

## NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACES ANNUAL REPORT

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Report Author: Executive Officer Emergency Management  
Responsible Officer: Director Communities  
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

This report is to note the status of Bushfire Shelter Options within the municipality of Yarra Ranges.

Annual Audits have been completed for the existing 18 designated Bushfire Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) in Yarra Ranges. Eighteen (18) sites are currently designated NSPs and comply with the required assessment criteria and as such, will maintain their status as designated NSP's for the 2022/23 fire danger period.

Three existing Community Fire Refuges (CFRs) are still commissioned by Emergency Management Victoria and will be retained within the municipality. These buildings are state owned managed assets, listed on both the CFA and Yarra Ranges Council websites.

No additional NSP or CFR sites have been established for the 2022/2023 fire danger period.

### RECOMMENDATION

#### *That Council notes*

- 1. eighteen (18) Neighbourhood Safer Places remain designated for the 2022/2023 fire danger period and three (3) Community Fire Refuges managed by Emergency Management Victoria remain designated for the 2022/2023 fire danger period.***
- 2. the Seville Recreation Reserve, First Oval Upon Entry, 20-28 Monbulk-Seville Road, Seville is not compliant for the 2022/2023 year. The oval continues to be decommissioned due to oval resurfacing maintenance.***

## **RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

No related Council decisions with regard to the NSP or CFR sites for the 2022/2023 fire danger period.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Purpose and Background***

In accordance with the Country Fire Authority Act, Local Government are to identify, designate, establish and maintain suitable sites as NSPs in their municipal districts. The CFA conducts an annual assessment of each NSP to ensure compliance with the assessment guidelines.

Neighbourhood Safer Places, also known as Places of Last Resort, are not intended to replace a personal bushfire survival plan. The CFA advises that everyone should have a written Bushfire Survival Plan. The CFA advises that there is no guarantee that people will not be injured or killed by fire or radiant heat when travelling to or sheltering at a Neighbourhood Safer Place - Place of Last Resort.

Following the introduction of the NSP legislation, Yarra Ranges Council currently has 18 designated NSP's within the municipality.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

There will be minimal costs for installation and maintenance of signage at each location and periodic inspections to ensure that the sites comply with the assessment criteria. All sites are subject to ongoing maintenance programs which are maintained within current budgets.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

Neighbourhood Safer Places Annual Report contributes to the following strategic objectives in the Council Plan:

- Connected and Healthy Communities
- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

The report also ensures Council is responsive to:

- Bushfire Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.
- Yarra Ranges Council Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan
- Country Fire Authority Act 1958 - Section 50J

## **RELEVANT LAW**

Municipal councils of which are wholly or partly in the country area of Victoria, identify potential suitable locations, designate, establish and maintain NSP-BPLRs within their municipal district, pursuant to provisions within Part IIIA, Division 3 of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 (CFA Act). The Country Fire Authority (CFA) supports municipal councils in the establishment of NSP-BPLRs as a last resort option for communities living in high-risk areas (and people visiting, working in or traveling though high-risk areas).

### ***Economic Implications***

In meeting the criteria for ongoing designation as an NSP no economic impacts are expected as a result.

### ***Social Implications***

The social impacts of a designated NSP are minimal until they are used during an emergency. In the instance of the decommissioned site at Seville for this fire danger period, communications are to be shared across Council and the CFA to inform local residents and visitors of the nearest NSPs.

### ***Environmental Implications***

In meeting the criteria for ongoing designation as an NSP some vegetation maintenance may be required around sites. Where required, Council works with neighbouring property owners to achieve required vegetation maintenance.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Country Fire Authority, Victoria Police, relevant landowners/managers, and Yarra Ranges Council staff are consulted during the NSP assessment process.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

In 2022 updated signage has commenced in consultation with the CFA to improve accessibility, this has been commended by the CFA as an innovative addition.

All Neighbourhood Safer Places and Community Fire Refuges within Yarra Ranges have been reassessed. They have been found to comply with the assessment guidelines and will be available for use by the community for the 2022/2023 fire danger period.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

In meeting the criteria for ongoing designation as an NSP, each year a risk assessment is carried out by Council, CFA and Victoria Police representatives to ensure designated NSP's still meet relevant criteria.

Community education and information will provide consistent key messages to highlight the role of NSP's. NSP's are a place of last resort and do not replace the

need for residents to have a bushfire plan. Travelling to a NSP may be dangerous because of traffic congestion, fire activity, heavy smoke, accidents or fallen trees blocking the route.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Nil

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Neighbourhood Safer Places Municipal List