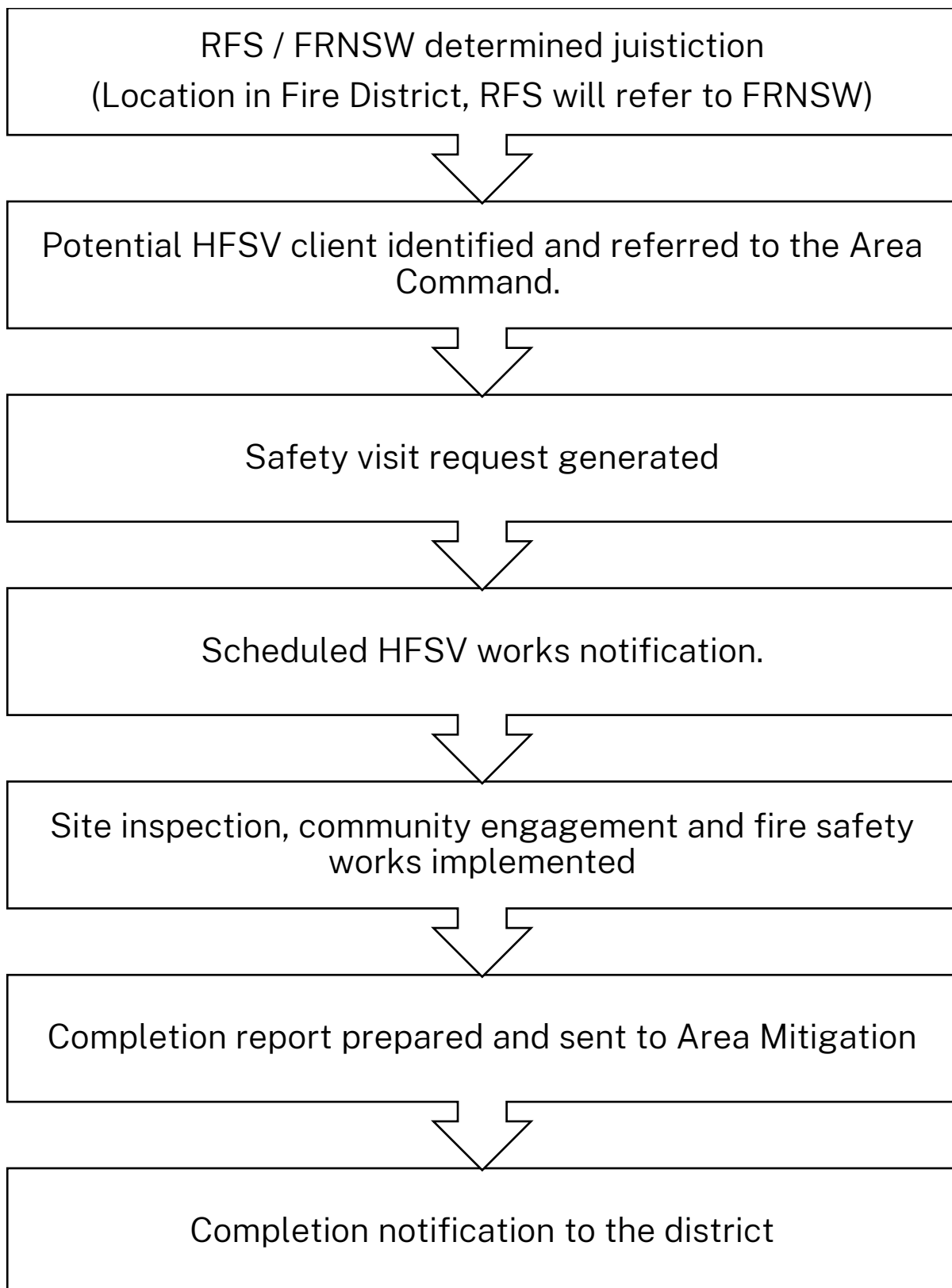
Appendix A Definitions & Abbreviations

AIDER	AIDER: Assist Infirm, Disabled and Elderly Residents Program. A free once-only service for infirm, disabled, and elderly community members who have limited domestic support available from family, relatives, friends, or other services to undertake vegetation and fuel management on their property and are at risk of bush fire.
Bush fire prone land	an area of land that can support a bush fire or is likely to be subject to bush fire attack, as identified on a bush fire prone land map. Bush fire prone land maps are prepared by local councils and certified by the Commissioner of the RFS.
Client	a resident of NSW who meets the eligibility criteria for the AIDER Program.
Disabled	a resident who fulfils at least one of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Receiving the disability support pension– Receiving any Commonwealth Home Support Programs for the disabled– Receiving any federal Department of Social Services (DSS) or Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet services for the disabled, or– Having a disability as defined in the <i>NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014</i>.
Elderly	a resident who fulfils at least one of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– 65 years or older (50 years or older for an Indigenous person)– Receiving an age pension– Receiving a Veterans Affairs pension– Receiving any HaCC services for the aged– Receiving any DSS services for the aged; or– In receipt of an NSW Seniors Card.
HFSV	Home Fire Safety Visit
Infirm	a resident who requires ongoing personal care, support, and assistance because of their disability, long-term or life-limiting illness, mental illness, dementia, or ageing.
Living arrangements	location where AIDER client resides or any other living arrangements which may warrant AIDER services to be provided.
Secondary assets	major buildings (such as farm sheds, hay sheds, machinery sheds) and boundary fences (being a fence erected on the boundary separating land owned by different persons/agencies).

Appendix B AIDER Works Process Diagram



Appendix C HFSV Works Process Diagram





RFS

Postal address

NSW Rural Fire Service
Locked Bag 17
GRANVILLE NSW 2142

State address

NSW Rural Fire Service
4 Murray Rose Avenue,
Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127

T 02 8741 5555

F 02 8741 5550

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