



## POSITION STATEMENT

### BUSH FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT ON CROWN LAND

#### Background

In the 2024/25 bush fire season, there have been four significant bushfires in the City of Gosnells as follows:

- Champion Lakes / Southern River fire (November 2024)
- Brixton Street Wetlands (Kenwick) fire (January 2025)
- Hester Park fire (February 2025)
- Barrett Street fire (April 2025)

With the exception of the Champion Lakes / Southern River fire which started in the City of Armadale before spreading to the City of Gosnells, the fires have all occurred predominantly on Crown land designated as Bush Forever. The land is managed by either the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage or the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Both Hester Park and the Barrett Street Bush Forever sites are surrounded by residential development and the fires in those locations posed risks to lives and property.

Crown land in the City of Gosnells presents the greatest bush fire risk. However, the Crown is not bound by the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and as such, has no statutory obligation to manage bush fire risk on its land.

Consolidated emergency services legislation that would replace the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and other legislation has been proposed for many years. The City has advocated for that legislation to bind the Crown to compel State Government agencies to manage fire risk on Crown land.

The City undertakes annual fire hazard inspections and advises State Government agencies of land they manage that presents a fire risk. However, the City has no authority to compel those agencies to address the risks.

This creates inconsistencies and has the potential to compromise community safety. The owners of private property are required to comply with the City's fire hazard reduction requirements, yet the Department of Housing is not required to ensure properties it owns comply. The City is required to manage fire risk on reserves it owns or manages, however, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is not.

State Planning Policy 3.7 – Bushfire requires the consideration and mitigation of bushfire risk in land development, and property owners are often required to design homes and build to standards capable of withstanding bushfires. However, State Government agencies often do not adequately develop and implement bush fire mitigation plans for their own land, including where that land abuts residential development.



### Council's Position

1. The Crown should be bound by the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and any new consolidated emergency services legislation.
2. Regardless of whether the Crown is bound by legislation, Government agencies should be directed and resourced to proactively manage bush fire risk on Crown land, particularly where that land is located in close proximity to residential developments.