

**BUSH FIRES ACT 1954
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1995**

SHIRE OF VICTORIA PLAINS

BUSH FIRE BRIGADES LOCAL LAW 2017

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Under the powers conferred by the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, the *Local Government Act 1995* and under all other powers enabling it, the Council of the Shire of Victoria Plains resolved on 19 July 2017 to make the following local law.

Part 1 - Preliminary

1.1 Citation

This local law may be cited as the *Shire of Victoria Plains Bush Fire Brigades Local Law 2017*.

1.2 Commencement

This local law will come into operation 14 days after its publication in the *Government Gazette*.

1.3 Application

This local law applies throughout the district.

1.4 Repeal

The *Shire of Victoria Plains Fire Control Local Law* as published in the *Government Gazette* on 9 June 1998 is repealed.

1.5 Definitions

In this local law unless the context otherwise requires –

Act means the *Bush Fires Act 1954*;

bush fire brigade has the meaning given to it in section 7 of the Act;

bush fire brigade area has the meaning given to it in clause 2.2(b);

bush fire brigade member means a volunteer fire fighter having current membership of a bush fire brigade;

bush fire brigade officer means a person holding a position referred to in clause 3.3(1), irrespective of method of appointment to the position;

bush fire control officer means a person appointed to that office by the local government;

Bush Fire Operating Procedures means the Bush Fire Operating Procedures as may be adopted by the local government and amended from time to time;

Captain means the person holding or acting in that position in a bush fire brigade;

CBFCO means the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer;

CEO means the Chief Executive Officer of the local government;

Council means the Council of the local government;

district means the district of the local government;

fire fighting activities means all normal brigade activities relating to a live bush fire which is active in the district, and includes burning off, creating fire breaks and other methods for the control of bush fires;

Lieutenant means the person holding that position in a bush fire brigade;

local government means the Shire of Victoria Plains;

normal brigade activities has the meaning given to it in section 35A of the Act;

President means President of the Council;

Regulations means Regulations made under the Act; and

volunteer fire fighter has the meaning given to it in section 35A of the Act.

Part 2 - Establishment of bush fire brigades

2.1 Establishment of a bush fire brigade

- (1) The local government may establish a bush fire brigade for the purpose of carrying out normal brigade activities.
- (2) A bush fire brigade is established on the date of the local government's decision under subclause (1).

2.2 Name and area of bush fire brigade

On establishing a bush fire brigade under clause 2.1(1) the local government is to –

- (a) give a name to the bush fire brigade;
- (b) specify the area within the district in which the bush fire brigade is primarily responsible for carrying out the normal brigade activities.

2.3 Objects of bush fire brigades

The objects of the bush fire brigade are to carry out –

- (a) the normal brigade activities; and
- (b) the functions of the bush fire brigade which are specified in the Act, the Regulations and the local law.

2.4 Chain of command during fire fighting activities

- (1) Subject to the Act, the chain of command to apply during fire fighting activities is –
 - (a) bush fire control officers in order of seniority;
 - (b) bush fire brigade officers in order of seniority; and
 - (c) all other volunteer fire fighters.
- (2) The person in command has full control over other persons fighting the fire, and is to issue instructions as to the methods to be adopted by the volunteer fire fighters, and may exercise all the powers and duties provided for by the Act.

2.5 Existing bush fire brigades

A bush fire brigade established prior to the day on which this local law comes into operation –

- (a) is to be taken to be a bush fire brigade established under and in accordance with this local law;
- (b) the provisions of this local law apply to the bush fire brigade save for clause 2.1; and
- (c) any rules governing the operation of the bush fire brigade are repealed and substituted with the provisions of this local law.

2.6 Dissolution of bush fire brigade

In accordance with section 41(3) of the Act, the local government may cancel the registration of a bush fire brigade if it is of the opinion that the bush fire brigade is not complying with the Act, this local law, or is not achieving the objectives for which it was established.

2.7 New arrangement after dissolution

If the local government cancels the registration of a bush fire brigade, alternative fire control arrangements are to be made in respect of the bush fire brigade area.

Part 3 - Organisation of bush fire brigades

3.1 Local government responsible for structure

The local government is to ensure that there is an appropriate structure through which the organisation of bush fire brigades is maintained.

3.2 Appointment of bush fire control officers

- (1) The local government may appoint bush fire control officers in their absolute discretion, and apply conditions as considered appropriate.
- (2) Where only one person is appointed as a bush fire control officer, that person is the CBF CO for the purposes of this local law.

- (3) Where more than one person is appointed as a bush fire control officer, the local government shall determine seniority as CBFCO, Deputy CBFCO, and further seniority as is considered appropriate.
- (4) When considering the appointment of a person as a bush fire control officer, the local government is to have regard to the qualifications, training and experience which may be advisable to fill the position.

3.3 Election and appointment of bush fire brigade officers

- (1) Subject to subclause (2), the members of a bush fire brigade shall elect –
 - (a) a Captain;
 - (b) a first lieutenant;
 - (c) a second lieutenant; and
 - (d) any additional lieutenants or officers considered appropriate for the effective management of normal brigade activities.
- (2) If the members of a bush fire brigade have not elected a bush fire brigade member to a position, the local government may make an appointment to the position as they see fit and as considered appropriate.
- (3) When considering the election or appointment of persons to the positions in subclause (1), the bush fire brigade members or the local government as the case may be, are to have regard to the qualifications, training and experience which may be advisable to fill each position.
- (4) The local government may remove any person elected or appointed from any position.

3.4 Managerial role of CBFCO

Subject to any directions by the local government the CBFCO has primary managerial responsibility for the organisation and maintenance of bush fire brigades.

3.5 Duties of CBFCO and Captain

The duties of the CBFCO and Captain include –

- (a) to provide leadership to bush fire brigades;
- (b) to monitor bush fire brigades' resourcing, equipment and training levels;
- (c) to liaise with the local government concerning fire prevention or fire suppression matters generally and directions to be issued by the local government to bush fire control officers (including those who issue permits to burn), bush fire brigades or bush fire brigade officers;
- (d) to ensure that lists of bush fire brigade members are maintained in accordance with clause 4.3;
- (e) to report annually to the local government the office bearers of the bush fire brigade in the form of Form 12 of the Regulations; and
- (f) to report to the local government prior to the local government's annual budget each year, for consideration and appropriate provision being made in the next budget, the status of a bush fire brigade's –
 - (i) training and readiness;
 - (ii) protective clothing;
 - (iii) equipment; and
 - (iv) vehicles and appliances.

3.6 Training of officers

- (1) The local government is to supply each bush fire control officer and Captain with a copy of the Act, the Regulations, any Bush Fire Operating Procedures adopted, this local law and any other written laws which may be relevant to the performance of the bush fire brigade officers' functions, and any amendments made from time to time.
- (2) Bush fire control officers are to complete a Bush Fire Control Officers course conducted by an organisation approved by the CEO, within 12 months of appointment, unless a course has been completed within the 4 years prior to appointment as a bush fire control officer.
- (3) Bush fire control officers are required to complete a bush fire control officers course or a bush fire control officers refresher course at least once every 5 years.

Part 4 - Membership

4.1 Types of membership of bush fire brigade

- (1) The membership of a bush fire brigade consists of volunteer fire fighters.
- (2) Registration as a volunteer fire fighter does not commit the person to participating in all normal brigade activities.

4.2 Membership applications

The decision on an application for admission of member, with or without conditions or restrictions, may be made by –

- (a) either the Captain or CBFCO; jointly with
- (b) either the CEO or President.

4.3 Membership – review, refusal, suspension or termination

- (1) The Captain is to review the membership and report to the CEO and CBFCO the name and contact details of each bush fire brigade member.
- (2) If circumstances warrant, membership of the bush fire brigade may be refused or suspended at any time for a period considered appropriate in the opinion of –
 - (a) either the Captain or CBFCO; jointly with
 - (b) either the CEO or President.
- (3) Membership of the bush fire brigade terminates if the member –
 - (a) dies;
 - (b) gives written notice of resignation to the Captain or CEO;
 - (c) is permanently incapacitated by mental or physical ill-health in the opinion of –
 - (i) either the Captain or CBFCO; jointly with
 - (ii) either the CEO or President; or
 - (d) has been removed from the membership list for other sufficient reason in the opinion of –
 - (i) either the Captain or CBFCO; jointly with
 - (ii) either the CEO or President.
- (4) Where a decision under subclause (2), (3)(c) or (3)(d) is unable to be agreed, the matter is to be referred to Council, whose decision shall be final.
- (5) Members are eligible to reapply where membership has ceased for any reason.

4.4 Right to object to or review of decision

- (1) If an application for membership is refused under clause 4.2, the CEO is to notify the applicant in writing as soon as practicable after the decision is made, of –
 - (a) the reasons for the refusal; and
 - (b) the right to object to the local government within 14 days of the date of notice.
- (2) If it is proposed that a bush fire brigade member is to be suspended under clause 4.3(2) or terminated under clause 4.3(3)(c) or (d), the CEO is to notify the bush fire brigade member in writing as soon as practicable after the decision is made, of –
 - (a) the reasons for the intention to suspend or terminate the bush fire brigade member;
 - (b) the opportunity to respond and answer any matters which might give grounds for suspension or dismissal –
 - (i) in person or in writing to the CEO; or
 - (ii) to meet with a minimum of any three of the Captain, CBFCO, CEO; or President; and
 - (c) the right to object to the local government within 14 days of the date of notice, or such other time as may be agreed.
- (3) The decisions of any meeting in accordance with subclause (2)(b)(ii), of a bush fire brigade member with a minimum of any three of the Captain, CBFCO, CEO; or President –
 - (a) are to be made by simple majority; and
 - (b) may revoke, vary or confirm the original decision to suspend or terminate the bush fire brigade member.

- (4) The bush fire brigade member is to be notified in writing as soon as practical after a decision under subclause (3) is made, of –
 - (a) the decision and the reasons for the decision; and
 - (b) the right to object to the local government within 14 days of the date of notice.
- (5) The local government may dispose of an objection by –
 - (a) dismissing the objection;
 - (b) varying the decision objected to; or
 - (c) revoking the decision objected to, with or without –
 - (i) substituting for it another decision; or
 - (ii) referring the matter, with or without directions, for another decision by a minimum of any three of the Captain, CBFCO, CEO; or President.
- (6) The local government shall give written advice of the decision made under subclause (5) to the person.

4.5 Existing liabilities to continue

The resignation, suspension or termination of a member under clause 4.3 does not affect any liability of the bush fire brigade member arising prior to the date of resignation, suspension or termination of membership.

4.6 Disagreements

- (1) Any disagreement between bush fire brigade members regarding normal brigade activities may be referred to the Captain.
- (2) Where a disagreement in subclause (1) is considered by the Captain to be of importance to the interests of the bush fire brigade, then the Captain is to refer the disagreement to the CEO.
- (3) The local government is the final authority on matters affecting the bush fire brigade, and may resolve any disagreement which is not resolved under subclause (1) or (2).

Part 5 - General

5.1 Administration

All administrative matters of a bush fire brigade are to be managed by the local government, other than bush fire brigade specific internal arrangements.

5.2 Finances

All financial matters of a bush fire brigade are to be managed by the local government, other than bush fire brigade specific internal arrangements.

5.3 Equipment

All equipment purchased by the local government is the property of, and shall be insured by, the local government.

5.4 Consideration in the local government budget

In addition to funding made available through emergency services grants, the local government may provide further funding depending upon the assessment of budget priorities for the year in question.

Dated: 19 July 2017

The Common Seal of the Shire of Victoria Plains was affixed by authority of a resolution of Council in the presence of –

D.S. LOVELOCK President

G.M. TEEDE, Chief Executive Officer.

Notes to this administrative compilation –

1. Original local laws published in the *Government Gazette* on 29 August 2017
2. Amended as published in the *Government Gazette* on 4 September 2018
3. Correction published in the *Government Gazette* on 7 September 2018