

6. ECO-INFO - BUSHFIRE HAZARD REDUCTION GUIDELINES

Edited July 2006

The following guidelines are provided to assist you, the landowner and/or contractor to comply with the conditions required by either a warning letter or a formal notice issued under Section 66 of the Rural Fires Act. By carefully following these simple instructions, your obligation as a member of this community will not only be met, but the balance between bushfire safety and environmental responsibility will be maintained.

Burning of the whole block is not acceptable, nor is bulldozing to bare earth. Both of these processes require development consent and are not considered necessary at this stage. Severe penalties are applicable for acts of perceived environmental degradation. The use of bulldozers and other track type machinery is not acceptable except to load log heaps onto trucks for transport to Council garbage tips. Rubber tyred wheel type tractors with slashers, walk-behind mower slasher, scrub cutters and hand tools are the most satisfactory equipment for clearing of the fragile soil types in Wyong Shire. Only this type of equipment may be used.

The understorey vegetation from ground level to two metres high should be thinned, removed or mulched. Single specimens or groups of plants not exceeding 1.5 metres in diameter may be left in an undisturbed condition provided a break of at least 2 metres is maintained between the clumps. By this method, both habitat and species variation will be maintained, whilst the overall fire threat will be reduced. Where possible, such clumps should be located around retained semi-mature trees.

Small saplings and vegetation less than 75mm in diameter or less than 3 metres in height may be removed, lopped or thinned (preference should be given to smooth barked species when retaining trees).

When underscrubbing greater than 500 square metres or removing vegetation larger than listed above, you should contact Council's Customer Service staff (Phone:

(02) 4350 5555) as development consent is required.

All cut material and ground fuel, leaves, bark, twigs, grass tussocks, etc should be mulched and spread over the block to help prevent weed invasion and soil erosion. Such mulch shall not exceed 100mm in depth. Once the land has been cleared, no material is to be heaped and left. If material is heaped during the clearing process, it must be disposed of by one of the following methods:

- 1 By removal to the local garbage tip;
- 2 By returning all suitable material to the site in the form of mulch.

The work on the block and therefore compliance with any notice issued, will not be considered complete until this process has been finalised.

In addition to those requirements listed under environmental considerations in the notice, all legislation regarding protected and endangered species must be complied with. When selecting plants for removal, the following preferences should be observed:

- 1 Firstly, remove all declared noxious (invasive plants);
- 2 Then, self propagating exotics (invasive plants);
- 3 Not-native exotics;
- 4 Introduced exotic plants (native);
- 5 Indigenous native species (when required).

Should you have any uncertainty regarding your particular property or notice, inspectors are available for consultation weekdays on (02) 4350 5480. Your co-operation is sought in providing a safer, more pleasant environment in Wyong Shire.