POLICY NO. 2/2006

Management of Bush Fire Operations

(Amended vide BFCC Minute No. 38/2006 of 21 September 2006)
(Amended vide BFCC Minute No. 5/14 of 24 July 2014)

Policy Cancellation

The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee Policy No. 2/2005 – Policy on the Management of Bush Fire Operations is hereby cancelled and is replaced with this policy.

Rationale

The Rural Fires Act 1997 charges the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) with responsibility for ensuring a coordinated response to fires for the protection of land, life, property and the environment, consistent with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 requires the preparation of a bush fire management plan of operations by a Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC). This policy describes the method and standard for preparing these plans, which are to be known as 'Operations Coordination Plans'. It also provides a range of supporting resources to assist BFMCs and agencies in achieving the goal of efficient and coordinated fire fighting.

Statement of Interim Measures – Plans of Operations

As an interim measure the BFCC has resolved that until such time as enhanced mapping becomes available, those maps previously attached to the old Plans of Operations are to be used as the BFMCs Operations Maps.

Policies

1. Plans of operations to satisfy Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 must be prepared in accordance with a Model 'Operations Coordination Plan' approved by the BFCC. The model plan must incorporate the following principles:

- Any fire fighting authority may make the first response to a bush fire. This responding fire fighting authority will take immediate steps to advise the land manager and relevant fire fighting authority in whose area the fire is burning, or will advise in accordance with any Memorandum of Understanding or Mutual Aid Agreement, of action being taken.

- Any fire suppression techniques or activities for which prior authority from the land owner, occupier or land management agency is required must be specified in the plan.

- Personnel or equipment provided under an Operations Coordination Plan to a bush fire will remain under the command of the supplying fire fighting authority, unless that authority's line commander indicates otherwise.

- Personnel or equipment provided under an Operations Coordination Plan to a bush fire will remain under the control of the Incident Controller, for the period that the personnel or equipment are provided.

The current approved model plan and instructions for preparation are attached at **Annexes A & B**.

2. An Operations Map will be prepared for each BFMC area. The Commissioner Rural Fire Service is responsible for the production of these maps. The maps are to be prepared in accordance with the Guidelines attached at **Annex C**.

3. All fires are classified in accordance with the Fire Classification system attached at **Annex D**.

The determination as to whether a fire should be managed at Class 2 will be made by the relevant fire service, and for Class 3 by the Commissioner Rural Fire Service, on the basis of a recommendation made by the relevant BFMC Fire Classification Group. The group should try to reach an agreement by consensus based on the current and expected situation and likely development of the fire. In making its decision, and particularly where there is dissent among members, the decision support tool at **Annex D** is to be used to guide the deliberations.

4. A pre-season checklist must be completed by each BFMC in each year prior to 1 August in accordance with the standard checklist attached at **Annex E**.

- BFMC checklists are to be collated by the Rural Fire Service which will report to BFCC.

5. Each BFMC is to produce and maintain an Operations Coordination Manual. Details of matters for inclusion in the manual are contained in **Annex F**.

6. General fire fighting:

- Fire Coordination at all classes of bush fire will be under the control of an Incident Controller – **See Annex D for the Classification of Fires**:

For ***Class 1 Fires*** the Incident Controller will be the Officer-in-Charge of the first suppression agency on scene, unless relieved or replaced.

For ***Class 2 Fires***, an Incident Controller will be appointed by the relevant fire service to control fire fighting operations on the basis of a recommendation made by the relevant BFMC Fire Classification Group.

For ***Class 3 Fires***, the Commissioner RFS will appoint an Incident Controller under section 44 of the Rural Fires Act 1997, having considered any recommended nominees of the local BFMC.

- When suppressing a fire, the fire and land management policies and relevant plans of the land manager will be taken into account or considered as required by the Act.

- All fire fighting activities will, as far as practicable, be carried out in consultation with the responsible officer of the fire fighting authority or land manager in whose area the fire is burning.

- Under a Section 44 appointment, the Incident Controller will form an Incident Management Team. The Incident Management Team must include a person who has local knowledge of the area and can assist the IMT in effecting suppression activities.

- Persons appointed as Incident Controllers for a Class 3 fire will relinquish their normal duties for the duration of their appointment.

- During fire fighting operations, due consideration must be given to the 'Minimal Impact Suppression and Rehabilitation Guidelines' attached at **Annex G**.

7. A BFMC must hold a debrief following each Class 3 fire within its area. The debrief must be held as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the fire (and should generally occur within 6 weeks of the fire). All members of the BFMC must be encouraged to attend. Any organisation/agency that does not have a member on the BFMC but which was significantly involved in the fire must be invited to attend. The debrief is to be conducted in accordance with Annexure I. A written report must be submitted to the BFCC as soon as practicable after the meeting.

INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS – protocol for management of initial response to bush fires

Where a fire-fighting authority, other than the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) or Fire & Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW) (hereafter referred to as the Fire Services), has responded to a bush fire and the Fire Services are not present:

1. The fire fighting authority must notify the relevant Fire Service of its initial response to the fire as soon as is practicable.

2. The Incident Controller will be determined by that fire-fighting authority until such time as:

- a rural fire brigade or FRNSW brigade is present at the fire and it has been determined by the senior officer of the Fire Service with statutory authority for the area in which the incident is located, (the relevant Fire Service) that incident control should be transferred to the relevant Fire Service; or

- the relevant Fire Service has directed a member of that Fire Service or another person to assume the role of Incident Controller.

3. The fire fighting authority's Incident Controller must provide the relevant Fire Service with a situation report as soon as is practicable, which includes the following information:

- the location of the fire;

- its size and any relevant information in relation to its behaviour;

- resources in attendance at the fire;

- the local weather conditions;

- the Alert level;

- the proposed strategy to contain or control the spread of the fire; and

- information in relation to any known injuries or damage to property .

4. The fire fighting authority's Incident Controller must provide the relevant Fire Service with further situation reports on a regular basis, together with any additional relevant information in relation to the management of the fire.

5. The fire fighting authority's Incident Controller must discuss any proposed significant changes to strategy prior to their implementation with the relevant Fire Service Senior Officer.

6. The situation reports must be provided to the relevant Fire Service by way of the ICON system.

Notwithstanding the above, consistent with statutory responsibility imposed by the Acts, the Fire Services reserve the right to assume control of any fire in their respective jurisdiction with absolute discretion, regardless of the tenure of the land on which the fire is burning or which fire fighting authority was first to respond.

These interim arrangements have effect and take precedence over any alternative provision included in a plan of operations that was approved prior to the date of adoption of these Interim arrangements.

Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM
Chairman

Annexures:

A. The Model Operations Coordination Plan for Bush Fire Management Committees.
B. The Instructions for preparation of a local Bush Fire Management Committee Operations Coordination Plan.
C. The Guidelines for preparation of Operations Maps.
D. Classification of Fires.
E. The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee Pre-season Checklist.
F. Contents of a Bush Fire Management Committee Operations Coordination Manual.
G. Minimal Impact Suppression and Rehabilitation Guidelines.
H. Operations Coordination Plan - Plans of Operations under Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997.
I. Post-fire Debrief Meetings.

Model Operations Coordination Plan for BFMCs

OPERATIONS COORDINATION PLAN

**** DISTRICT/ZONE

A plan of operations prepared pursuant to section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997.

1. Authorisation

This Operations Coordination Plan has been prepared by the **** Bush Fire Management Committee as a plan of operations for the purpose of s52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997.

This plan has been endorsed by the members of the **** BFMC on behalf of the authorities they represent:

_____ Date:_____

****

Chairperson, on behalf of the **** BFMC

_____ Date:_____

****

NSW Rural Fire Service

_____ Date:_____

****

Fire & Rescue NSW

_____ Date:_____

****

Forestry Corporation

_____ Date:_____

****

Office of Environment & Heritage (National Parks & Wildlife Service)

Approved:

_____ Date:_____

On behalf of the

NSW Bush Fire Coordinating Committee

Distribution

Copies of this plan, once approved, are to be provided to:

Combat Agencies:

1. RFS **** District/Zone Office/s
2. RFS Region **** Office
3. RFS Headquarters
4. Forestry Corporation Regional Office
5. Forestry Corporation Head Office (Fire Management Branch)
6. NPWS District Office
7. NPWS Head Office (Fire Management Unit)
8. FRNSW Local Superintendent
9. FRNSW Specialised Operations (Bush Fire/Natural Hazards Section)

Support Agencies:

10. NSW Police local office
11. **** LEMC
12. **** Council/s
13. SES

Other Agencies:

14.

2. Introduction

This is the Operations Coordination Plan for the **** Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) prepared under section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997.

This plan applies to the local government area(s) of ****.

3. States of Readiness

Agencies will undertake the actions described in the table in circumstances identified.

State of Readiness Level	Description	Action to be taken
Normal:	FDI<24	•
Level 1:	Where the area is at a FDI of 24 to 45	•
Level 2:	Where the area is at a FDI of 45 or greater OR Where the area is under a Total Fire Ban. OR There are multiple fires in this or neighbouring district	•
Level 3:	Where the area and or neighbouring areas are at a FDI 45 or higher or under Total Fire Bans AND experiencing fire activity with the potential for further outbreaks.	•

4. Fire Detection

Agencies will undertake the actions described in the table in circumstances identified.

Observation point/patrol route	Timing	Agency providing resource	State of Readiness level

5. First Response Arrangements

Any fire fighting authority may make first response to any reported fire on any land.

The authority that makes the first response to a bush fire must notify the land owner or manager, and any other fire fighting authority with responsibility for the area affected or threatened by the fire. Notification must be made as soon as practicable after receiving the initial report of the fire.

Notification should include the location of the fire or false alarm, number of appliances responded and the potential for the need for additional resources.

Where a fire fighting authority, other than the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) or Fire & Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW) (hereafter referred to as the Fire Services), has responded to a bush fire and the Fire Services are not present:

1. The fire fighting authority must notify the relevant Fire Service of its initial response to the fire as soon as is practicable .

2. The Incident Controller will be determined by that fire fighting authority until such time as:

- a rural fire brigade or FRNSW brigade is present at the fire and it has been determined by the senior officer of the Fire Service with statutory authority for the area in which the incident is located, (the relevant Fire Service) that incident control should be transferred to the relevant Fire Service; or
- the relevant Fire Service has directed a member of that Fire Service or another person to assume the role of Incident Controller.

3. The fire fighting authority's Incident Controller must provide the relevant Fire Service with a situation report as soon as is practicable, which includes the following information:

- the location of the fire;
- its size and any relevant information in relation to its behaviour; resources in attendance at the fire;
- the local weather conditions; the Alert level;

- the proposed strategy to contain or control the spread of the fire; and information in relation to any known injuries or damage to property .

4. The fire fighting authority's Incident Controller must provide the relevant Fire Service with further situation reports on a regular basis, together with any additional relevant information in relation to the management of the fire.

5. The fire fighting authority's Incident Controller must discuss any proposed significant changes to strategy prior to their implementation with the relevant Fire Service Senior Officer.

6. The situation reports must be provided to the relevant Fire Service by way of the ICON system.

Notwithstanding the above, consistent with statutory responsibility imposed by the Acts, the Fire Services reserve the right to assume control of any fire in their respective jurisdiction with absolute discretion, regardless of the tenure of the land on which the fire is burning or which fire fighting authority was first to respond.

6. Duty to Notify

Any fire fighting authority that observes a fire on any tenure will inform:

In the **** rural fire district: ****

In the **** fire district: ****

The officer notified will determine and advise the informant of the response being made to that fire.

In addition, where the fire observed is on land managed by Forests NSW or NPWS, the informant will also notify that land manager.

7. Duty of Land Managers who are also Fire Fighting Authorities

When a fire is reported to a land manager who is also a fire fighting authority responsible for the land on which the fire is burning, that land manager must make an assessment of the need for an investigation of or response to that fire.

If the land manager determines that a response by it is not required, it must notify all other fire fighting authorities responsible for land within 8km of the fire of its existence and the reason why it will not be making a response.

Notwithstanding the response of the land manager, the NSW RFS and FRNSW reserve the right to investigate or respond to any fire to discharge their legislative obligations to protect persons and property.

8. Incident Control

The Incident Controller of a fire will be:

Class of Fire	Incident Controller
Class 1	The Officer-in-Charge of the first suppression unit on scene, until relieved or replaced. If the first suppression unit on scene is not from the fire fighting authority responsible for the land, once a sufficiently qualified representative of the responsible authority arrives on scene that person *may* take over as IC. *The decision whether or not to take over as IC is at the discretion of the representative of the responsible authority and must be made in consideration of the prevailing circumstances and in consultation with the OIC of the first suppression unit.* For a Class 1 fire, the IC should be qualified to at least Crew Leader level. *(Amended vide BFCC Minute No. 38/2006 of 21 September 2006)*
Class 2	A suitably qualified person will be appointed to control fire fighting operations by the relevant fire service on the basis of a recommendation made by the BFMC Fire Classification Group
Class 3	Appointed by the Commissioner RFS under s44 of the Rural Fires Act 1997.

A list of persons to be considered for appointment as Incident Controllers of Class 2 or 3 fires is attached at Appendix B. A person other than those on the list may be appointed/nominated as IC if required and/or as appropriate in the circumstances.

Personnel and equipment provided to manage a bush fire remain under the command of the supplying fire fighting authority unless otherwise specified by that authority's line commander. Those personnel will operate in accordance with and be bound by the supplying authority's SOPs, policies, standards, work practices and the like, with particular attention to fireground operations and occupational health and safety procedures.

Personnel and equipment provided to manage a bush fire will be under the control of the Incident Controller for the duration of their deployment, regardless of the whether or not the personnel and IC are from the same or different agencies.

9. Incident Management Teams

The Incident Controller will form an Incident Management Team as appropriate to the fire activity being experienced. NB: A full IMT must be formed for Class 3 fires, in accordance with any instructions given to the IC by the Commissioner RFS.

A list of persons to be considered for appointment as members of an IMT for a Class 2 or 3 fire is attached at Appendix C. A person other than those on the list may be appointed to the IMT if required and/or as appropriate in the circumstances.

10. Emergency Operations Centres

Fires will be managed from an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) selected from the following table. An EOC will be chosen by the fire fighting agencies involved, on the basis of current and expected conditions. Note that a location other than those on the list may be used as an EOC if required and/or as appropriate in the circumstances.

In selecting an EOC, particular consideration will be given to the potential for escalation of the scale of the fire and the need to minimise disruption caused by relocation of an EOC. That is, a small fire may be managed from the outset at a main office if it is expected to become a large fire.

EOC	Criteria
	•
	•

Details of the locations to be considered for use as EOCs are attached at Appendix D.

11. Radio Communications

12. Use of Aircraft

Aircraft are to be managed in accordance with the BFCC Policy “Aviation Support to Bush Firefighting” and the Inter-Agency Aviation SOPs.

13. Resourcing

14. Media Relations

Media comment regarding a fire fighting operation during the course of that operation will be made by:

Class 1	The most senior local officer of the agency providing the IC (or their delegate)
Class 2	IC (or their delegate)
Class 3	IC (or their delegate) or as otherwise specified by the Commissioner RFS

A land manager who is also a fire fighting authority, but who is not managing the operation, may make media comment during the operation but only as far as it relates to the impact of the fire on its land. Comment must not be made on the strategies being employed, their success, appropriateness or otherwise, or the expected future progress of the fire without the concurrence of the IC.

15. Training

A training exercise involving all fire fighting authorities in the **** BFMC area will be held at least once per year, in accordance with the requirements of the BFCC. This annual exercise may be limited in scope or dispensed with altogether if a fire requiring a multi-agency response occurs in the area during the year that otherwise tests the capacity of the authorities to work together in accordance with the provisions of this plan.

16. Joint Declarations

Appendices

A – Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Mutual Aid Agreements (MAAs).
B – Persons to be considered for appointment as Incident Controller of a Class 2 or Class 3 Fire.
C – Persons to be considered for appointment as IMT members for a Class 2 or Class 3 Fire.
D – Offices to be considered for use as EOCs.

Appendix A

Local MOUs & MAAs

Appendix B

Persons to be considered for appointment as Incident Controllers of Class 2 or 3 Fires.

Class 3 - Section 44 Nominees

Name	Agency	Meets Competency Requirements	Office Location	Telephone Number	Mobile Phone	Pager Number

Class 2 Incident Controller Nominees

Name	Agency	Meets Competency Requirements	Office Location	Telephone Number	Mobile Phone	Pager Number

Appendix C

Persons to be considered for appointment as IMT members for a Class 2 or 3 fire.

Name	Agency	Meets S44 Competency Requirements	Office Location	Telephone Number	Mobile Phone	Pager Number
Operations Officer						
Planning Officer						
Logistics Officer						
Local Knowledge Representative						
Management Support Officer						
Safety Advisor						

Appendix D

Offices to be considered for use as EOCs.

	Emergency Operations Centre	Multi-area Control Centre
Agency Name		
Street name		
Postal Address		
UBD reference		
Topographic map reference		
Latitude/longitude		
Phone number		
Fax number		

The Instructions for preparation of a local Bush Fire Management Committee Operations Coordination Plan

General

Insert the name of your BFMC, councils and the like wherever required throughout the plan.

Take care to ensure that any measures your BFMC wishes to include in its plan are described in a clear, specific and concise manner. The plan should be as brief as possible.

1. Authorisation

Include here all fire fighting authorities involved in your BFMC. Delete from the list any that are not relevant to your area. Insert the names of the officers who will be signing on behalf of their agencies below each signature line.

2. Distribution

Combat & support agencies:

Insert into the list the local/district/regional office name descriptor e.g. NPWS Northern Zone Team, RFS Region North Office. Delete from the list any that are not relevant to your area.

Other:

This is an optional field – you do not need to include any additional agencies. However, if there are other agencies that have an active interest or involvement in the execution of the plan, include them here (e.g. Dept Lands Soil Services, Dept Primary Industries).

3. State of Readiness

This section is to detail coordination arrangements for agencies when conditions are conducive to the development of fire activity, particularly when assistance may be required from outside your BFMC's area.

Using the table, discuss and determine what actions will be taken at each specified level. Only include actions that require coordination between agencies. Anything you put in here will be binding on the agencies and must be carried out under the conditions specified.

Actions that are agency specific or relating to combat issues are outside the scope of this document and should not be included here. This document does not replace any agency specific procedures.

Example table:

State of Readiness Level	Description	Action to be taken (these are examples only – insert locally relevant actions)
Normal:	FDI<24	• Normal agency response procedures
Level 1:	Where the area is at a FDI of 24 to 45	• Normal agency response procedures • Permits to be suspended • Fire detection arrangements to be activated • At all times while fire suppression activities are being carried out, the Emergency Operations Centre from which the fire is being managed (such as RFS Fire Control Centre, NPWS office, Forestry Corporation office) must be staffed and remain open for the duration of all fire suppression activities
Level 2:	Where the area is at a FDI of 45 or greater OR	• As per Readiness Level 1 PLUS • Agencies to advise BFMC Fire Classification Group of significant changes to resource availability in the area

	Where the area is under a Total Fire Ban. OR There are multiple fires in this or neighbouring district	• Activate local resource standby arrangements • Regular updates on current situation and weather to be provided to resources on standby
Level 3:	Where the area and or neighbouring areas are at a FDI 45 or higher or under Total Fire Bans AND experiencing fire activity with the potential for further outbreaks.	• As per Readiness Level 2 PLUS • BFMC XO to contact section 44 nominees & ascertain availability • BFMC XO to contact IMT nominees & ascertain availability • Conduct interagency communication tests

4. Fire Detection

This section is to identify agreed detection strategies that are to be implemented irrespective of actual or reported fire activity. It does not remove or replace the requirement for investigation of reports of fire outside the agreed actions. The plan should identify routine observation arrangements only.

Using the table provided, discuss and determine what detection strategies will be put in place at each level. Only include actions that require coordination between agencies. Anything you put in here will be binding on the agencies and must be carried out under the conditions specified.

Determine which observation or vantage points will be staffed, during what hours, and who will be providing staff or payment for staffing.

Determine whether patrols requiring inter-agency coordination are to be carried out – e.g. aerial patrol, patrol of major routes through multiple land tenures. **NB:** Individual agencies may carry out patrols of their own land – this is not to be displaced by this plan. These local agency-specific arrangements do not need to be detailed in the plan.

For example, Forestry Corporation may decide to patrol within certain areas of their own estate on high fire danger days. This is a normal activity undertaken by a land manager – it does not need discussion or approval of the BFMC and can be varied according to the land manager's own needs and resource availability at the time. As another example, a RFS brigade may, if it has volunteers available, decide to patrol an area known for repeated arson attacks on days of high fire danger. You wouldn't want to include such a measure in this plan to be signed off by the BFMC, because that would mean the patrol must be carried out in the conditions specified, and the RFS would be bound to finding the resources to satisfy the agreement at all times, which could be a difficult proposition when reliant on a volunteer workforce. However, if there is a fire tower giving access to multiple land tenures and multiple agencies have an interest in its use, an agreement should be reached as to how and when it is operated and included within this plan.

(These are examples only – insert locally relevant actions)

Observation point/patrol route	Timing	Agency providing resource	State of Readiness level
Seaview Fire Tower	1000-1700hrs	FC/NPWS as per contractual agreement	3
Aerial patrol using fixed wing aircraft – flight path from Coffs Harbour airport tracking across Dorrigo, Ebor to Nambucca then across coastal ranges to Coffs Airport.	Within 24 hours of dry storm with multiple lightning strikes	State Air Desk	3
Horseshoe Road from Waterfall Way at Thora to Gaddes Ridge Road at Bowraville	Once per day	FC	3

A simple map showing the location of towers/observation points and patrol routes agreed under this plan only should be included if essential for clarity. Do not include any other potential observation points or patrol routes – these additional details can be included in your Operations Map. The only maps to be included in your Operations Coordination Plan are those essential to the understanding of the agreements being made.

Agencies may conduct aerial surveillance outside and beyond the coordinated arrangements provided in the BFMC's plan to satisfy their own management requirements. In the interests of efficiency and cooperation, given the significant expense involved in such activities, you should discuss and decide whether it would be appropriate to have an agreement included in the plan along the lines of:

> *Any agency planning to conduct an aerial patrol other than as provided for within this plan, will make all reasonable efforts to contact other major agency land owners/managers prior to the flight to minimise duplication of effort. This notification should be coordinated by the BFMC XO. Details to be provided should include:*
>
> - *Agency carrying out reconnaissance*
> - *Type of aircraft & tactical call sign*
> - *Area of operations*
>
> *Following the patrol, the BFMC XO should be provided with details of the outcome of the flight to disseminate to agencies, particularly including notification of smoke sightings or <u>significant</u> changes in fire behaviour.*

If no coordinated detection arrangements are to be included in your BFMC's plan, this should be specified in the plan and an explanation provided.

5. First Response Arrangements

This section is to identify and record agreed arrangements for first response to reports of fire. The first part of this section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

You should then discuss what else should be included in this section.

You should refer to and attach as Appendices any Memorandum of Understanding or Mutual Aid Agreement endorsed for your BFMC area.

You may choose to describe your normal first response arrangements using the table provided below as an example. Where a Memorandum of Understanding or Mutual Aid Agreement exists, the provisions of your plan must be consistent with it. You do not have to include the table if it is easier to describe the arrangements in your BFMC area another way.

(These are examples only – insert locally relevant information, if you choose to use this table)

First Response Arrangements	**F.D.I <24**	**F.D.I >24 or Total Fire Ban**
Fire District Fire not involving SF or NPWS estate	*Initial Response*: FRNSW *2nd Response:* RFS	*Initial Response*: FRNSW *2nd Response:* RFS
Fire District Fire involving SF and/or NPWS estate	*Initial Response:* Land manager if immediately available to respond. If not, FRNSW. *2nd Response:* RFS	*Initial Response:* FRNSW & land manager *2nd Response:* RFS
Rural Fire District Fire not involving SF or NPWS estate	*Initial Response:* RFS *2nd Response:* FRNSW	*Initial Response:* RFS *2nd Response:* FRNSW
Rural Fire District Fire involving SF and/or NPWS estate	*Initial Response:* Land manager if immediately available to respond. If not, RFS. *2nd Response:* FRNSW	*Initial Response:* RFS & land manager *2nd Response:* FRNSW

Do not insert a map of fire districts, rural fire districts, state forest or NPWS land tenure into this plan. This information will be included in your Operations Map. All that is required in your Operations Coordination Plan is the terms of agreement between agencies.

Next, you should discuss and decide whether land owners/managers need to specify restrictions on fire fighting techniques or activities that may be carried out by other fire fighting authorities making first response to a fire on their land.

These restrictions may take a number of forms, several examples are as follows:

- *No AFFF or BFFF to be used within 100 m of Watsons Swamp within Bangarra State Forest (to protect threatened frog species).*
- *No earthmoving machinery to be used on NPWS estate.*
- *No agency to attend fire on Northern Rail Line without first obtaining clearance from State Rail Authority contact ph 1300 *** ***.*

If any such local arrangements are required, they must be included in your plan. Ensure that the restrictions are described in as clear and concise a manner as possible – this will help to ensure that they are understood and put into practice when required. Remember that these restrictions are designed to cover initial response only – as soon as the land manager/owner and/or fire fighting authority with responsibility for the land can be contacted, they can arrange their own response and take over management of the fire in accordance with their own normal practices. For example, a restriction preventing the construction of containment lines using heavy earthmoving equipment acts only to prevent that activity by the agency making the first response – the responsible agency may itself decide to undertake such construction once it takes over management of the fire.

A simple map showing the location of areas affected by special restrictions agreed under this plan may be included if essential for the understanding of the plan – full details can be included in your Operations Map.

You should then discuss whether there is any need to vary the 8km limit contained in s133 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 for your BFMC area. If so, the modified distance must be specified in your plan.

6. Duty to Notify

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

Insert the name/s of the districts and the arrangements for notification. In rural fire districts this is to be the RFS Emergency Operations Centre, with details of contact telephone numbers and radio channels. This notification requirement is irrespective of any response being made to the fire. It is separate and additional to any arrangements for initiating emergency fire response (e.g. 000 system).

In fire districts the notification arrangement is to be to telephone “000”.

7. Duty of Land Managers who are also Fire Fighting Authorities

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified, except for the notification distance which may be varied to suit local needs. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

8. Incident Control

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

You need to discuss and determine who will be eligible for selection/nomination to be an Incident Controller for Class 2 and 3 fires within your BFMC area. Insert details into the table at Appendix A.

9. Incident Management Teams

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

You need to discuss and determine who will be eligible for selection as potential members of an IMT. Make sure you include people who can be relied upon for good local knowledge. Your local knowledge nominees should include local residents and volunteers as well as agency staff, in case all your nominated agency staff are deployed out of area when a fire occurs in your own. Insert details into the table at Appendix B. Nominees for the core IMT roles only are to be included in your plan. People may be identified as being suitable candidates for other IMT roles – their details can be recorded in the BFMC's contact list, but should not be included in the Operations Coordination Plan.

10.Emergency Operations Centres

The first part of this section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so. You should then identify all office spaces that are potentially available to use as an EOC for managing fires within the BFMC area. Discuss and decide which offices will be used as the EOC to manage fires – your choice may vary depending on scale, class or location of the fire/s. Use the table provided as an example, to develop arrangements suitable for your BFMC area.

You should ensure that any location chosen has sufficient office space and resources to meet the demands associated with managing the scale of fire activity for which it is nominated. Consider: access to inter-agency radio communications as specified in your plan, number of phone lines, access to faxes, photocopiers, computers, printers, plotters, desks, meal and toilet facilities, proximity to the fireground, potential airbase locations and sleeping accommodation.

You should also consider the potential for the need for a multi-area control centre (MACC) to manage a significant fire across a number of districts.

(These are examples only – insert locally relevant actions)

EOC	Criteria
RFS Fire Control Centre	• Single or multiple class 1 fires in rural fire district, not on SF or NPWS estate • Class 2 fire mostly not on SF or NPWS estate • Class 3 fire

FRNSW station	• Single or multiple class 1 fires in fire district, not on SF or NPWS estate
Forestry Corporation NE Region fire room	• Single or multiple class 1 fires on SF estate • Class 2 fire mostly on SF estate • Class 3 fire significantly involving SF estate
NPWS Northern Zone fire room	• Single or multiple class 1 fires on NPWS estate in coastal area • Class 2 fire mostly on NPWS estate in coastal area • Class 3 fire significantly involving NPWS estate
NPWS Dorrigo District Office	• Single or multiple class 1 fires on NPWS estate on Dorrigo plateau and surrounds • Class 2 fire mostly on NPWS estate on Dorrigo plateau and surrounds
Bellingen Council Chambers	• Single or multiple class 1 fires in rural fire district, not on SF or NPWS estate • Class 2 fire mostly not on SF or NPWS estate NB: to be used when RFS FCC not available, and other locations are not appropriate for the fires being managed.

Insert details of the offices, such as address, phone numbers, and the like, into the table at Appendix C.

11.Radio Communications

In this section, you need to identify and describe the arrangements to be used to coordinate inter-agency radio communications within your BFMC area. Do not describe agency specific communications systems in detail unless absolutely necessary for understanding the coordination arrangements.

This plan is the coordination plan – it should not describe intra-agency communications systems or discuss the strengths and weaknesses or relative merits of each agency's system.

Detail arrangements for the 3 levels of communications required for multi-agency operations:

Strategic – EOC to: other EOCs, RFS State Operations (required for s44 fires), IMT functional units (planning, operations, logistics), other agencies (RFS/FRNSW/SF/NPWS/SES/Ambulance/Police/Council etc).

Tactical – EOC to: fireground, tankers, other appliances, aircraft.

Task based – among fireground appliances and firefighters.

NB: Your arrangements may vary depending on whether you have a Class 1, 2 or 3 fire. If so, all levels need to be described in your plan.

You must specify the radio frequencies to be used in your BFMC area. Note that aircraft frequencies are allocated by the State Air Desk upon tasking of aircraft.

Your description of communications arrangements may be in text or diagrammatic form.

You should detail contingency arrangements agreed for circumstances in which a major component of the system fails (e.g. a main transmitter tower is lost; the local PMR system fails).

You may have known deficiencies and work-arounds developed for your BFMC area. If so, include them here. For example: *if radio communications are required to cover crew operating within location x, NPWS portable radio repeater stored at Ebor Depot to be deployed and installed at location y; OR if communication is required between personnel on the fireground and police vehicles, the RFS will provide a handheld radio transceiver to the police for this purpose.*

Do not include a description of general shortfalls in the system (e.g. blackspots or areas of poor coverage) where no coordinated response is in place to overcome them. This information can be included in your Operations Map.

12.Use of Aircraft

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

13.Resourcing

Consider and discuss resourcing arrangements that may need to be put in place before a fire.

It is normal for agencies to provide food and water to their own crews in accordance with their own arrangements, even if multiple agencies are present at a fire. Discuss whether feeding of crews should be managed in a coordinated manner for multi-agency fires in your area. Insert into your plan a brief explanation of sustenance arrangements, particularly for Class 1 & 2 fires. If you have decided upon coordinated feeding arrangements, then describe them here, with details of who will organise, providers, funding arrangements etc.

Also discuss other resourcing issues that may arise. For example, provision of logistical support for arranging accommodation, fuel supply, transport. This is an optional section, but if you have decided upon coordinated arrangements, then describe them here, with details of who will organise, providers, funding arrangements etc.

14.Media Relations

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

Note that an IC from a fire fighting authority may delegate responsibility for issuing media comment to a person from outside their agency if appropriate in the circumstances. For example, a RFS IC who is not used to dealing with the media or who has insufficient time to devote to the task may use a trained and experienced media liaison officer from the local council or other agency to assist. Such an arrangement would normally be made on the day, but if your BFMC wishes to make some formal agreement ahead of time, then include the details here.

15. Training

This section is common to all plans and should not be modified. You should use the text provided unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.

16. Joint Declarations

Where there is a history or expectation of Class 2 or 3 fires across multiple BFMC areas, your BFMC may wish to detail some pre-agreed arrangements between the BFMCs covering matters like EOCs, ICs, IMT members and the like. This section is optional - only include it if your BFMC feels it needs to have something agreed in advance for coordination purposes.

17. Appendices

Insert details as specified. Note that for Appendix C, the BFMC may identify persons for IMT roles other than those specified in the model. If so, add rows to the table as required.

The Guidelines for Preparation of Operations Maps

General

Operations maps will be produced by the Commissioner RFS for the BFCC, and will be available to member BFCC agencies via a web-based system. The Commissioner is responsible for the production of the maps. The provision, maintenance and updating of the data sets used to compile the map are the responsibility of the provider as shown in the table below. The RFS will host the data and compile the maps. The data specified below (as far as the data exists) should be provided to the Commissioner RFS, in a format agreed to between the Commissioner and the provider, as soon as possible, and at most within 6 months of the endorsement of this policy. Data providers must provide updated datasets or advice that there is no change to available data by the end of each financial year (to allow updating of operations maps prior to the expected fire season).

Operations maps must include a title block showing the following information:

1. area of operation
2. area characteristics
3. state of readiness table from the Operations Coordination Plan
4. limitation on first response fire fighting activities
5. first response arrangements
6. inter-agency communications

An operations map must contain the following data sets:

	Data set	Definition	Provider / owner
1.	Cadastre		LPI
2.	Contours		LPI
3.	Drainage & waterbodies		LPI
4.	Roads		LPI
5.	Towns/Villages (Geographic names)		LPI
6.	LGA boundaries		LPI
7.	State Forest Boundaries		Forestry Corporation
8.	NPWS Reserves		NPWS

An operations map should include the following additional data layers, as far as they are available. **NOTE:** it is recognised that some data may not be suitable for distribution in this manner (e.g. certain threatened species and cultural records). This policy does not require the provision or disclosure of such information where this would be contrary to agency practice. Where necessary, the Commissioner is to develop a formal protocol with the data provider to cover the management of sensitive information.

	Data set	**Definition**	**Provider/ owner**
9.	Railways		LPI
10	Topographic maps		LPI
11	Satellite images		
12	Aerial Photographs		
13	Land managed by the Dept of Lands		Dept of Lands
14	RFS District/Zones/Regions		RFS
15	FRNSW District/Zones		FRNSW
16	FRNSW Stations		FRNSW
17	Hazard Reductions	Areas planned and actioned for hazard reduction works	BRIMS Hazard Reduction Module
18	Bush fire Prone Land		RFS GIS
19	RFS Brigade Locations and Boundaries		RFS GIS
20	Gas Pipelines		TBA
21	Rural Land Protection District		
22	Forestry Corporation management Regions & Compartments		Forestry Corporation
23	NPWS management Regions		NPWS
24	Department of Lands Regions		Dept of Lands
25	NPWS Offices & Workshops	Location of all NPWS resources, within the BFMC's area of operation	NPWS
26	Forestry Corporation Offices & Workshops	Location of all Forestry Corporation resources, within the BFMC's area of operation	Forestry Corporation
27	Observation Points	- Fire Towers	BFMCs

	Data set	Definition	Provider/ owner
		- Strategic Vantage Points	
28	School Communities	- Public Schools (including Kindergartens) - Private Schools - University complexes (including TAFE's) Child day care facilities	Dept of Education/BFMCs/ LIC – TBA DoCS
29	Health Communities	- Hospitals - Private Hospitals - Nursing Homes	Dept Health
30	High risk Recreation Areas	-Scout Camps -Camping areas -Sporting Venues -Gov & Organisations recreation camps - Isolated Commercial enterprises	- Local BFMCs
31	Community Fire Units	-Location	FRNSW
32	Fire Trails	Fire Trails (Including names and/or numbers. As well as Refuge Areas) In accordance with the BFCC Fire Trails Policy	BFMCs BRIMS Fire Trail Module
33	Significant Assets	- Mines (Coal) plus others - Mine ventilation shafts -Cultural Sites -Water extraction and treatment plants - sewage treatment plants -Aboriginal Sites -Council Works Depots - Threatened Species	Dept Mineral Resources NPWS local water supply authorities NPWS Local BFMCs/ councils/LIC - TBA NPWS Telstra

	Data set	Definition	Provider/ owner
		- telephone exchanges	
34	Firefighter Hazard	-Mine Subsidence areas -Restriction of Firefighting Practice (e.g.. areas were the land manager has place restriction on the use of BFFF) -Government Secure Areas, Jails etc.	Dept Mineral Resources/ BFMCs BFMCs TBA- Commonwealth supply
35	Storage Hazards	- Military complexes (including MOU's with Defence) - Commercial Hazardous Storage	TBA TBA (potentially BFMCs/ councils/ EPA)
36	Electrical Hazards	- Power Stations - Transmission Towers - Sub station	Transgrid Country Energy Integral Energy
37	Staging Areas	- Staging Areas -Evacuation Assembly Areas - Animal evacuation assembly areas	BFMCs
38	Base Camps		BFMCs
39	Water Vehicle Points	-SWS Points	BFMCs
40	Water Air Points	- Accessible Dams -Accessible Rivers	BFMCs
41	Air Bases	- designated airbase for the BFMC - Aviation fuel stock piles	BFMCs
42	Operational Airstrips		CASA/RFS GIS (Aviation Data Base)
43	Helipad Sites		CASA/BFMCs
44	Communication Towers	Strategic Radio Towers (Fire Fighting and Commercial)	Agencies ACA

	Data set	Definition	Provider/ owner
45	Communication Black Spots	-Areas of poor or substandard radio coverage -Areas of no coverage	Agencies
46	Fire Districts	-MAZ	RFS/NSWFB
47	Reticulated Water Area	Mains Pressure line (Where fire appliances can ship standpipes)	Water supply authorities
48	Evacuation areas	From bush fire risk management plan	BFMC
49	Fire history		Agencies/ BRIMS
50	Refuge Areas		Agencies

Note: If a data set is unavailable, the map should be produced on the basis of the information available at hand, with all reasonable efforts being made to procure the missing data for later inclusion.

The Operations maps are to be available as a web-based resource, updated by RFS as new data becomes available. The Commissioner RFS is to ensure that at least one hard-copy plot of the operations map is provided to each BFMC on preparation, and at each significant update. The map may be printed on multiple sheets to ensure that the information displayed is legible. The Commissioner is to develop a protocol for the combinations of data sets to be displayed on each of multiple sheets, to ensure consistency in the appearance of the operations maps across the state.

CLASSIFICATION OF FIRES

Class 1

A fire under the control of the responsible fire fighting authority, whether or not incidental/low level assistance is provided by other agencies.

Class 2

A fire which, by necessity, involves or is expected to involve, more than one agency, and where the relevant fire service has appointed a person to take charge of fire fighting operations, on the basis of a recommendation made by the relevant BFMC Fire Classification Group.

Class 3

A major bush fire or fires where an appointment has been made or is imminent under the provisions of Section 44 of the Rural Fires Act, 1997.

Decision Support Tool – Fire Classification

All fires are classified in accordance with the Fire Classification system described above. The BFMC Fire Classification Group may make a recommendation to the relevant fire service as to whether a fire should be managed at Class 2 or Class 3 level. In making the recommendation, the BFMC should use the questions in the table below to guide its deliberations. Local knowledge and experience should be used to evaluate the situation and contribute to the classification decision.

	0-12hrs	12-24hrs	24-48hrs	
What is the forecast weather? (fire weather - improving, deteriorating, no change)				
Are multiple additional ignitions expected? (Consider lightning strikes, arson)				
What assets expected to be at risk? Consider life, houses, other structures, commercial, environmental and cultural assets. Consider the seriousness of the consequences – will there be loss of life or minimal loss of property (say a derelict shed)?				
What likelihood/possibility is there of successful containment?				
What agencies are involved or expected to be involved as of necessity? (required, not only incidental or low level assistance)				Once this answer is 2 or more, the fire should be managed as Class 2
Adequate resources locally to implement containment strategy and protect assets?				Once the answer to this is no, the fire should be managed as Class 3

The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee
Pre-season Checklist

Operations Map
- Reviewed
- Updated

Communications arrangements in Operations Coordination Plan
- Reviewed
- Tested, amongst multi agency exercise
- Deficiencies identified/addressed

Contact Directories
- Reviewed
- Current
- Distributed

Incident Management Teams (All levels)
- Personnel identified and willingness to participate confirmed
- Personnel identified for roles provided with current copy of position description (AIIMS ICS)
- Personnel qualifications verified and current
- Personnel lists agreed and distributed

Heavy Plant registers (e.g. Bulldozers, Water Carts, Graders, etc)
- Resources and availability identified
- Contact directory maintained

Support Groups/functions (Mechanical, Accommodation, Fuel Suppliers, Stores, etc)
- Resources and availability identified
- Tasking documentation identified and distributed

Specialist Fuel Supplies
- Jet A1/Avgas stocks
    - Location agreed
    - Minimum stock levels maintained (Consult State Air Desk)
    - Stocks still in currency

Fire Fighting Retardant/Foam
- Stock locations identified
- Quantities established

BFMC Fire Trail Register

- reviewed
- updated

Other local issues (e.g. provisions from Bush Fire Risk Management Plan)

Contents of a Bush Fire Management Committee Operations Coordination Manual

The operations coordination manual of a BFMC must contain:

1. A copy of this policy.
2. A copy of the BFMC's approved Operations Coordination Plan.
3. A copy of the BFMC's latest completed pre-season Checklist.
4. A copy of the resource lists complied in BRIMS/OMS.
5. Interagency Aviation SOPs.
6. A copy of any state-level MOUs, MAAs and the like of practical application in fire management, (e.g. agreement between RFS & NPWS for fire investigation) as provided or directed by the BFCC.
7. The Minimal Impact Suppression and Rehabilitation Guidelines.

Minimal Impact Suppression and Rehabilitation Guidelines

1. Minimal Impact Suppression and Rehabilitation Guidelines

The use of earth moving equipment and retardants are vital to the early suppression of fires therefore minimising the impact of the fire on the environment.

However, the placement and use of suppression techniques need to be carefully considered to minimise impact. The table below identifies a range of suppression activities. For each activity a number of minimising factors are listed. These should be considered before and during construction and use. The right side of the table outlines some potential results of suppression activities and corresponding rehabilitation options to be considered.

	Minimal Impact	**Rehabilitation**	
Activity	**Minimising factors (to be considered before and during construction / use)**	**Results of suppression activities**	**Rehabilitation options**
New trails/control lines constructed	When selecting appropriate line and implementing trail or control line, minimise: • soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. access only required), • line not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • length within steep slopes, including side slope, • length within dispersible soils in potentially high rainfall areas, • length within close proximity to drainage features, • amount of catchment above trail, • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather	Poorly drained trails/control lines (erosion potential)	Install appropriate drainage (as per C&LM guidelines)
		Unwanted trails/control lines	Restrict/close access and rehabilitate as required by land manager
		Trail to be maintained	Restrict access Leave trail open
		Bulldust present	Remove, redistribute or water bulldust Restrict access to area and enable area to settle naturally.
		Damaged road surface	Ensure silt movement is managed Repair as needed, consult road manager
		Damaged drainage structures	Repair as required, consult road manager

Trails/control lines re-opened	Before re-opening trails, consider factors above and evaluate whether creating a new realigned trail would have less impact. When re-opening trails minimise: • Soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. Access only required), • line not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • Work carried out in wet weather	Poorly drained trails/control lines (erosion potential)	Install appropriate drainage (as per C&LM guidelines)
		Unwanted trails/control lines	Restrict/close access and rehabilitate as required by land manager
		Trail to be maintained	Restrict access Leave trail open
		Bulldust present	Remove, redistribute or water bulldust Restrict access to area and enable area to settle naturally
		Damaged road surface	Ensure silt movement is managed Repair as needed, consult road manager
		Damaged drainage structures	Repair as required, consult road manager

New trails/control lines constructed	When selecting appropriate line and implementing trail or control line, minimise: • soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. access only required), • line not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • length within steep slopes, including side slope,	Poorly drained trails/control lines (erosion potential)	Install appropriate drainage (as per C&LM guidelines)
		Unwanted trails/control lines	Restrict/close access and rehabilitate as required by land manager
		Trail to be maintained	Restrict access Leave trail open

	• length within dispersible soils in potentially high rainfall areas, • length within close proximity to drainage features, • amount of catchment above trail, • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather	Bulldust present	Remove, redistribute or water bulldust Restrict access to area and enable area to settle naturally.
		Damaged road surface	Ensure silt movement is managed Repair as needed, consult road manager
		Damaged drainage structures	Repair as required, consult road manager
Trails/control lines re-opened	Before re-opening trails, consider factors above and evaluate whether creating a new realigned trail would have less impact. When re-opening trails minimise: • Soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. Access only required), • line not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • Work carried out in wet weather	Poorly drained trails/control lines (erosion potential)	Install appropriate drainage (as per C&LM guidelines)
		Unwanted trails/control lines	Restrict/close access and rehabilitate as required by land manager
		Trail to be maintained	Restrict access Leave trail open
		Bulldust present	Remove, redistribute or water bulldust Restrict access to area and enable area to settle naturally
		Damaged road surface	Ensure silt movement is managed Repair as needed, consult road manager
		Damaged drainage structures	Repair as required, consult road manager

New helipads constructed	When selecting appropriate locations for, and using, new helipads, minimise: • vegetation removal, • soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. Access only required), • areas not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • locating in dispersible soils in potentially high rainfall areas, • areas within close proximity to drainage features, • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather, • areas where visibility /aesthetics is an issue. • Areas where sensitive animals/communities are present (i.e. Evaluate noise pollution issues).	Helipad to be maintained	Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Remove rubbish. Restrict access if required.
		Unwanted helipad	Close and rehabilitate in consultation with land manager.
Re-opening old helipads	Before re-opening helipads, consider factors above and evaluate whether creating a new helipad would have less impact. When re-opening old helipads minimise: • vegetation removal, • soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. access only required), • areas not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather,	Helipad to be maintained	Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Remove rubbish. Restrict access if required.
		Unwanted helipad	Close and rehabilitate in consultation with land manager.

Staging Area, Assembly Area, Control Points	When creating or using areas for SA,AA or CP's, minimise: • soil disturbance: if bare earth is not required maintain some vegetation cover, • areas not adequately drained, • use of areas within dispersible soils in potentially high rainfall areas, • use of areas within close proximity to drainage features, • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather It must be realized that traffic flows, (including timing, size of equipment and regularity) create noise pollution and congestion. Appropriate access and traffic control is required.	Area with vegetation removed and unwanted clearing	Close and rehabilitate area in consultation with land manager. Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Remove rubbish.
		Areas to be maintained for future SA, AA or CP's.	Remove rubbish. Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Seed appropriate areas to establish ground cover. Consult land owner.
Use of retardant, foam, salt water.	Due to the non-endemic chemical and surfactant nature of these products, avoid using in close proximity to drainage features, water bodies and wetlands.	Drainage features, water body or wetland with retardant, foam or salt water drops within.	Note and monitor.

Back burning and burning out operations	Back burning is implemented as an indirect attack option, usually to contain a moderate to high intensity wildfire and limiting its spread. To minimise the impact of back burning, the options of doing or not doing the back burn need to be considered. Burning out, on the other hand, is where islands of unburnt fuel between a control line and a low intensity fire edge (or dead edge) are "burnt out". When considering these options minimise impacts by: • Ensuring experience fire personnel are involved in the decision to carry out these operations, • Ensuring the back burning or burning out operations are undertaken under the guidance of experienced fire personnel, • Ensuring weather conditions and proposed lighting techniques are appropriate	Inappropriately hot back burn	Note and monitor
Non-active suppression (monitoring fire and allowing to burn within a defined area)	This option may be appropriate where: 1. the current and predicted fire behaviour is within set limits and it is considered less impact to let the fire burn out to existing control lines, rather than constructing new control lines, 2. the predicted weather may reduce the fire intensity or extinguish the fire, 3. the fire is burning in inaccessible country To minimise the impact of this suppression option, the predicted weather (hence fire behaviour) needs to be favourable and the interim damage to social and environmental assets needs to be evaluated.	Large fire area	Monitor

Helicopters	Noise pollution and rotor wash are the main detrimental concerns when using helicopters for fire suppression. In order to reduce these impacts minimise: • unnecessary low flying over populated areas or areas where sensitive animals are present (e.g.. horses, ostriches), • unnecessary low flying over control lines or personnel and equipment, where embers and branches may be blown about by rotor wash. • Consider noise pollution issues when locating heli-bases and consult neighbours where appropriate. • Consult experienced and trained aircraft personnel.	N/A	N/A

- When considering minimal impact techniques, special consideration should be given to avoidance of sensitive areas such as Cultural and European Heritage areas, Social Assets and Environmental Assets. Where these issues are in areas to be considered for suppression, avoidance is best, minimal disturbance is less optimal. Please consult experienced people for advice where appropriate.
- Vehicle/plant/equipment hygiene is also important in fire suppression. Vehicles need to be cleaned when being moved in and out of known infected areas. This information needs to be provided to operators at an incident.

Use of existing trails/control lines	When using existing trails/lines, minimise the volume of traffic using the lines and ensure inappropriate vehicles/ equipment do not use the lines (e.g.. heavy machinery on load limited bridges) Assess drainage structures and pavement condition to ensure functionality.	Trail to be maintained	Restrict access. Leave trail open.
		Bulldust present	Remove, redistribute or water bulldust. Restrict access to area and enable area to settle naturally. Ensure silt movement is managed
		Damaged road surface	Repair as needed, consult road manager.
		Damaged drainage structures	Repair as required, consult road manager.

New helipads constructed	When selecting appropriate locations for, and using, new helipads, minimise: • vegetation removal, • soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. Access only required), • areas not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • locating in dispersible soils in potentially high rainfall areas, • areas within close proximity to drainage features, • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather, • areas where visibility /aesthetics is an issue. • Areas where sensitive animals/communities are present (i.e. Evaluate noise pollution issues).	Helipad to be maintained	Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Remove rubbish. Restrict access if required.
		Unwanted helipad	Close and rehabilitate in consultation with land manager.
Re-opening old helipads	Before re-opening helipads, consider factors above and evaluate whether creating a new helipad would have less impact. When re-opening old helipads minimise: • vegetation removal, • soil disturbance: if the blade does not have to disturb the soil, keep it off the ground (e.g.. access only required), • areas not adequately drained during construction (depends on urgency), • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather,	Helipad to be maintained	Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Remove rubbish. Restrict access if required.
		Unwanted helipad	Close and rehabilitate in consultation with land manager.

Staging Area, Assembly Area, Control Points	When creating or using areas for SA,AA or CP's, minimise: • soil disturbance: if bare earth is not required maintain some vegetation cover, • areas not adequately drained, • use of areas within dispersible soils in potentially high rainfall areas, • use of areas within close proximity to drainage features, • disturbance to threatened species/cultural heritage/natural features, • not using previously/naturally cleared areas, • work carried out by inexperienced and non trained personnel, • work carried out by inappropriate machinery, • work carried out in wet weather It must be realized that traffic flows, (including timing, size of equipment and regularity) create noise pollution and congestion. Appropriate access and traffic control is required.	Area with vegetation removed and unwanted clearing	Close and rehabilitate area in consultation with land manager. Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Remove rubbish.
		Areas to be maintained for future SA, AA or CP's.	Remove rubbish. Ensure appropriate drainage features are in place. Seed appropriate areas to establish ground cover. Consult land owner.
Use of retardant, foam, salt water.	Due to the non-endemic chemical and surfactant nature of these products, avoid using in close proximity to drainage features, water bodies and wetlands.	Drainage features, water body or wetland with retardant, foam or salt water drops within.	Note and monitor.

Back burning and burning out operations	Back burning is implemented as an indirect attack option, usually to contain a moderate to high intensity wildfire and limiting its spread. To minimise the impact of back burning, the options of doing or not doing the back burn need to be considered. Burning out, on the other hand, is where islands of unburnt fuel between a control line and a low intensity fire edge (or dead edge) are "burnt out". When considering these options minimise impacts by: • Ensuring experience fire personnel are involved in the decision to carry out these operations, • Ensuring the back burning or burning out operations are undertaken under the guidance of experienced fire personnel, • Ensuring weather conditions and proposed lighting techniques are appropriate	Inappropriately hot back burn	Note and monitor
Non-active suppression (monitoring fire and allowing to burn within a defined area)	This option may be appropriate where: 1. the current and predicted fire behaviour is within set limits and it is considered less impact to let the fire burn out to existing control lines, rather than constructing new control lines, 2. the predicted weather may reduce the fire intensity or extinguish the fire, 3. the fire is burning in inaccessible country To minimise the impact of this suppression option, the predicted weather (hence fire behaviour) needs to be favourable and the interim damage to social and environmental assets needs to be evaluated.	Large fire area	Monitor

Helicopters	Noise pollution and rotor wash are the main detrimental concerns when using helicopters for fire suppression. In order to reduce these impacts minimise: • unnecessary low flying over populated areas or areas where sensitive animals are present (e.g.. horses, ostriches), • unnecessary low flying over control lines or personnel and equipment, where embers and branches may be blown about by rotor wash. • Consider noise pollution issues when locating heli-bases and consult neighbours where appropriate. • Consult experienced and trained aircraft personnel.	N/A	N/A

- When considering minimal impact techniques, special consideration should be given to avoidance of sensitive areas such as Cultural and European Heritage areas, Social Assets and Environmental Assets. Where these issues are in areas to be considered for suppression, avoidance is best, minimal disturbance is less optimal. Please consult experienced people for advice where appropriate.
- Vehicle/plant/equipment hygiene is also important in fire suppression. Vehicles need to be cleaned when being moved in and out of known infected areas. This information needs to be provided to operators at an incident.

Operations Coordination Plans
Plans of Operations under Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997

One of the fundamental responsibilities of a Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) is to prepare two bush fire management plans for its area: a plan of operations and a bush fire risk management plan – a function required by section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997.

This paper is about plans of operations (known as Operations Coordination Plans).

Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 says that:

"52 Bush Fire Management Committees to prepare plans.

(1) Each Bush Fire Management Committee must, in accordance with this Division, prepare and submit to the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee a draft of each of the following kinds of bush fire management plans for the rural fire district or other part of the State for which it is constituted:

(a) a plan of operations, and

(b) a bush fire risk management plan.

(2) Draft bush fire management plans of both kinds must be prepared and submitted to the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee by a Bush Fire Management Committee within 12 months after the constitution of the Bush Fire Management Committee and:

(a) in the case of a plan of operations—within each successive 2 year period following the constitution of the Committee, and

(b) ..."

The Act specifies what must and what may be included in a BFMC's plan.

"53 Content of draft plan of operations

A draft plan of operations for a rural fire district or other part of the State is to set out the procedures to be followed if:

(a) a bush fire breaks out in the rural fire district or other part of the State and assumes or is likely to assume such proportions as to be incapable of suppression by the fire fighting authority or authorities in that part of the State, or

(b) the prevailing conditions are conducive to the outbreak of a bush fire likely to assume such proportions."

"55 General content:

(1) A draft bush fire management plan may:

(a) include schemes for the exercise in the rural fire district or other part of the State to which it applies of functions conferred or imposed by this Act, and

(b) confer or impose functions on the Commissioner, the Commissioner of Fire & Rescue NSW, the Forestry Corporation, the Director-General of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water or any other person or body associated with the prevention, mitigation or suppression of bush fires in that part of the State.

(2) A draft bush fire management plan must include any provisions that the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee has advised the Bush Fire Management Committee concerned to include in the plan."

An Operations Coordination Plan is a tool used to reach agreement among BFMC members as to what actions and agreements are required to coordinate effective and efficient fire fighting in the BFMC's area. Used well, the development of the plan should give all fire fighting authorities an opportunity and trigger to think about and discuss what arrangements they need to make with each other before a fire starts. The Operations Coordination Plan does not replace the individual agencies' own plans and standards.

One of the most common misunderstandings about Operations Coordination Plan prepared by BFMCs to satisfy s52, is that they should be the base from which an Incident Controller manages a fire, and that they therefore need to contain sufficient information to allow the IC to determine tactics to combat a fire - such as the location of water points, helipads, assets, and resource lists with details such as contact phone numbers for operators of earthmoving machinery. While no one argues that any of this information is unnecessary, the Operations Coordination Plan is not the place to record it. Other fire fighting information is recorded in the BFMC's bush fire risk management plan, its operations map, contact directories in BRIMS and agency documents.

As the local representatives of fire fighting authorities and land management agencies, BFMC members need to consider their agency positions and determine what agreements they need to ensure that fire management in the area is as efficient and effective as possible. The Operations Coordination Plan should avoid duplication of effort and waste of resources, and provide for agencies to provide assistance to each other in a cooperative manner. For example, the provisions for first response allow any agency to immediately respond to a fire on any land without having to delay while attempting to contact the land manager. This is of critical importance, because early and aggressive action in the early stages of a fire can often prevent its spread to a large fire, limiting damage and losses to the community.

Because each land manager has different land management priorities and practices, agencies can be concerned that another agency undertaking first response fire fighting may use techniques that are inconsistent with its land management practices. The Operations Coordination Plan allows a land manager to record any special restrictions it would like to place on other agencies that may respond to a fire on its land, until such time as the land manager can be contacted for advice. This provision can be very effective in fostering mutual respect and understanding while facilitating effective fire suppression.

Post-Fire Debrief Meetings

A BFMC must conduct its debrief meeting in accordance with the following provisions:

Arranging the meeting

The BFMC executive officer is to make arrangements for the meeting, in consultation with the Chairperson.

Invitations must be issued to:

- The Commissioner RFS (due to his role in taking charge of fire fighting operations under s44)
- The s44 Incident Controller
- All BFMC members
- All other organisations/agencies who were involved in or supported the fire suppression effort (for example, Dept of Agriculture, Dept of Community Services)

Every effort must be made to select a time that is suitable for as many participants as possible. Invitees must be advised of the importance of the meeting that their attendance is essential and that only unavoidable absences are acceptable to the BFCC.

Fires involving more than one BFMC area

Where a Class 3 fire has involved more than one BFMC area, a joint debrief meeting must be held, involving all BFMCs affected. The BFMC Chairpersons must decide which BFMC will host and arrange the meeting (book the venue, send invitations, prepare minutes etc) and who will chair the meeting (the current chairperson of one of the BFMCs should undertake this role).

Organisations/agencies to prepare for BFMC debrief

Each organisation/agency must prepare for the debrief by seeking comment and feedback from its staff, contractors, suppliers etc as necessary. Each organisation/agency must prepare to contribute to each component of the debrief as described below, as far as applicable to it.

Organisations/agencies should, as far as possible, have only one person speak for their organisation/agency at the meeting. An exception may be made where there are multiple members on the BFMCs – for example, where there are two DEC members who manage different areas – but every effort should be made to coordinate the organisation/agency's response.

Matters not relevant to the BFMC debrief

Only issues that are directly relevant to or which influence coordinated arrangements (for planning and/or suppression) are to be raised at the BFMC debrief. Matters that are specific to organisations/agencies are to be resolved within their own channels.

For example, contractual issues between a contracting party and the contractor are not to be discussed at the BFMC, unless directly relevant or influencing coordinated arrangements.

Running of the meeting

The meeting must be run in a structured manner, and is to address each of the following areas in turn:

1. *Overview* - of the entire incident by the Incident Controller.
2. *First response* - progress of fire from origin to Class 3 – first response, notification of other fire fighting agencies and landowners/managers. Was the operations coordination plan followed (if not, why not)?
3. *Declaration/revocation* – timeliness - did the Commissioner follow recommendations of BFMC and why or why not? Was the transfer of management from Class 1 through to Class 3 and back (if applicable) seamless or were there problems?
4. *Appointment of IC* - did the Commissioner follow recommendations of BFMC and why or why not?
5. *Organisations/agencies* – who was involved?
6. *Fireground access for fire fighters* – adequacy of construction standard and location of trails and other roads, gates or other access restriction issues, landowners preventing access, traffic management (eg stopping traffic to get fire fighting vehicles across major roads), access for replacement crews on fireground etc.
7. *Public access* – road closures and other access restrictions.
8. *Strategies* – those selected and their effectiveness given the progress of the fire and weather conditions etc. Also briefly discuss potential strategies that were not adopted, and why. Not too detailed, but enough so that the BFMC gets some appreciation of whether its bush fire risk management plan and operations coordination plan helped or hindered the operation. Should also give an appreciation of the decisions that might need to be made for the next fire, and the need to amend the existing plans to assist.
9. *EOC* –selection, adequacy etc – was the operations coordination plan followed (if not, why not)?
10. *IMT* – any problems sourcing IMT members? Did the team work together effectively as a team (and why or why not)? Was local knowledge available to and used by the IMT (and why or why not)?
11. *Coordination on the fireground* – were the communications and coordination arrangements successful? Was the operations coordination plan followed (if not, why not)?

12. *Utilisation of resources* – who provided what (crew, tankers, IMT, plant, aircraft) over what length of time (eg 5 RFS tankers each day for 2 shifts for 3 weeks, 1x Forestry Corporation tanker on Day 3 only)?
13. *Catering, accommodation* – was it timely, was the food safely prepared and handled, was it shared? Was the operations coordination plan followed (if not, why not)?
14. *Media and public awareness* – was this achieved in a coordinated manner? Was the operations coordination plan followed (if not, why not)?
15. *Management systems* – cover shared systems (eg ICON, BoM access, IAPs, Sitreps) and those that are not shared (eg Forestry Corporation crewing database). Were they adequate? Did they complement or duplicate each other?
16. *Outcomes*: losses – deaths, injuries, dwellings, other structures, assets including grazing land, stock, fences, farm machinery, cars, boats etc
17. *Cause of fire and investigations*.
18. *Preparedness* – did the provisions in the operations coordination plan and pre-season checklist assist?
19. *Relationship to bush fire risk management plan* - Did the strategies in the bush fire risk management plan help, or would they have helped if they'd been done?
20. *Relevance to recent funding applications* - Were any of the trails or APZs etc used in the fire suppression effort subject to recent successful or unsuccessful funding applications?
21. *Other issues*
22. *Suggestions and recommendations* – compile a list of suggestions and recommendations. These can cover: amendments to existing policies and practices, suggestions for new policies and practices, or to abandon existing policies and practices. Consideration should be given to these issues on a local, regional and state scale. Specific reference should be made to the BFMC's operations coordination and bush fire risk management plans.

Reporting

At the conclusion of the meeting, minutes must be prepared and endorsed by the BFMC. The minutes must include a clear description of the points raised for each item, and must clearly identify the suggestions and recommendations made.

Care should be taken to ensure that the minutes are sufficiently clear and descriptive to allow comprehension by a person who was not present at the meeting.

A copy of the endorsed minutes must be forwarded to the BFCC as soon as practicable after the meeting.