2024

Bush Fire Assessment

Multiple Occupancy Residential Development

39 James Forster Drive Black Head NSW



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Executive Summary

The following Bushfire Assessment has been carried out to inform the property owners, builders, Certifying Authority, NSW Rural Fire Service and other stakeholders of the bushfire planning requirements for the construction of the proposed multiple occupancy residential development at 39 James Forster Drive Black Head NSW.

The development was assessed under Section 100B of the Rural Fires Act 1997 as well as Section 4.14 of the EP & A Act. The requirements listed in Clause 44 of the Rural Fires Regulation 2008 were addressed. A Bushfire Safety Authority (BFSA) will need to be issued before the development can be approved.

This report provides an assessment of the bushfire protection measures required for the development to guard against the potential impact of bushfires. Recommendations have been made in respect of APZ fuel management, construction standards, access and services.

This document assesses how the development will conform to the aims, objectives and performance criteria set out in Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019.

- Providing for an Asset Protection Zone distance between the buildings and any hazard
- Providing a Radiant Heat Shield against the Grassland hazard
- Providing safe access and egress for emergency services and residents
- Providing services for fire fighters
- Recommending construction requirements, landscaping and upkeep requirements to maintain the bushfire protection measures

Disclaimer

The following report is made on the assessment undertaken by S & K Johnson Constructions Pty Ltd in October 2024.

The report recognizes the fact that no property and lives can be guaranteed to survive a bushfire attack. The report examines ways of reducing the risk of bushfire attack upon the proposed development.

Whilst the assessors use their best endeavors to ensure that the information contained within this report is valid and comprehensive, the company makes no representations or warranties about its accuracy, reliability, completeness or suitability for any particular purpose and disclaims all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages (including indirect or consequential damage) and costs which might be incurred as a result of the data being inaccurate or incomplete in any way and for any reason.

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Bushfire Assessment Report has been prepared by S & K Johnson Constructions *Pty Ltd* on behalf of the owners of the property for seven (7) residential dwellings on one (1) existing lot (multiple occupancy). The site is part of an existing residential subdivision in the village of Black Head.

The site is identified as **bushfire prone** by Mid Coast Council using the NSW Planning Portal *Bushfire Prone Land Map*. The mapping shows the lot sitting in the buffer zone of Category 3 impacting from the north. The map is considered accurate.



Dual or multi occupancy developments on bushfire prone land are classified as 'Integrated development'. They are covered by Section 91 of the EP&A Act 1979 and Section 100B of the Rural Fires Act 1997

Residential dwelling developments are covered by Section 4.14 of the EP & A Act but are assessed by the NSW Rural Fire Service under Section 100B of the Rural Fires Act when it involves a subdivision or change of boundary at the same time. Section 100B notes the need for approval by the NSW RFS and the issuance of a Bushfire Safety Authority (BFSA) before the development can be approved.

Clause 44 of the Rural Fires Regulation 2002 outlines the requirements to be submitted for the approval and issuance of a Bushfire Safety Authority. This assessment will cover these requirements for the proposed development.

In NSW, *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019* (PBP 2019) sets out the aims, objectives and performance criteria required for development in bushfire prone areas. This proposed development will be assessed against these aims and objectives.

The aim of PBP is to provide for the protection of human life and minimise impacts on property from the threat of bush fire, while having due regard to development potential, site characteristics and protection of the environment.

The objectives are to:

- i. afford buildings and their occupants protection from exposure to a bush fire
- ii. provide for a defendable space to be located around buildings
- iii. provide appropriate separation between a hazard and buildings which, in combination with other measures, minimises material ignition
- iv. ensure that appropriate operational access and egress for emergency service personnel and residents is available
- v. provide for ongoing management and maintenance of BPMs
- vi. ensure that utility services are adequate to meet the needs of firefighters.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Identify the site
- Provide an assessment of the bushfire hazard
- Address the relevant requirements of Clause 44 of the Rural Fires Regulation 2002 and *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019*
- Identify if the development complies with the aims and objectives of *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019*
- Provide the relevant information for the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) and Certifying Authority to make a determination for granting a Bushfire Safety Authority or development approval.

The references referred to during this assessment are:

- Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019
- Building Code of Australia 2011
- AS 3959 Building in Bushfire Prone Areas 2018
- Keith, D Ocean Shores to Desert Dunes 2004
- Overall Fuel Hazard Guide Forest Science Centre Victoria 2003

1.2 Legislation

As noted earlier, this development will be assessed as a dual occupancy residential subdivision development under Section 100B of the Rural Fires Act 1997. This section requires that the proposed development meet the aims and objectives of *PBP 2019*. It also requires that a Bushfire Safety Authority be issued by the NSW RFS before development approval is granted.

PBP 2019 notes specific objectives for dual occupancy subdivision developments.



Not all of these objectives are relevant here, given the small scale of the subdivision, but they still must be considered. This proposal will need to meet the objectives listed above along with the Performance Criteria noted in Chapter 5 of *PBP 2019*.

Section 2 Site Assessment

2.1 Site Details

The site is Lot 57 DP1072968 / 39 James Forster Drive Black Head NSW.

The site is presently vacant land with un-mowed grass over the lot. A narrow watercourse with grasses, reeds and Sheoaks growing within it is present along the southwestern boundary.





James Forster Drive is a well-established street with developed residential lots present. It is expected that the street will extend to the north in time but no plans or timeline for this is known. The site is located at the end of the existing street.

The large lot to the north is zoned residential and at present undeveloped, with unmanaged grasslands present and extending into the adjacent rural lot further northwest.



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. The Local Government Area is Mid Coast Council. The lot is classed Residential (R1).



2.2 Proposed Development

The proposal is to construct a multiple occupancy development – seven (7) attached and detached dwellings on one lot, separated by Party Wall Systems, Open Space and fences. The development will be assessed under the provisions of Section 100B of the Rural Fires Act 1997 which requires a Bushfire Safety Authority for development approval.

It is anticipated that these dwellings will be subdivided if not immediately after construction, sometime in the future. Preliminary Plans have been prepared and can be found below.



The units will be accessed via the common driveway from James Forster Drive - no new public roads or access roads are required.

The intended building materials are – concrete slab, masonry walls, aluminium framed windows and Colorbond roof sheeting.



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2.3 Vegetation

The type and arrangement of vegetation plays a major role in determining how a bushfire will behave. The vegetation types occurring on the site and on land adjacent to the site are capable of supporting fires of varying severity. The vegetation present is discussed below and includes photographic examples.

Site -

There is no significant vegetation on the lot – the presently contains un-mowed grass over the lot. This grass will of course be removed during construction. The site will then be managed.



External -

To the north of the site is a large undeveloped residential zoned lot along with a rural lot. Both contain unmanaged grasslands over their entirety. As noted earlier, the residential zoned lot may be developed in the future but no plans or timeline is known for this, so the hazard classification of grasslands will be used. The grasslands are located at the lot boundary and a minimum of 2.5 metres from the proposed dwellings. Beyond the grasslands are more developed residential lots and supporting infrastructure.





Northern grasslands as shown from Meers Drive

The southwest boundary of the site meets with a very narrow drainage reserve that directs water into a wetlands area to the southeast. The vegetation within this narrow reserve has not been mapped as a bushfire hazard which is considered accurate. It is narrow, well contained by the surrounding managed land and will not develop into a fully evolved bushfire that threatens adjoining property. The vegetation does become larger in size within the Wetlands Reserve and is considered Forested Wetlands at that point (93 metres from the corner point of the site). This forest will not encroach towards the site due to land management of the adjacent playing fields.







The land directly to the east is made up of developed residential lots and supporting infrastructure for over 140 metres from the site. The same exists to the west and south.



Looking south along James Forster Drive

Vegetation Summary

North

- Grasslands on undeveloped residential zoned land
- Located 2.5 metres from the proposed dwellings

East

- Developed Residential land
- Managed land for over 140 metres

Southeast

- Playing Fields and Forested Wetlands
- Located 93 metres from the site

West

- Developed Residential land
- Managed land for over 140 metres

The hazard impacting this site is from the north and the southeast. For this assessment the classification of Grassland and Forest of Tables A1.12.3 and A1.12.6 will be used.

2.4 Slope

The grassland to the north is on a slight downslope as it travels away from the site. The Woodland to the east is on a steady upslope as it travels away from the lot, this slope continues for a considerable distance

Grassland vegetation to the north Forest vegetation to the southeast Upslopes 0-5 Downslopes

2.5 Environment and Heritage Issues

There are no known Cultural, Heritage or Environmental issues present on the site. It is not anticipated that any vegetation will be removed to facilitate this development.



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Section 3 Bushfire Hazard Assessment

This bushfire hazard assessment was determined using the site assessment methodology set out in Appendix 3 of PBP 2006.

3.1 Vegetation formation

The vegetation impacting upon this site is made up of:

- 1. Grassland to the north growing on undeveloped land
- 2. Forested Wetlands to the southeast growing on RE1 zoned land

3.2 Effective Slope

The slope under the hazard vegetation is:

- 1. Grassland to the north -Upslopes 2. Forest to the southeast -
 - 0-5 Downslopes

3.3 Fire Weather

The subject site is located within the Mid Coast Council Local Government Area in the North Coast Region. The Forest Fire Danger Index for the North Coast Region is rated at 80 for use in determining asset protection zone requirements and categories for bushfire attack.

3.4 Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)

A 2.5 metre setback from a grassland hazard would normally provide for a radiant heat exposure to the new dwellings of greater than 40kW/m². However, research conducted by the Bushfire CRC has found that the use of a Colorbond steel fence can reduce the radiant heat levels to 5kW/m² on the inside of the fence (*Fire Note Issue 70 November 2010*). The construction of a 1.8 metre high Colorbond fence along the northern boundary is proposed and will act as a radiant heat shield. This heat shield lowers the radiant heat flux impacting this development from fire within the grasslands to the north to less than 5Kw/m² resulting in the development meeting the objectives of Planning for Bushfire 2019.

A minimum BAL 12.5 has been assumed for all of the development which takes into account both the grassland hazard to the north and the forest hazard to the southeast.

Table A1.12.6

Determination of BAL, FFDI 80 - residential development

	BUSH FIRE ATTACK LEVEL (BAL)				
TH VEGETATION FORMATION	BAL-FZ	BAL-40	BAL-29	BAL-19	BAL-12.5
		Distance (m) asse	t to predominan	t vegetation cla	55
Rainforest	< 7	7-<9	9 -< 14	14 -< 20	20 -< 100
Forest (wet and dry sclerophyll) including Coastal Swamp Forest, Pine Plantations and Sub-Alpine Woodland	< 15	15 -< 20	20 -< 29	29 -< 40	40 -< 100
Grassy and Semi-Arid Woodland (including Mallee)	< 8	8 -< 11	11 -< 16	16 -< 22	22 -< 100
Forested Wetland (excluding Coastal Swamp Forest)	< 6	6 -< 8	8 -< 12	12 -< 18	18 -< 100
Tall Heath	< 12	12 -< 16	16 -< 23	23 -< 32	32 -< 100
Short Heath	< 7	7-<9	9 -< 14	14 -< 20	20 -< 100
Arid-Shrublands (acacia and chenopod)	< 5	5-< 6	6-< 9	9 -< 14	14 -< 100
Freshwater Wetlands	< 4	4 -< 5	5-<7	7 -< 11	11 -< 100
Grassland	< 7	7 -< 10	10 -< 14	14 -< 20	20 -< 50
Sainforce	< 9	9 -< 12	12 -< 17	17 -< 25	25 -< 100
Enerst (wet and dry sclerophyll) including Coasta Swamp Forest, Pine Plantations and Sub-Alpine Mediand	< 19	19 -< 25	25 -< 35	35 -< 47	47 -< 100
Grassy and Semi-And Woodland (including Mallee)	< 10	10 -< 13	13 -< 19	19 -< 28	28 -< 100
Forested Wetland (excluding Coastal Swamp Forest)	< 8	8 -< 10	10 -< 15	15 -< 22	22 -< 100
Tall Heath	< 13	13 -< 18	18 -< 26	26 -< 36	36 -< 100
Short Heath	< 8	8 -< 10	10 -< 15	15 -< 22	22 -< 100
Arid-Shrublands (acacia and chenopod)	< 5	5 -< 7	7 -< 11	11 -< 16	16 -< 100
Freshwater Wetlands	< 4	4 -< 6	6 -< 8	8 -< 12	12 -< 100
Grassland	< 8	8-<11	11-< 16	16 -< 23	23 -< 50
Rainforest	< 11	11 -< 15	15 -< 22	22 -< 32	32 -< 100
Forest (wet and dry sclerophyll) including Coastal Swamp Forest, Pine Plantations and Sub-Alpine Woodland	< 24	24 -< 31	31 -< 43	43 -< 57	57 -< 100
Grassy and Semi-Arid Woodland (including Mallee)	< 12	12 -< 17	17 -< 24	24 -< 34	34 -< 100
Forested Wetland (excluding Coastal Swamp Forest)	< 10	10 -< 13	13 -< 20	20 -< 28	28 -< 100
Tall Heath	< 15	15 -< 20	20 -< 29	29 -< 40	40 -< 100
Short Heath	< 9	9 -< 12	12 -< 18	18 -< 25	25 -< 100
Arid-Shrublands (acacia and chenopod)	< 6	6 -< 8	8 -< 12	12 -< 18	18 -< 100
Freshwater Wetlands	< 5	5-< 6	6 -< 10	10 -< 14	14 -< 100
Grassland	< 9	9 -< 12	12 -< 18	18 -< 26	26 -< 50
Rainforest	< 14	14 -< 20	20 -< 29	29 -< 40	40 -< 100
Forest (wet and dry sclerophyll) including Coastal Swamp Forest, Pine Plantations and Sub-Alpine Woodland	< 30	30 -< 39	39 -< 52	52 -< 68	68 -< 100
Grassy and Semi-Arid Woodland (including Mallee)	< 16	16 -< 21	21 -< 31	31-< 42	42 -< 100
Forested Wetland (excluding Coastal Swamp Forest)	< 12	12 -< 17	17 -< 25	25 -< 35	35 -< 100
Tall Heath	< 17	17 -< 22	22 -< 32	32 - 44	44 -< 100
Short Heath	< 10	10 -< 13	13 -< 20	20 -< 29	29 -< 100
Arid-Shrublands (acacia and chenopod)	< 7	7-<9	9 -< 14	14 -< 20	20 -< 100
Freshwater Wetlands	< 5	5-<7	7 -< 11	11 -< 16	16 -< 100
Grassland	< 10	10 -< 14	14 -< 21	21-< 30	30 -< 50

3.5 Asset Protection Zone Distance & Defendable Space

Table A1.12.4 Appendix 1 of *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019* presented below shows the APZ requirements for this development:

Table A1.12.4

Minimum distances for APZs - residential subdivision development, FDI 80 areas (<29kW/m2)

	EFFECTIVE SLOPE				
KEITH VEGETATION FORMATION	Up slopes and flat	>0*-5*	>5*-10*	>10*-15*	>15*-20*
-	Distance (m) from the ass	et to the predomi	nant vegetation f	ormation
Rainforest	9	12	15	20	25
Forest (Shrubby and Grassy) including Coastal Swamp Forest, Pine Plantations and Sub-Alpine Woodland	20	25	31	39	48
Woodland (grassy and woody)	11	13	17	21	27
Forested Wetland	8	10	13	17	22
Tall Heath	15	16	18	21	23
Short Heath	10	11	13	14	16
Arid-Shrublands (acacia and chenopod)	7	8	9	10	11
Freshwater Wetlands	6	7	8	9	10
Alpine Complex	7	8	8	10	11
Grassland	10	11	12	14	16

This report needs to show that this distance can be adequately met for all the new dwellings; not requiring vegetation removal from an external lot.

The sites are located within an existing residential area with developed land surrounding them.

- The grassland hazard on the undeveloped land is contained and radiant heat reduced by use of a Colorbond fence heat shield.
- The forest hazard is located a minimum of 93 metres from the site

Elevation	Hazard/s	APZ required	APZ available	APZ met?
North	Grassland	10m	2.5m + Radiant Heat Shield	Yes
East	Managed > 140m	0m	>140m	Yes
Southeast	Forest	25m	93m	Yes
West	Managed >140m	0m	>140m	Yes

It is noted that the requirement for Asset Protection Zones as set out in *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019*, can be satisfied for the proposed development.

3.6 Construction Standards

All dwellings construction shall comply with Sections 3 and 5 (BAL 12.5) Australian Standard AS3959-2018 'Construction of buildings in bush fire-prone areas' and section 7.5.2 NSW State Variations of 'Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019'.

This is the deemed-to-satisfy solution.

3.7 Access

James Forster Drive is an existing street in an established residential subdivision. It connects with Black Head Road offering numerous egress options through built up areas and travelling away from the hazards. These roads are all established two-way sealed roads.

For these developments no new public roads will need to be established. Each new dwelling will share the new driveway accessed directly from James Forster Drive.

The requirements of Table 5.3b are considered to be met.

3.8 Services – Gas, Water and Electricity Supply

The vacant lots are connected to mains supplied power and water. An extension/expansion of these services will be required for the additional dwellings but this will not affect the supply to any extent to warrant additional services.

The requirements of Table 5.3c are considered to be met.

3.9 Emergency and Evacuation Management Plan

A formal emergency/evacuation plan does not need to be prepared for this development. However, any owners of the new dwellings should create their own plan and ensure all occupants are aware of the risks. Should a bushfire threaten these properties it is essential that all residents are skilled to deal with it. Set procedures with decisions already made will reduce confusion and panic during any emergency.

Section 4 Recommendations

The following measures are recommended to reduce the risk of bushfire on the proposed dwellings. These recommendations are linked to the Performance Criteria set out in *PBP 2019*. It is believed that by implementing these recommendations the aims and objectives of *PBP 2019* will be met.

4.1 Performance Criteria – Asset Protection Zone (5.3.1)

- Radiant heat levels to not exceed 29 kW/m2 on a proposed building
- APZs are managed to prevent fire spread
- APZs are provided in perpetuity
- APZ maintenance is practical
- Landscaping is managed to minimize flame contact and radiant heat to the building

Recommendation

- Each entire new lot is to be maintained as an Inner Protection Zone in perpetuity
- This will require little effort as the lots are to be clear of vegetation but this does cover future vegetation that may be planted as gardens
 - The requirements for vegetation within an Inner Protection Zone:
 - o Minimal fine fuel at ground level
 - Grass mowed
 - Trees and shrubs planted as clumps or islands and do not take up more than 20% of the area
 - Minimal plant species that keep dead material or drop large quantities of ground fuel
 - The canopy cover must be less than 15%
 - Any canopy must be located more than 2 metres from any roofline
 - Trees separated by 2-5 metres and do not provide a continuous canopy from the hazard to the building
 - Trees should have lower limbs removed up to a height of 2 metres above the ground (4 metres if emergency vehicles need to park next to or drive around them).
 - $\circ~$ Shrubs / gardens need to be 1.5m away from exposed windows and doors

4.2 Performance Criteria – Access (5.3.2)

- Fire fighting vehicles are provided with safe, all weather access to structures
- There is appropriate access to water supply
- Road surface and bridge capacity is sufficient to carry fully loaded fire fighting vehicles
- Road widths and design enables safe access for vehicles both fire fighting and residents

Recommendations

- The existing public road network is sufficient
- No new public or private access roads are required for this development.
- The concrete driveways shown on plan are sufficient.

4.3 Performance Criteria – Services – Water, Electricity & Gas (5.3.3)

- A water supply reserve dedicated for firefighting purposes is installed and maintained.
- Location of electricity services limits the possibility of ignition of surrounding bushland or the fabric of buildings
- Location of gas services will not lead to ignition of surrounding bushland or the fabric of buildings

Recommendations

- The existing reticulated water supply should be accessed
- New electrical transmission lines should be located underground
- Gas bottles to be located away from the hazard, with metal pipework and the release valve positioned away from the building

4.4 Performance Criteria – Construction Standards

• The proposed building can withstand bush fire attack in the form of wind, smoke, embers, radiant heat and flame contact.

Recommendation

 The proposed dwellings are to be constructed to BAL 12.5 requirements as per AS 3959-2018 - Sections 3 and 5, plus Section 7.5.2 NSW State Variations of PBP 2019. These constitute the deemed-to-satisfy acceptable solution.

4.5 Performance Criteria – Landscaping

• It is designed and managed to minimize flame contact and radiant heat to buildings, and the potential for wind driven embers to cause ignitions.

Recommendations

- Maintain an area of lawn or non-combustible material (such as concrete) adjacent to the new dwellings.
- Keep the area under fences, trees and gates raked and free of fuel.
- Use non-flammable ground covers pebbles or rocks.
- Do not place plants and shrubs against building elements likely to fail IE windows, any timber structure. They can ignite and bring flames closer to the building.
- Choose plants that are less flammable IE those with less oil, higher moisture content, dense growth pattern. Look for broad fleshy leaves and smooth bark.
- Do not restrict access around the dwelling with plants or structures
- The fencing used is to be of Colorbond Steel 1.8m high
- Class 10b structures (e.g. retaining walls) must also meet the requirements of BAL 12.5
- The entire building must be maintained on a regular basis to reduce leaf and other flammable debris from building up around building and other structures.
- Check for branches overhanging roofs and driveways trim as required
- Maintain all building elements e.g. window screens, roof tiles/sheeting, draught seals, and hoses. Ensure all are in good working repair.

Section 5 Conclusion

The site has been studied, and it has been determined that there is significant vegetation present within 140 metres of the lots which could carry a bushfire in extreme fire conditions – this makes the lots 'bushfire prone'. Any further development of these lots will require additional protection measures to reduce the impact a bushfire could have on the buildings and its occupants.

As this development is a multiple occupancy it is assessed under 100B of the Rural Fires Act. A Bushfire Safety Authority is required before the development can be approved. It is necessary to ensure that the objectives of *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019* can be met, in particular those relating to Asset Protection Zones and minimum BALs.

The report notes that the proposed development can satisfy the aim and objectives of PBP 2019.

The objectives of PBP 2019 have been achieved by:

- Providing for an Asset Protection Zone distance between the buildings and any hazard
- Providing a Radiant Heat Shield against the Grassland hazard
- Providing safe access and egress for emergency services and residents
- Providing services for fire fighters
- Recommending construction requirements, landscaping and upkeep requirements to maintain the bushfire protection measures

Whilst the protection measures outlined in this report will greatly improve the chances of a future building surviving a bushfire event, it does not guarantee it. The unpredictable nature of bushfire events precludes any such guarantee. It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the building, roads and landscaping – without it the whole system will fail.

If there are queries or concerns about the assessment or the recommendations please feel free to contact myself on 0402 318073.

Prepared by Krisann Johnson

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18th October 2024

UTS Planning for Bushfire Prone Areas UWS G.Dip. Design for Bushfire Prone Areas BPAD-D Certified Practitioner BPD-PD-18578

