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Baw Baw Shire Council
Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Place
Place of Last Resort Plan
2014-2018

Version 3.1 - August 2014

Version Control

Version	Release Date	Author	Changes
Draft 1.0	January 2010	S. Venville (MFPO)	1st draft of plan
2.0	August 2010	G. Tarrant (MERO)	Updated after draft
3.1	August 2014	G. Tarrant (MERO)	Updated & Revised by MFMP

Amendment Authorisations

Name	Position	Signature	Date
Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

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i. Introduction and Background

In its [Interim Report, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommended](#) that Neighbourhood Safer Places – Places of Last Resort, or ‘NSP-PLRs’, be identified and established to provide persons in bushfire affected areas with a place of last resort during a bushfire.

In response to this recommendation, the Victorian Government has introduced the *Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009* (Vic) (‘ESLA Act’) which amends the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (Vic) (‘CFA Act’), *Emergency Management Act 1986* (Vic) (‘EM Act’) and the *Emergency Management Act 2013*. The effect of these amendments will be to require the Country Fire Authority (‘CFA’) to certify NSP-PLRs against the CFA’s Fire Rating Criteria, and Victoria’s Councils to identify, designate, establish and maintain suitable places as NSP-PLRs in their municipal districts.

NSP-PLRs are not community fire refuges or emergency relief centres. NSP-PLRs are places of last resort during the passage of a bushfire, and are intended to be used by persons whose primary bushfire plans have failed. NSP-PLRs are places of relative safety only. They do not guarantee the survival of those who assemble there. Furthermore, there may be serious risks to safety encountered in travelling, and seeking access, to NSP-PLRs during bushfire events. Depending on the direction of a particular fire, it may not be a safer place to assemble than other places within the municipal district.

NSP-PLRs will be assessed by the CFA as providing some protection from immediate risk of direct fire attack, but not necessarily from other risks, such as flying embers. Where a potential NSP-PLR which is used for an operational purpose at many times meets the CFA’s criteria, then the CFA considers that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP-PLR.

This Plan is a neighbourhood safer places plan for the purposes of the legislation, and contains guidelines which have been developed by the Municipal Association of Victoria (‘MAV’) to assist the Council in:

- Identifying
- Designating
- Establishing
- Maintaining
- Decommissioning places as NSP-PLRs within its municipal district.

This Plan also identifies other matters that should be taken into account in identifying, designating, establishing and maintaining NSP-PLRs within the municipality.

This Plan contains a step-by-step methodology for the Council to follow in identifying, designating, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning NSP-PLRs. The Council must consider each of the factors set out in this Plan. It should also consider other factors which are specific to the Council’s circumstances, including the resources available to the Council.

Once this Plan has been adopted, Council must make it, and any documents incorporated into it, available at the Council's municipal offices for public inspection during normal office hours free of charge under section 50F(4)(b) of the CFA Act. It must also be published on Council's website under section 50F(4)(a) of the CFA Act.

i.i. Plan Revision

The Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places - Places of Last Resort Plan will be revised each;

- Four year period or,
- Post a major bushfire event in the municipality or,
- As part of recommendations from a Royal Commission or,
- Changes to legislation in the identification, designation, establishment, maintaining and decommissioning of NSP-PLRs.

ii. Structure of this Plan

This Plan has been divided up into four distinct sections.

Section 1 certified Neighbourhood Safer Places – Places of Last Resort within Baw Baw Shire Council.

Section 2 contains a flow chart which summarises the process for councils to adopt in identifying, designating, establishing and maintaining NSP-PLRs within their municipal district.

Section 3 contains a more detailed summary of the steps summarised in the flow chart found in Section 1.

Section 4 contains a summary of the factors for Council to consider in assessing potential NSP-PLR locations, prior to designation.

Section 5 contains details of content of signage that Council is required to erect at designated NSP-PLR locations and checklists.

Section 1 Certified Neighbourhood Safer Places

1.1 Location(s) of certified NSP-PLR's

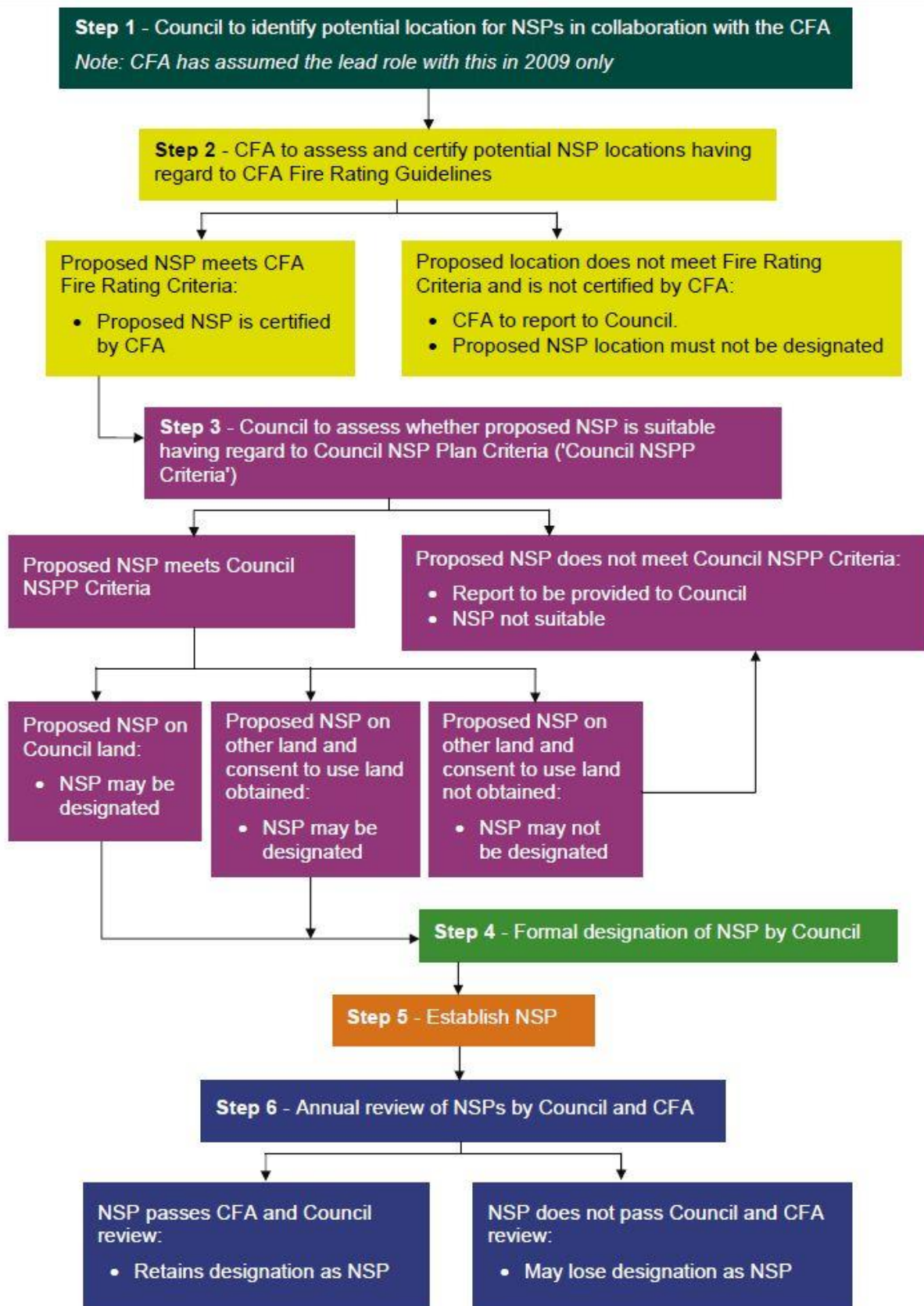
1.1.1 Individual NSP-PLR descriptions

Neighbourhood Safer Places are defined as an area or premises that may, as a last resort, provide some sanctuary from the life threatening effects of a bushfire (e.g. direct flame contact or radiant heat). They will generally be an area of existing space or structure, (such as an oval or a building) that may protect a person against fire.

Currently there are no Neighbourhood Safer Places within Baw Baw Shire Council.

Section 2 Flow chart Showing Process for
Identifying, Designating, Establishing and
Maintaining NSP-PLRs

2.1 Overview of the process for establishing and maintaining NSP-PLRs after adoption of this Plan by Council



Section 3 Detailed summary of steps for establishing NSP-PLRs

3.1 Identification of Potential NSP-PLR Locations

3.1.1 Who is responsible for identifying places as potential NSP-PLRs?

For the 2009-2010 fire season, the Country Fire Authority ('CFA') has assumed lead responsibility for identifying potential locations for NSP-PLRs. This has been done in consultation with Councils. The initial focus was upon the identification of proposed NSP-PLRs within those municipalities with CFA Community Information Guides ('CIG') areas in place. However, identification efforts have now expanded beyond these localities.

From 2010-onwards, Council will be responsible for identifying potential places as NSP-PLRs within its municipal district. Section 50G of the CFA Act requires Council to identify potential NSP-PLR locations.

3.1.2 When do potential NSP-PLRs need to be identified?

The CFA, in conjunction with Council, is currently in the process of identifying potential NSP-PLRs in preparation for the 2009-2010 fire season.

From 2010-onwards, Councils should identify potential additional places as NSP-PLRs by 31 May in each year. This should allow sufficient time for:

- **CFA Certification** first, assessment and certification of the potential NSP-PLR by the CFA;
- **Council Designation** secondly, designation of the potential NSP-PLR location by the Council; and
- **Establishment** thirdly, and subject to the outcome of the assessment and designation process, establishing the NSP-PLRs, including the erection of signage and other steps by Council.

The process of NSP-PLR identification is ongoing. Following each fire season, Council should assess whether any additional potentially suitable NSP-PLR locations can be identified within the municipal district.

3.1.3 What factors should be considered when identifying potential NSP-PLR locations?

When identifying potential NSP-PLR locations, Council should consider matters such as:

- The environment surrounding the potential NSP-PLR;
- What other uses are made of the potential NSP-PLR, and whether or not those uses could be inconsistent with its designation as an NSP-PLR;
- Whether the land on which the potential NSP-PLR is located is Council-owned or non-Council owned land;
- Whether there are clear means of access and egress to and from the potential NSP-PLR; and
- Whether the potential NSP-PLR is in close proximity to population centres.

Council's identification of potential NSP-PLR locations should be undertaken by the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer ('MERO') and the Municipal Fire Prevention

Officer ('MFPO'), with input from other Council personnel (such as Infrastructure Services Managers, or equivalent) as appropriate.

3.2 CFA to Assess and Certify Potential NSP-PLR Locations

3.2.1 Who is responsible for assessing potential NSP-PLRs against guidelines issued by the CFA ('CFA Fire Rating Guidelines')?

Under section 50G(5) of the CFA Act, the CFA is responsible for assessing potential NSP-PLR locations against the [CFA Fire Rating Guidelines](#). This will be done by appropriately qualified and experienced CFA personnel.

Council is not responsible for the assessment and certification of potential NSP-PLRs by the CFA.

3.2.2 What criteria must the CFA take into account in assessing potential NSP-PLR locations?

In assessing potential NSP-PLR locations which have been identified by the CFA (for the 2009-2010 fire season), or by Councils (from 2010-onwards), the CFA must consider the criteria and other considerations as set out in the CFA's Fire Rating Guidelines as issued from time to time by the CFA.

The key matters to be considered by the CFA under the current CFA Fire Rating Criteria are:

(a) For Open Spaces:

- (i) The appropriate separation distance between the outer edge of the potential NSP-PLR and the nearest fire hazard (['Buffer Zone'](#)) should be at least 310 metres; or
- (ii) An alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the site is no more than 2 kw/m².

(b) For Buildings:

- (iii) The Buffer Zone between the outer edge of the building and the nearest fire hazard should be at least 140 metres; or
- (iv) An alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the building is no more than 10 kw/m².

3.2.3 When does the CFA assess a potential NSP-PLR?

Following identification of a place which may be suitable as an NSP-PLR, the potential NSP-PLR is assessed by the CFA as soon as practicable. This is likely to occur shortly after identification.

3.2.4 When does the CFA certify potential NSP-PLR locations?

Once the assessment of a potential NSP-PLR is completed by the CFA, the CFA will certify the potential NSP-PLR if the place meets the CFA Fire Rating Criteria. The

CFA will provide a copy of the CFA certification in relation to a potential NSP-PLR to Council upon completion of certification, and a summary of the criteria and assumptions upon which the assessment is based.

Council should ensure that the boundaries of both the potential NSP-PLR as certified by the CFA, and any Buffer Zone surrounding it, are clearly defined in the CFA assessment.

For reasons of community safety, it is a requirement of the CFA Act, and it is also Council policy, that only those places assessed and certified by the CFA may be considered for designation as NSP-PLRs by the Council. The Council must not designate a place as an NSP-PLR unless it has CFA certification.

3.3 Council Assessment of NSP-PLRs Following CFA Certification

3.3.1 What factors should be applied by Councils in assessing the suitability of a place as a potential NSP-PLR location?

Following certification of a place as an NSP-PLR by the CFA, and once Council has received the CFA assessment and any criteria and CFA assumptions which underpin the assessment, Council must assess the place in accordance with the factors outlined below to determine whether it is suitable to be designated as an NSP-PLR. Unless a potential NSP-PLR satisfies each of the criteria outlined below, it should not be designated by Council as an NSP-PLR.

Council's assessment of CFA-certified potential NSP-PLRs may, if reasonably practicable, be conducted by the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee ('MEMPC'), with a preliminary assessment to be provided to the MEMPC by the MERO and the MFPO.

The factors to determine the suitability of the place as an NSP-PLR are as follows: ('Council NSP-PLRP Criteria'):

(a) Consents and rights of access

There must be appropriate land access and tenure arrangements so that Council has the right to:

- Use the place as an NSP-PLR;
- Access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance; and
- Erect appropriate signage at the NSP-PLR, including the OESC signage and additional NSP-PLR information signage.

If the potential NSP-PLR is on land owned or controlled by Council, appropriate rights of land access and tenure are unlikely to be an issue. However, Council will need to ensure that where Council land is leased or licensed to a third party, it must be possible to put in place appropriate arrangements on reasonably satisfactory and acceptable terms with the tenant or licensee permitting Council to use the land as a potential NSP-PLR. In taking these matters into account, Council should consider what alternative uses may be made, whether temporarily or semi-permanently, of land under Council control or management.

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If the potential NSP-PLR is on Crown land not owned or controlled by Council, then the consent of the Crown land manager is likely to be required. If the land has been leased or licensed to a third party, such as a caravan park operator, then the consent of the tenant or licensee to use the place as a potential NSP-PLR will also be required. In obtaining the consent of the relevant Crown land manager, it will be necessary to consider whether or not the Crown Grant or reservation authorises the place to be used as a potential NSP-PLR.

Where it is proposed that a place on privately-owned land is to be used as an NSP-PLR, then the consent of the relevant landowner (and, where applicable, occupier) for the place to be designated and used as an NSP-PLR is required. If the landowner (or occupier) does not consent to the place being designated and used as an NSP-PLR on terms which are reasonably satisfactory and acceptable to the Council, it must not be so designated and used.

Where a potential NSP-PLR is located on non-Council land, with the result that consent and rights of access need to be negotiated with the owner and (where necessary) occupier, Council officers responsible for negotiating such consent and rights of access should provide a draft form of consent to the owner/occupier for their consideration. The form of consent will be required to be approved either by Council (through a formal resolution), or by the CEO acting under delegation.

Any amendments to the form of consent which may be requested by the landowner or occupier would need to be thoroughly considered before they are agreed to by Council. If it is not possible or appropriate for Council to agree on amendments that may be requested to the consent document, then the proposed NSP-PLR should not be designated by Council.

(b) **Access and Egress**

Council must assess whether there is sufficient access to the potential NSP-PLR which will allow:

- Anticipated potential numbers of people to move to and from the place; and
- The CFA and other emergency services to attend the place for asset and personnel protection activities and operations.

Council must assess potential access and egress routes, bearing in mind the fact that NSP-PLRs are places of last resort.

As people may be seeking access to an NSP-PLR in a rushed or panicked state, a number of people could be seeking access in a relatively short time and visibility could be affected by smoke, easily navigable routes to and from an NSP-PLR are crucial.

In considering whether access and egress routes are adequate, consideration should be given to issues such as:

- The condition of the road surface;
- The proximity of the NSP-PLR to major roadways and population centres;
- The type and amount of vegetation along any access routes, and whether that vegetation could be affected by fire and pose a risk of harm to those seeking access to the potential NSP-PLR, or otherwise block access to the NSP-PLR;

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- The capacity of access routes to accommodate potentially large numbers of vehicles, and to accommodate potential vehicle break-downs;
- Parking at the place;
- Any hazards that may exist for persons accessing the place by foot, including in the buffer zone;
- Any relevant matter contained in Council's Road Management Plan prepared pursuant to the *Road Management Act 2004* (Vic); and
- If appropriate and satisfactory access and egress routes are not available, then the proposed NSP-PLR should not be designated by Council.
- Maintenance of potential NSP-PLR in accordance with CFA assessment criteria
 - (i) Council must ensure that the potential NSP-PLR can be maintained in accordance with the criteria taken into account by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment.
 - (ii) If additional information is required from the CFA to understand the criteria they have considered in arriving at their fire rating assessment, Council should seek this information from the CFA. If necessary, Council may request the CFA to undertake a further assessment to provide Council with additional information.

(c) **Opening of the NSP-PLR**

Council must consider:

- Whether it will be possible or practicable to open the potential NSP-PLR or otherwise make it available for use on a 24 hour basis during the declared fire danger period;
- The potential for damage to the place during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as an NSP-PLR;
- The potential costs to Council associated with (i) and (ii) above; and
- The possibility that a potential NSP-PLR could be used for unintended purposes, such as an emergency relief centre.

(d) **Defendable space and fire suppression activities**

CFA have advised that there is no guarantee that fire units will attend an NSP-PLR, and that individuals who use NSP-PLRs are doing so at their own risk. There should be no expectation that fire units or other emergency services personnel will attend an NSP-PLR during a bushfire.

Despite this, the potential NSP-PLR should be surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA and other fire services to conduct asset protection and fire suppression operations around the place.

Any open space should be reasonably free of obstacles which could hinder fire suppression activities. Obstacles may include, amongst other things:

- Fences;
- Buildings and sheds;

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- Steep inclines in close proximity to the potential NSP-PLR;
- Vegetation, particularly large trees;
- Other land formations, including rocks, boulders or knolls which could substantially hinder fire suppression operations.

If necessary, advice should be sought from the CFA about their defensible space and fire vehicle access requirements.

When assessing the defensible space factor, Council must consider whether or not approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna could be required, whether under legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) ('EPBC Act'), *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) ('FFG Act') or the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) ('PE Act'). If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential NSP-PLR location is designated.

If the proposed NSP-PLR does not have adequate defensible space around it, or if approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna is required but cannot be obtained before the NSP-PLR is required to be established, or cannot be obtained on reasonably satisfactory conditions, it should not be designated as an NSP-PLR by Council.

(e) **Defend-ability of Buildings**

If the potential NSP-PLR is a building, Council must consider whether or not it is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack.

As the CFA is not required to assess the risk of ember attack to a building in undertaking the CFA fire rating assessment when certifying NSP-PLRs, the Council should consider this issue. In considering this issue, Council may need to seek expert advice from appropriately-qualified CFA personnel.

If there is an appreciable risk of the proposed NSP-PLR being compromised by ember attack which cannot be satisfactorily defended, then the building is unlikely to be suitable as an NSP-PLR and should not be designated by Council.

(f) **Signage**

Council must assess whether it will be possible to have signage at the entry to, and in the vicinity of, the potential NSP-PLR. Such signage must generally be in accordance with the Signage Template, which is at Section 4 of this Plan.

Council must refer to the Signage Template when considering whether or not appropriate signage can be erected.

If signage must be placed on private land, then the consent of the landowner will be required.

(g) **Maintenance and maintainability**

- (i) Council must assess whether ongoing maintenance of the proposed NSP-PLR, and the surrounding area, is both possible and practical, having regard to the resources reasonably available to the Council. This factor should be considered by the Council not only in relation to the suitability of a proposed NSP-PLR, but also as to the total number of proposed NSP-PLRs that can be reasonably maintained within the municipal district. This is

needed to ensure that the place remains suitable for use as an NSP-PLR during each fire season.

- (ii) Specifically, the place must be capable of being maintained so as to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Fire Rating Criteria and the Council NSP-PLRP Criteria. It is Council policy that if it is not possible to maintain a potential NSP-PLR, then it must not be designated as such.
- (iii) When assessing the maintainability of the potential NSP-PLR, both the NSP-PLR and the Buffer Zone may require various maintenance activities to be undertaken on a periodic basis. The potential introduction of hazards into the Buffer Zone, such as structures, animals and vehicles, should be taken into account.
- (iv) There may be cases where maintenance activities can only be undertaken by, or with the consent of, an adjoining landowner. This may, in turn, require assurances from such landowners that the place, and areas surrounding it, will be maintained to a satisfactory level.
- (v) When assessing the maintainability of a potential NSP-PLR, Council must consider whether or not approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna could be required, whether under legislation such as the EPBC Act, FFG Act or the PE Act. If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential NSP-PLR location is designated.
- (vi) If the proposed NSP-PLR is not capable of being satisfactorily maintained, then it should not be designated by Council.

(h) Disabled access

Council must consider whether or not there are clear means of access for disabled and mobility-impaired persons to the potential NSP-PLR.

In considering this issue, regard should be had to such matters as whether or not it would be necessary for cars or other vehicles to enter the NSP-PLR area to allow persons with disabilities to be dropped off within the place.

(i) Alternative Uses of potential NSP-PLR

Council must consider what other uses may be made of the potential NSP-PLR which could impact upon its ability to properly function as an NSP-PLR.

Where a potential NSP-PLR which is used for an operational purpose at many times has been assessed by the CFA as meeting the criteria in the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines, and has been certified by the CFA, then the CFA has advised that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP-PLR.

If the place is used for other uses which could compromise its ability to be used as an NSP-PLR, then it should not be designated as an NSP-PLR by Council.

(j) Communication with the community

Council must be able to communicate the location of the potential NSP-PLR to the community. There should be good community awareness of the location of the

place, together with the risks that relate to the use of the potential NSP-PLR, and the risks associated with travelling to the potential NSP-PLR in the event of a bushfire.

(k) Public liability insurance

As a matter of prudent risk management, Council should have regard to:

- (i) Any additional factors which are relevant to Council's maintenance of insurance coverage for legal claims relating to the identification, designation, establishment, maintenance and decommissioning of a place as an NSP-PLR, as well as travel to an NSP-PLR; and
- (ii) Any statutory defences to claims.

3.3.2 Who is responsible for undertaking the Council assessment of potential NSP-PLRs?

A report prepared by the MERO and MFPO detailing whether or not the potential NSP-PLR meets the above criteria should be prepared and provided to:

The MEMPC, where it is practicable for the MEMPC to be involved in the Council assessment process; and

The Council.

The MEMPC must assess the potential NSP-PLR, taking into account the MERO's report, and make a recommendation to Council as to whether or not to designate the potential NSP-PLR.

3.3.3 When are potential NSP-PLR locations required to be assessed by Council?

Any potential NSP-PLRs certified by the CFA should be assessed by Council no later than 30 June each year, so as to allow time for the places to be designated and established as NSP-PLRs by Council, and for any appropriate amendments to be made to the MEMP and MFPP prior to the commencement of the bushfire season.

This timing is obviously subject to the CFA assessing and certifying the potential NSP-PLR location in a timely manner.

3.4 Council Designation of NSP-PLRs

3.4.1 Who is responsible for Council designation of NSP-PLRs?

Council must formally determine whether or not to designate a place as an NSP-PLR. Council should not designate a place as an NSP-PLR-PLR unless it is satisfied that the place is suitable, having regard to the Council Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan Criteria.

An NSP-PLR-PLR may only be designated by a resolution of the Council.

3.4.2 When should Council consider the designation of a potential NSP-PLR-PLR?

Following preparation of an assessment of a potential NSP-PLR-PLR by the MEMPC, Council should determine whether or not to designate a potential NSP-PLR

location by no later than 31 July. This will enable any necessary establishment works to be undertaken.

3.4.3 What must the MFPO do once a potential NSP-PLR-PLR is designated by Council?

Once the Council has designated a place as an NSP-PLR-PLR, the MFPO must provide an updated list of all designated NSP-PLRs within the municipality to the CFA under section 50K of the CFA Act. This updated list must be provided by no later than 30 September in each year.

3.5 Establishment and Maintenance of NSP-PLRs Following Designation

3.5.1 Who is responsible for establishing NSP-PLR-PLRs?

Following designation, Council will establish all designated NSP-PLRs within the municipal district.

3.5.2 What must be done when establishing NSP-PLR-PLRs?

To establish a NSP-PLR after its designation, Council must:

- Erect appropriate signage at and near the NSP-PLR-PLR;
- undertake any necessary preparatory works, including the construction or establishment of any required infrastructure and the clearance of vegetation, so as to enable the area to be used as an NSP-PLR;
- publish the location of the NSP-PLR on the Council website; and
- Update Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan and Municipal Fire Prevention Plan to include the location of the NSP-PLR.

The MFPO must provide an up-to-date list of NSP-PLRs to the CFA no later than 30 September each year under section 50K of the CFA Act.

Following designation, all designated NSP-PLRs within the municipality must be identified in:

- the MFPP, under section 55A(2) of the CFA Act; and
- The MEMP, under section 20(2) of the EM Act.

3.5.3 When must NSP-PLRs be established?

NSP-PLRs should be established no later than [30 October] each year.

3.5.4 Maintenance of NSP-PLRs

NSP-PLRs within the municipality need to be maintained by Council. Maintenance activities must include vegetation management, hazardous tree removal and the maintenance of infrastructure required for the satisfactory functioning of the place as an NSP-PLR. If additional works have been required to establish the NSP-PLR, then those works should be subject to periodic review.

The fuel load in the vicinity of the NSP-PLR must not increase so as to affect the fire rating of the NSP-PLR.

Council must ensure that defensible spaces, the Buffer Zone and access and egress routes are appropriately maintained.

Council must inspect the NSP-PLR, Buffer Zone and access and egress routes on a periodic basis, and in any event not less than once every month during the declared fire danger period, to ensure that the NSP-PLR continues to be capable of functioning as an NSP-PLR. If Council identifies issues that may impact upon the functioning of the place as an NSP-PLR, then Council must:

- Address the issue;
- Take reasonable steps to have the issue addressed, such as requesting the owner of the land on which the NSP-PLR or Buffer Zone is located to address the issue; or
- Consider decommissioning the NSP-PLR and revoking the designation of the place as an NSP-PLR.

3.6 Annual Inspections of NSP-PLRs

3.6.1 Who is responsible for the annual review of NSP-PLRs?

Council must undertake an annual review of all designated NSP-PLRs within the municipality.

Council must also request the CFA to undertake an assessment against the CFA Fire Rating Criteria of each NSP-PLR within the municipality on an annual basis.

These reviews are intended to ensure that each NSP-PLR remains suitable for use as an NSP-PLR during the up-coming fire season.

3.6.2 What must be considered when undertaking inspections?

NSP-PLRs should be assessed annually against the Council NSP-PLRP Criteria. The CFA will assess NSP-PLRs against the CFA Fire Rating Criteria.

If an NSP-PLR no longer meets:

- The CFA Fire Rating Criteria, then it must be decommissioned; and
- The Council NSP-PLRP Criteria, then Council must determine whether or not it wishes to address any of the identified non-compliances. If it does not, then the NSP-PLR must be decommissioned.

3.6.3 When must NSP-PLR locations be inspected?

NSP-PLRs must be inspected prior to 31 August each year under section 50J of the CFA Act.

Section 4 Summary of factors for Council to consider in assessing potential
NSP-PLR locations prior to designation

4.1 Factors to Consider in Assessing Potential NSP-PLRs

Council NSP-PLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Consents and rights of access See section 3.2(a)	If the potential NSP-PLR is located on Council-owned land, can Council use the land as an NSP-PLR if required? Consider whether or not Council allows the land to be used for potentially inconsistent purposes, such as for farmers' markets, fetes, circuses etc.	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Consents and rights of access See section 3.2(a)	If the potential NSP-PLR is on private land, or public land under the control of a Crown Land Manager (other than Council), can Council enter into arrangements which allow it to use the land as a potential NSP-PLR on reasonably satisfactory terms? Also consider whether Council has the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance; and • Erect appropriate signage at the NSP-PLR. 	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Access and egress See section 3.2(b)	Do access routes to the potential NSP-PLR allow for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The anticipated potential number of people to move to and from the place; and • The CFA and other emergency services to attend the place for asset and personnel protection activities? 	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Access and egress See section 3.2(b)	Are access routes easily navigable, bearing in mind they could be affected by smoke? Consider the condition of the road surface, proximity to population centres and major roads, capacity of access routes to accommodate large numbers of vehicles, the availability of car parking at the place and any other relevant matters.	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A

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Council NSP-PLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Maintenance of NSP-PLR in accordance with CFA assessment See section 3.2(c)	<p>Can Council maintain the potential NSP-PLR in accordance with the criteria taken into account by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment?</p> <p>If the CFA have not provided sufficient information in relation to the criteria it has taken into account in arriving at its fire rating assessment, it may be necessary for Council to seek further information from the CFA.</p>	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Opening of the NSP-PLR See section 3.2(d)	<p>Will it be possible and practicable to make the potential NSP-PLR available for use on a 24 hour basis during the declared fire danger period? This is a particular issue where the potential NSP-PLR is a building.</p> <p>Consider the potential for damage to the NSP-PLR which could result during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as an NSP-PLR.</p>	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Opening of the NSP-PLR See section 3.2(d)	<p>What costs could be incurred by Council in making the potential NSP-PLR available on a 24 hour basis during the declared fire danger period? Are these costs reasonable, and capable of being borne by Council?</p>	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Opening of the NSP-PLR See section 3.2(d)	<p>Could the potential NSP-PLR be used for an unintended purpose which could impact upon its use as an NSP-PLR (such as an emergency relief centre)?</p>	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Defendable space and fire suppression activities See section	<p>Is the potential NSP-PLR surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA to conduct asset protection and fire suppression operations? Is that open space reasonably free of obstacles (such as fences, buildings, steep gradients, vegetation and other land formations)?</p> <p>Council should seek CFA advice concerning the defendability of the</p>	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A

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Council NSP-PLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
3.2(e)	potential NSP-PLR and the Buffer Zone, including in relation to fire vehicle access requirements.		
Defendable space and fire suppression activities See section 3.2(e)	Will approval be required under legislation such as the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i> , <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic)</i> and the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic)</i> ? Can such approval be obtained before the NSP-PLR is established?	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Defendability of buildings See section 3.2(f)	If the potential NSP-PLR is a building, has Council has sought expert advice from the CFA to determine whether the NSP-PLR is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack? If it is subject to such a risk, can that risk be safely managed?	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Signage See section 3.2(g)	Can appropriate signage be erected at the entry to the potential NSP-PLR, and in its vicinity?	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Signage See section 3.2(g)	If signage needs to be placed on private land, can Council obtained the consent of the relevant landowner to the erection of the signage?	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Maintenance and maintainability See section 3.2(h)	Is the potential NSP-PLR capable of being maintained to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Fire Rating Criteria and the Council NSP-PLRP Criteria? Where relevant, consider whether adjoining land owners and occupiers will provide Council with an assurance that both the potential NSP-PLR and the Buffer Zone can be maintained to a satisfactory level.	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A

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Council NSP-PLRP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Disabled access See section 3.2(i)	Are there are means of access for disabled and mobility-impaired persons to the potential NSP-PLR, including vehicle access to drop off people with disabilities?	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Alternative uses of potential NSP-PLR See section 3.2(j)	Can Council manage alternative uses which may be made of the potential NSP-PLR so as to ensure that those uses will not compromise the function of the place as a potential NSP-PLR? The CFA has advised that where a potential NSP-PLR which is used for an operational purpose at many times meets the CFA Fire Rating Criteria, then the CFA considers that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP-PLR.	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A
Community Communication See section 3.2(k)	Will it be possible to ensure that there will be good community awareness of the location of the potential NSP-PLR, and the risks associated with using the potential NSP-PLR?	<i>To be advised</i>	N/A

Section 5 NSP-PLR Signage Template & Checklist

Country Fire Authority Act 1958

Section 50H

Signage Guidelines for Neighbourhood Safer Places

1. Under section 50H of the **Country Fire Authority Act 1958**, municipal councils are required to:
 - (1) ensure that appropriate signs are provided at each designated neighbourhood safer place in its municipal district; and in meeting that obligation; and
 - (2) have regard to signage guidelines issued from time to time on the Internet site of the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC).
2. The OESC has, in consultation with the Country Fire Authority and the Municipal Association of Victoria, developed a standard sign for designated neighbourhood safer places.
3. The specifications for the standard sign are set out in Schedule 1.
4. Nothing in these guidelines prevents a municipal council from providing additional information on the sign post displaying the standard sign. For example, such information may relate to the capacity or use of the place.
5. These guidelines come into effect on the date below and continue to apply until otherwise replaced or varied.



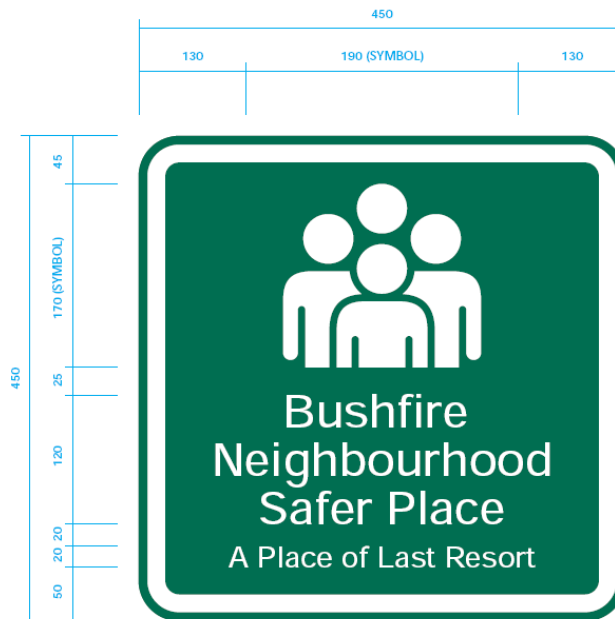
Bruce Esplin
Emergency Services Commissioner

Dated: *9 December 2009.*

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Bushfire Neighbourhood Safer Place
450mm x 450mm Sign



Notes:

- All Dimensions are in Millimetres
- Border, background and edgestrip - Retroreflective GREEN CL.2 (PMS Colour 342)
- Symbol - Retroreflective WHITE CL.2 (community information billboard sign)

The above has been designed in accordance with Australian Standards 2342 -1992 Guidelines.
Signage contractor responsible for manufacturing in accordance with VICROADS Specifications.

Australian Standards applicable:

AS 2899.1 - 1986	Public Information Symbols Part 1 – General Information Signs
AS 2342 – 1992	Development, Testing & Implementing of Information & Safety Symbols and Symbolic Signs
Colours:	
Background	Dark Green (as specified)
Text	Reflective White (as specified)
Enclosure	Reflective White (as specified)

COMMOTION

Making Victoria FireReady:



This is the signage that will identify a Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort.

Neighbourhood Safer Place(s)

Place(s) of Last Resort has(ve) been designated at:

- <insert location details>
- <insert location details>

Further details, including a map of the NSP location(s), can be found on the Community Information Maps (Township Protection Plans) published on the CFA website at: www.cfa.vic.gov.au

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The purpose of a Neighbourhood Safer Place - **Place of Last Resort** is to provide some protection from the effects of radiant heat during a bushfire.

A **Place of Last Resort** is only intended for use when all other plans have failed and should not be considered as a place to relocate to when leaving early as it will not guarantee safety or survival from fire, embers or radiant heat.

Travelling to a **Place of Last Resort** when there is a bushfire may be extremely dangerous due to dense smoke, radiant heat, flying embers, fallen trees and power lines, traffic congestion and accidents.

A Neighbourhood Safer Place - **Place of Last Resort** may not have the capacity to cater for special needs; and there will be no support services (food or drink, material aid) or provision for pets. There is no guarantee that emergency services will be present during a bushfire.

A Neighbourhood Safer Place – **Place of Last Resort** should not replace a personal bushfire survival plan. If your plan is to leave early, the safest option is to leave at the beginning of a day when the Fire Danger Rating is declared Severe or Extreme. On a Code Red (Catastrophic) rated fire danger day, the safest option is to leave the night before, or early in the morning.

This information is up-to-date as at <insert date>. Check the CFA website regularly for a full list of NSP locations.

1800 240 667
www.cfa.vic.gov.au

<Insert council logo (same height as FireReady logo)>

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.
FireReady

WARNING

THIS *DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACE* (NSP) IS A PLACE OF LAST RESORT DURING THE PASSAGE OF A BUSHFIRE. WHILST IT MAY OFFER SOME PROTECTION FROM BUSHFIRE, THE SAFETY OR SURVIVAL OF THOSE WHO ASSEMBLE HERE IS NOT GUARANTEED.

BEFORE DECIDING TO HEAD TOWARDS, OR ENTER, THIS NSP IN THE EVENT OF BUSHFIRE, BE AWARE THAT:

- MANY HOUSES MAY OFFER BETTER PROTECTION THAN THIS NSP
- TRAVELLING TO THIS NSP WHEN THERE IS BUSHFIRE CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL BE SAFE DOING SO.
- THIS NSP MAY NOT PREVENT DEATH OR INJURY FROM FIRE, EMBERS OR RADIANT HEAT WHEN YOU GET HERE
- YOU SHOULD ONLY USE THIS NSP WHEN YOUR PRIMARY BUSHFIRE PLAN HAS FAILED OR CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED
- THIS NSP ONLY HAS LIMITED CAPACITY
- THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT CFA OR OTHER EMERGENCY SERVICES WILL BE PRESENT AT THIS NSP DURING A BUSHFIRE
- NO FACILITIES ARE PROVIDED FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, INCLUDING THOSE REQUIRING MEDICAL ATTENTION
- THIS NSP MAY BE UNCOMFORTABLE AND NO AMENITIES SUCH AS FOOD AND DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED
- THERE IS NO PROVISION FOR ANIMALS

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE INFORMATION LINE - 1800 240 667

5.1 Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort Checklist (April 2010)

Item	Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort designation steps	Timeframe	Date completed
1.	<p>There are two ways to start the NSP-PLR designation process:</p> <p>(a) Review and adapt Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan (MNSP-PLRP) template to reflect local needs. The criteria outlined in this plan will later be applied to all potential NSP-PLRs. Once the template is modified ensure the following steps are followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Take to MEMPC for endorsement; (ii) Take to Council meeting for adoption and ratification of criteria; and (iii) Place Council-adopted MNSP-PLRP on council website (to comply with CFA Act). <p>(b) Commence identification of potential NSP-PLRs prior to Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) endorsement and Council adoption of MNSP-PLRP.</p>	Up four weeks.	
2.	<p>Desktop exercise to be undertaken with by council (MERO or MFPO – depending who is managing the process within council) and CFA to identify potential locations for further consideration. Exercise could make use of aerial photography, GIS mapping, Google maps, VFRR, and some MNSP-PLRP criteria.</p>		
3.	<p>Council (preferably with CFA, and potentially with VicPol) visit sites to get sufficient information to begin assessment including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic and common place names • Land ownership • Access and egress 	Up to four weeks	

Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places – Places of Last Resort

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Item	Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort designation steps	Timeframe	Date completed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation • Street address, • Nearest intersection • Melway or VicRoads reference • Photographic evidence of noncompliance issues 		
4.	MEMPC meets to discuss potential sites and the MNSP-PLRP criteria (using either Council-adopted MNSP-PLRP (if selected step 1a above) or draft MNSP-PLRP (if selected step 1b above). Identify any additional information required for each site.		
5.	Council to write to CFA requesting assessment for all shortlisted sites.		
6.	<p>If the site is on Crown land, council to start discussions around consent and other arrangements with DSE and relevant department (e.g. DEECD), following established departmental protocols.</p> <p>If the site is on private land, start discussions with private land owner and occupier. If verbal agreement with owner and occupier, council to start preparing the Consent and Indemnity Deed for non-Council owned land.</p>	Up to four weeks	
7.	CFA complete assessment of all shortlisted potential NSP-PLRs using the CFA assessment guidelines and provide written report to council. Recommend council officer present at assessment to ensure understanding of why site does/ does not comply.	Up to four weeks	
8.	<p>Prior to designation, ensure all MNSP-PLRP criteria have been met. Recommend using an assessment team comprising Council, VicPoL, CFA, and DSE and VicRoads where appropriate - use Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) structure where possible.</p> <p>The MAV MNSP-PLRP model plan includes the criteria below. Councils must consider each of the factors set out in the MAV template, and should also consider other factors which are specific to the Council, such as resources available. Factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent and access arrangements (if 	Up to four weeks	

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Item	Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort designation steps	Timeframe	Date completed
	<p>proposed site on non-council land). This includes Ministerial gazettal for Crown land and signing of the Consent and Indemnity Deed for private land owners, and any further steps agreed through the departmental protocols (step 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient access and egress to site – this may include a need for vegetation management, and this must be considered as part of the designation process • Ensuring the site can be maintained in accordance with the CFA assessment criteria • Ensuring the site is accessible by the public on a 24 hour basis • Defendable space to allow for fire suppression activities • Defend-ability of buildings (if applicable) • Whether or not it will be possible to erect signage • Maintenance requirements and maintainability • Disabled access • Alternative uses of potential NSP-PLR • Public liability insurance • Any additional criteria applicable to local risk and circumstances 		
9.	MERO/ MFPO and any relevant MEMPC members to consider CFA comments, maintenance arrangements and other MNSP-PLRP criteria and send report to all MEMPC members with suggested final list of NSP-PLR sites and MNSP-PLRP.		
10.	Request signage from MAV (if still available). If unavailable through MAV, signage will have to be produced according to OESC guidelines. Consider directional signage - speak to VicRoads if necessary.		

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Item	Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort designation steps	Timeframe	Date completed
11.	MEMPC meet to consider MNSP-PLRP and potential NSP-PLRs. MEMPC recommendations submitted to Council.		
12.	MEMPC makes recommendation to Council on MNSP-PLRP and NSP-PLRs.		
13.	<p>Council makes decision to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt updated MNSP-PLRP (or adopt MNSP-PLRP for first time if not done in step 1) • Designate sites or delegate authority for designation decisions • Document reasons for not designating iNSP-PLRected sites; i.e. failed to meet MNSP-PLRP criteria 	Allow time to resubmit to Council if required	
14.	If a conditional designation is made, ensure all conditions are met before publicising NSP-PLR or advising stakeholders of designation (see step 15).		
15.	<p>MERO or MFPO provides advice, including copies of Council reports, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) CFA (local CFA regional office and CFA headquarters, township protection plan project officer) (b) The MEMPC (c) Municipal Association of Victoria (d) Owner and occupier (if non-Council owned land), and (e) DSE, Director of Public Land Division – where NSP-PLR is on Crown land reserve 		
16.	<p>Once designated by Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erect signage • Communicate decision to community by means outlined in MNSP-PLRP and Council report • Council-adopted MNSP-PLRP updated on website. List and locations of NSP-PLR sites should also be added to Council website including 		

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Item	Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort designation steps	Timeframe	Date completed
	photos, maps and description of individual sites		
17.	Update MEMP and MFPP/ MFMP to include designated NSP-PLRs. Replace versions on Council website (if applicable).		
18.	<p>Ensure that there are processes in place so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Each NSP-PLR is inspected and maintained (see s 50I of the CFA Act), in accordance with the adopted MNSP-PLRP (see s 50F of the CFA Act) if there is one (b) Each NSP-PLR is assessed by the CFA before 31 August each year (see s 50J of the CFA Act), and (c) The MFPO provides the CFA an up to date list of all NSP-PLRs by 30 September each year (see s 50K of the CFA Act) 		
19.	In the event an NSP-PLR is decommissioned, or if there are significant changes to its location or attributes, ensure organisations/ people listed in step 15 are notified and amend MEMP, MFPP/MFMP and if required, the MNSP-PLRP.		

Definitions

Term	Definition

List of Endnotes

1. [Recommendation 8.5, 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report.](#)
2. [The CFA Act refers to 'Country Fire Authority Assessment Guidelines'. For ease of reference in the context of this MNSP Plan, these guidelines are referred to as the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines.](#)
3. [The CFA Guidelines refer to 'separation distances'. However, for ease of understanding, the term 'buffer zone' is used throughout the MNSP Plan.](#)