

Canterbury Road East, Lara, Victoria

Bushfire Risk Assessment for a proposed rezoning



Report for Lara Farms Pty. Ltd.

June 2022



BeaconEcological

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- **Matt Deledio** (Lara Farms Pty. Ltd.) for site and project information.
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DISCLAIMER

The author advises that the information presented in this report, including any bushfire management advice, has been prepared with all due diligence and care, and based on the best available knowledge and research.

However the author takes no responsibility for any loss, injury or financial damage resulting from the reliance and/or application of management advice provided in the report. Requirements detailed in this document do not guarantee survival of the buildings or the occupants. The client is strongly encouraged to develop and practice a bushfire survival plan.

Information and assistance including a template for a Bushfire Survival Plan is provided as part of the 'Fire Ready Kit' available through the CFA website at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au> or through your local CFA Regional office.



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SUMMARY

Beacon Ecological was engaged by Lara Farms Pty. Ltd. to undertake a Bushfire Attack Level assessment and prepare a Bushfire Risk Assessment for a proposed rezoning at Canterbury Road East, Lara, Victoria. This includes the properties: 95, 99, 101-145 and 76-156 Canterbury Road East, Lara and 705-765 and 785-805 Princes Highway Lara. These properties are bounded by Rennies Road in the east, Hovells Creek in the north and the Geelong-Melbourne Rail line in the west.

The study area is located within a Bushfire Prone Area. This document details fire related threats to the proposed development and includes responses to *Clause 13.02 Bushfire* of the City of Greater Geelong Planning Scheme.

The surrounding landscape is generally modified and supports high density residential areas to the north and west, industrial areas to the southwest and a mix of farm paddocks, public open space and low density residential areas in the remainder.

The bushfire hazards in the surrounding landscape can be mitigated and the intended residential rezoning is deemed appropriate given the surrounding bushfire hazards. Any potential residential subdivision will be able to support BAL 12.5 or less construction standards in accordance with the *Australian Standard AS 3959-2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas*.



1 INTRODUCTION

Beacon Ecological was engaged by Lara Farms Pty. Ltd. to undertake a Bushfire Attack Level assessment and prepare a Bushfire Risk Assessment for a proposed rezoning at Canterbury Road East, Lara, Victoria.

The study area is located within a Bushfire Prone Area. This document details fire related threats to the proposed development and includes responses to *Clause 13.02 Bushfire* of the City of Greater Geelong Planning Scheme.

1.1 PROPOSAL

The northern portion of the project area is proposed to be rezoned to residential with the south remaining Farming Zone with a future business park proposed (Figure 2). Note that a linear open space trail is proposed on the north boundary of the proposed future business park area.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to assess the bushfire risk to the development to meet Clause 13.02 requirements includes the following:

- Demonstrate the Protection of Human Life.
- Bushfire Hazard Identification and Assessment
 - Landscape Risk (up to 75 kilometres from the site)
 - Local Conditions (1 kilometres radius from the site)
 - Neighbourhood Conditions – (400 metre radius from the site)
 - Development Site (100 metre from the site which includes the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) Assessment).
- Settlement planning.
- Areas of high biodiversity conservation value.
- Use and development control in a Bushfire Prone Area.

2.1 BACKGROUND REVIEW

The following websites were reviewed to obtain background information on the study site:

- **Planning Schemes Online** for information regarding topography and slope, planning provision overlays and zones pertaining to native vegetation and ecological values within the study area (DELWP 2022a).
- **Google maps** for aerial photos of the study area and surrounds.



Other relevant literature, including the *Australian Standard. Construction in bushfire prone areas AS 3959 - 2018* (Australian Standards 2018) and practice notes published by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) were reviewed as part of the investigation.

2.2 FIELD ASSESSMENT

A field assessment was undertaken on 20 May 2022 to complete the Bushfire Hazard Landscape Assessment and Bushfire Attack Level Assessment.

2.3 BUSHFIRE HAZARD LANDSCAPE RISK AND LOCAL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The bushfire hazard landscape assessment provides information on the bushfire hazard more than 100 metres away from a development site. Landscape characteristics considered as part of this assessment include:

- Vegetation extent in the broader locality;
- The road network;
- Likely directions of travel for local bushfires; and,
- Any significant landscape features that are relevant.

2.4 BUSHFIRE ASSESSMENT LEVEL ASSESSMENT

Land within 100 metres of proposed development was traversed where possible to determine classifiable vegetation as described in AS 3959 2018 (Australian Standards 2018) and low-threat and modified vegetation as described in *Planning Permit Applications. Bushfire Management Overlay. Technical Guide* (DELWP 2017). The distance to classifiable vegetation and the proposed development was calculated as well as the slope under the classifiable vegetation.

This information in conjunction with Tables 1 or 2 from clause 53.02-5 was used to determine the appropriate Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) dwelling construction requirements. The higher the BAL, the higher the exposure to the effects of flame, radiant heat and ember attack from a bushfire (Plate 1), (DELWP 2017). A lower BAL (i.e. 12.5 or 19) will have a larger distance to high threat vegetation and fewer construction requirements, whilst a BAL-40 will have a smaller distance and extensive fire-protection construction requirements.



Plate 1. Bushfire Attack Levels (BAL) and hazards associated with bushfire threats (Source: DELWP 2017)

Construction Standards

Building construction and design can be used to minimise the impacts of ember attack and radiant heat on a building. Construction requirements for buildings relating to a calculated BAL are prescribed in AS3959-2018 (Australian Standards 2018). The materials and design of a building can be used to prevent the accumulation of debris and entry of embers. Appropriate construction helps the building to withstand the potential exposure from a bushfire as the fire front passes. See Appendix 2 for construction requirements associated with this development.

2.5 LIMITATIONS

When determining the bushfire hazards of the site and landscape, access to private property was not always available. In some cases, adjacent threats were determined using aerial photos and viewing over fences.

Classifiable vegetation was assessed based on the current conditions and evidence of vegetation modification. Assumptions have been made as to what ongoing vegetation conditions and successional processes may occur with respect to classifiable vegetation types.



3 BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL ASSESSMENT

3.1 LOCALITY AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located at Canterbury Road East, Lara, Victoria (Figure 1). This includes the properties: 95, 99, 101-145 and 76-156 Canterbury Road East, Lara and 705-765 and 785-805 Princes Highway Lara. These properties are bounded by Rennies Road in the east, Hovells Creek in the north and the Geelong-Melbourne Rail line in the west.

Property shape, dimensions, size, orientation and contours: The study area is approximately 145 hectares. The property and surrounding 150 metres radius is generally flat, with a gentle slope to Hovells Creek in the north (Figure 2). A slight depression is also present in the south of the assessment area.

The project area is located within Farming Zone (FZ) of the City of Greater Geelong Planning Scheme and the north is covered by a Floodway Overlay (FO), (DELWP 2022d).

Existing vehicle access arrangements: Access exists from Rennies Road along the east border and Canterbury Road East in the north. Both are two lane, sealed roads that meets CFA access requirements.

Any features of the site relevant to bushfire considerations: There are no features of the site relevant to bushfire considerations.

3.2 VEGETATION ASSESSMENT

Two classifiable vegetation types, Grassland and Scrub, were noted within the 100 metre assessment area (Figure 1). Excludable, low threat vegetation was also noted. See below for a description and photo of each vegetation type.



Grassland Vegetation:

Vegetation that meets the AS3959 classification of Grassland was noted as dominating the assessment area (Figure 2). This vegetation type is dominated by introduced pasture grasses and crops (Plate 2).



Plate 2. Grassland vegetation within the assessment area.

Scrub Vegetation:

Vegetation that meets the AS3959 classification of Scrub was noted to the west of the assessment area in the rail reserve and also as a small patch in the east (Figure 2). This vegetation type in the rail reserve is generally dominated by native Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* with a mix of native and introduced grasses and herbs in the understorey (Plate 3). This vegetation is broken up by an access road and the rail line.



Plate 3. Grassland vegetation within the assessment area.

Vegetation in the east is dominated by the introduced Golden Wreath Wattle *Acacia saligna* over an understorey dominated by introduced grasses.

Excludable, low threat vegetation:

Areas of maintained gardens, slashed grassy areas and non-vegetated surfaces dominate industrial and residential areas within the assessment area (Figure 2, Plate 4). Areas of wetland and succulent native species are also present (Plate 5). These areas are excluded from classification in accordance with section 2.2.3.2 of AS 3959-2018 as they are:

1. Non-vegetated areas, including waterways, roads, footpaths, buildings and rocky outcrops.
2. Low threat vegetation, including grassland managed in a minimal fuel condition, maintained lawns, golf courses, maintained public reserves and parklands, vineyards, orchards, cultivated gardens, commercial nurseries, nature strips and windbreaks (Standards Australia, 2018).



Plate 4. Excludable, low threat residential areas within the assessment area.



Plate 5. Saltmarsh areas considered excludable, low threat vegetation within the assessment area.

3.3 BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL (BAL) FOR THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL REZONING AREA

The proposed rezoning allows for BAL 12.5 development across the site with some setbacks from classifiable vegetation adjacent to property boundaries. The rezoned area will be managed to defensible space standards as per Appendix 1, (Defensible space requirements have been taken from Table 1 to Clause 53.02-5).

See Table 1 and Figure 2 for the distance to the highest threat vegetation within 100, the slope under the classifiable vegetation and setbacks required to achieve BAL 12.5.

Table 1. BAL set backs for the proposed rezoning area.

Location	Highest threat classifiable vegetation	Slope under classifiable vegetation	BAL 12.5 setback required from classifiable vegetation	Comments
Southwest Boundary	Grassland	0°-5° downslope	22 metres	A linear open space trail is proposed along this boundary that will be managed in a low threat condition. This trail will provide a set back of at least 22 metres achieving BAL12.5 for any dwellings located adjacent to this boundary.
		Flat/upslope	19 metres	
East boundary	Grassland	Flat/upslope	19 metres	Any dwellings located on the east boundary adjacent to mapped grassland will require a setback of 19 metres to achieve BAL 12.5
	Scrub	0°-5° downslope	31 metres	Any dwellings located on the east boundary adjacent to mapped grassland will require a setback of 31 metres to achieve BAL 12.5. A water retention basin is likely to be proposed adjacent to this vegetation providing further protection.
West Boundary	Grassland	Flat/upslope	19 metres	A performance solution may be potentially applied to this aspect by way of non-combustible fencing along the property boundary to reduce the set back requirement at the subdivision stage, particularly for areas of Scrub vegetation.
	Scrub	Flat/upslope	27 metres	
North boundary	Grassland	0°-5° downslope	19 metres	Hovells Creek and low threat vegetation already provides greater than 19 metres setback from any Grassland vegetation.



4 CLAUSE 13.02 BUSHFIRE

Clause 13.02 relates to development within Bushfire Prone and Bushfire Management Overlay areas and should be considered at the planning permit application stage for development within these areas.

4.1 OBJECTIVE

To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.

4.2 APPLICATION

This policy must be applied to all planning and decision making under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* relating to land which is:

- Within a designated bushfire prone area;
- Subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay; or
- Proposed to be used or developed in a way that may create a bushfire hazard.

The proposed development is located on land which is within a designated bushfire prone area.

4.3 STRATEGIES

See below for the Clause 13.02 strategies and how the proposed rezoning adequately responds to them.

Protection of human life

Strategy	Response
Prioritising the protection of human life over all other policy considerations.	The site is located within a generally low bushfire risk location on the southeast boundary of the established settlement of Lara. High density residential development has occurred to the north and west. Industrial development has occurred to the southeast. Some pasture is present to the west and low density development to the southeast. Managed open space is present to the east and directly north over Hovells Creek. The risk of bushfire to the proposed residential rezoning to people, property and community infrastructure is considered acceptable.
Directing population growth and development to low risk locations and ensuring the availability of, and safe access to, areas where human life can be better protected from the effects of bushfire.	As above the site is within the developed settlement of Lara. Once completed, the development may be considered a place of refuge as all vegetation within the site will be managed.
Reducing the vulnerability of communities to bushfire through the consideration of bushfire risk in	The proposed development will not increase the vulnerability of the Lara community to bushfire. The



<p>decision-making at all stages of the planning process.</p>	<p>site has been identified for future development as <i>Conventional Residential</i> in the Greater Geelong planning scheme as part of the Lara Structure Plan in <i>Clause 21.13 Lara</i>.</p>
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Bushfire hazard identification and assessment

Strategy	Response
<p>Applying the best available science to identify vegetation, topographic and climatic conditions that create a bushfire hazard.</p>	<p>AS3959-2018 has been used to determine bushfire threat to the proposed rezoning area.</p>
<p>Considering the best available information about bushfire hazard including the map of designated bushfire prone areas prepared under the Building Act 1993 or regulations made under that Act.</p>	<p>The site is located within bushfire prone area and the risk to the proposed development is considered in the landscape hazard assessment.</p>
<p>Applying the Bushfire Management Overlay in planning schemes to areas where the extent of vegetation can create an extreme bushfire hazard.</p>	<p>The Bushfire Management Overlay has not been applied to this property and a response to the Bushfire Management Overlay is not considered necessary as the extent of vegetation in the local area is unlikely to present extreme bushfire hazards.</p>
<p>Considering and assessing the bushfire hazard on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape conditions - meaning the conditions in the landscape within 20 kilometres and potentially up to 75 kilometres from a site; • Local conditions - meaning conditions in the area within approximately 1 kilometre from a site; <p>Neighbourhood conditions - meaning conditions in the area within 400 metres of a site; and the site for the development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape conditions: The landscape surrounding the site has been considered in a 30 km radius of the proposed development. The site is located approximately five kilometres north of Geelong. The majority of the 30 kilometre radius supports pasture and cropping with large settlements particularly Geelong just to the south, Werribee to the northeast and Bannockburn to the west. The risk profile of pasture and cropping is largely dictated by the type and life stage of the crops and seasonal dryness. During summer periods grassland fires may occur to the north and west of the Lara township but the proposed rezoning area is on the southeast side of the settlement affording protection from highly developed residential areas. • Local conditions: Within a one kilometre radius the north is dominated by residential development supporting generally low bushfire threat conditions. The southeast supports Industrial development also supporting generally low bushfire threat conditions. Some pasture is present to the west and south and low density rural residential properties comprising a mix of



Strategy	Response
	<p>maintained garden scapes and small areas of grazing pasture are present to the east (Figure 4). The Melbourne-Geelong railway line is present along the west boundary and the Melbourne-Geelong Freeway on the east boundary. While the railway line supports thin strips of grassland and some small areas of scrub vegetation, these areas are narrow and have areas devoid of vegetation within them (Access tracks, rail lines).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood conditions: Neighbourhood conditions (Figure 5) are similar to those of the local conditions listed above in local conditions.
<p>Consulting with emergency management agencies and the relevant fire authority early in the process to receive their recommendations and implement appropriate bushfire protection measures.</p>	<p>Local Fire Safety Officer Tim Nakaruru has been consulted as part of this report.</p>
<p>Ensuring that strategic planning documents, planning scheme amendments, planning permit applications and development plan approvals properly assess bushfire risk and include appropriate bushfire protection measures.</p>	<p>This proposed rezoning application has properly assessed bushfire risk and includes appropriate bushfire protection measures, The proposed rezoning will allow for adequate bushfire protection measures to be implemented at the subdivision stage including construction requirements of BAL 12.5 for all potential lots.</p>
<p>Not approving development where a landowner or proponent has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the relevant policies have been addressed, performance measures satisfied or bushfire protection measures can be adequately implemented.</p>	<p>The proposed rezoning allows for future subdivision of residential lots in a location that will allow for bushfire protection measures to be adequately implemented.</p>

Settlement planning

Plan to strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities and prioritise protection of human life.

Strategy	Response
<p>Directing population growth and development to low risk locations, being those locations assessed as having a radiant heat flux of less than 12.5 kilowatts/square metre under AS 3959-2009 <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas</i> (Standards Australia, 2009).</p>	<p>The proposed residential rezoning allows for a potential subdivision to allow lots with BAL 12.5 construction requirements or less with setbacks from mapped classifiable vegetation in some areas.</p>



Strategy	Response
Ensuring the availability of, and safe access to, areas assessed as a BAL-LOW rating under AS 3959-2009 <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas</i> (Standards Australia, 2009) where human life can be better protected from the effects of bushfire.	The proposed rezoning area is large and will provide areas that may be used as shelter in times of bushfire risk (open space areas, managed recreation areas).
Ensuring the bushfire risk to existing and future residents, property and community infrastructure will not increase as a result of future land use and development.	The proposed rezoning will reduce the bushfire threat from agricultural uses (pasture) to existing residential areas (generally low threat condition vegetation).
Achieving no net increase in risk to existing and future residents, property and community infrastructure, through the implementation of bushfire protection measures and where possible reducing bushfire risk overall.	The proposed rezoning will reduce the bushfire threat to existing residential areas to the west and north by altering the agricultural uses (pasture) to residential uses (generally low threat condition vegetation).
Assessing and addressing the bushfire hazard posed to the settlement and the likely bushfire behaviour it will produce at a landscape, settlement, local, neighbourhood and site scale, including the potential for neighbourhood-scale destruction.	The bushfire risk to the proposed rezoning area is low. Bushfire conditions are generally associated with hot days supporting northerly winds and also in some instances when northerly winds can change to the west or southwest creating a large fire front. In this instance the large residential area of Lara which generally supports managed low threat areas is located to the north and west offering protection from neighbourhood scale destruction in the proposed rezoning area.
Assessing alternative low risk locations for settlement growth on a regional, municipal, settlement, local and neighbourhood basis. Not approving any strategic planning document, local planning policy, or planning scheme amendment that will result in the introduction or intensification of development in an area that has, or will on completion have, more than a BAL-12.5 rating under AS 3959-2009 <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas</i> (Standards Australia, 2009).	The proposed development will not increase the vulnerability of the existing Lara community or proposed residential rezoning area to bushfire. The site has been identified for future development as <i>Conventional Residential</i> in the Greater Geelong planning scheme as part of the Lara Structure Plan in <i>Clause 21.13 Lara</i> . As discussed in this document, the proposed rezoning is able to support residential areas with a BAL 12.5 rating or less.

Areas of high biodiversity conservation value



Strategy	Response
<p>Ensure settlement growth and development approvals can implement bushfire protection measures without unacceptable biodiversity impacts by discouraging settlement growth and development in bushfire affected areas that are of high biodiversity conservation value.</p>	<p>An ecological assessment, <i>705-765 Princes Highway, 785-805 Princes Highway, 95 Canterbury Road East, 99 Canterbury Road East and 101-145 Canterbury Road East, Lara Vegetation Assessment and Native vegetation removal report</i> (Mark Trengove Ecological Services 2022) has been completed within the project area. This report identified that the majority of the project area is dominated by introduced species and supports low ecological values. Some small, degraded areas of native vegetation were noted within the north of the study area. The proposed rezoning is not considered likely to impact any high biodiversity conservation values.</p>

Use and development control in a Bushfire Prone Area

In a bushfire prone area designated in accordance with regulations made under the Building Act 1993, bushfire risk should be considered when assessing planning applications for the following uses and development:

- Subdivisions of more than 10 lots.
- Accommodation.
- Child care centre.
- Education centre.
- Emergency services facility.
- Hospital.
- Indoor recreation facility.
- Major sports and recreation facility.
- Place of assembly.
- Any application for development that will result in people congregating in large numbers.

Response: The proposal is for rezoning and not a planning application for any of the above uses.




5 FIGURES



Figure 1: Study area location



 Study area

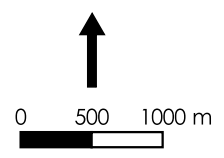


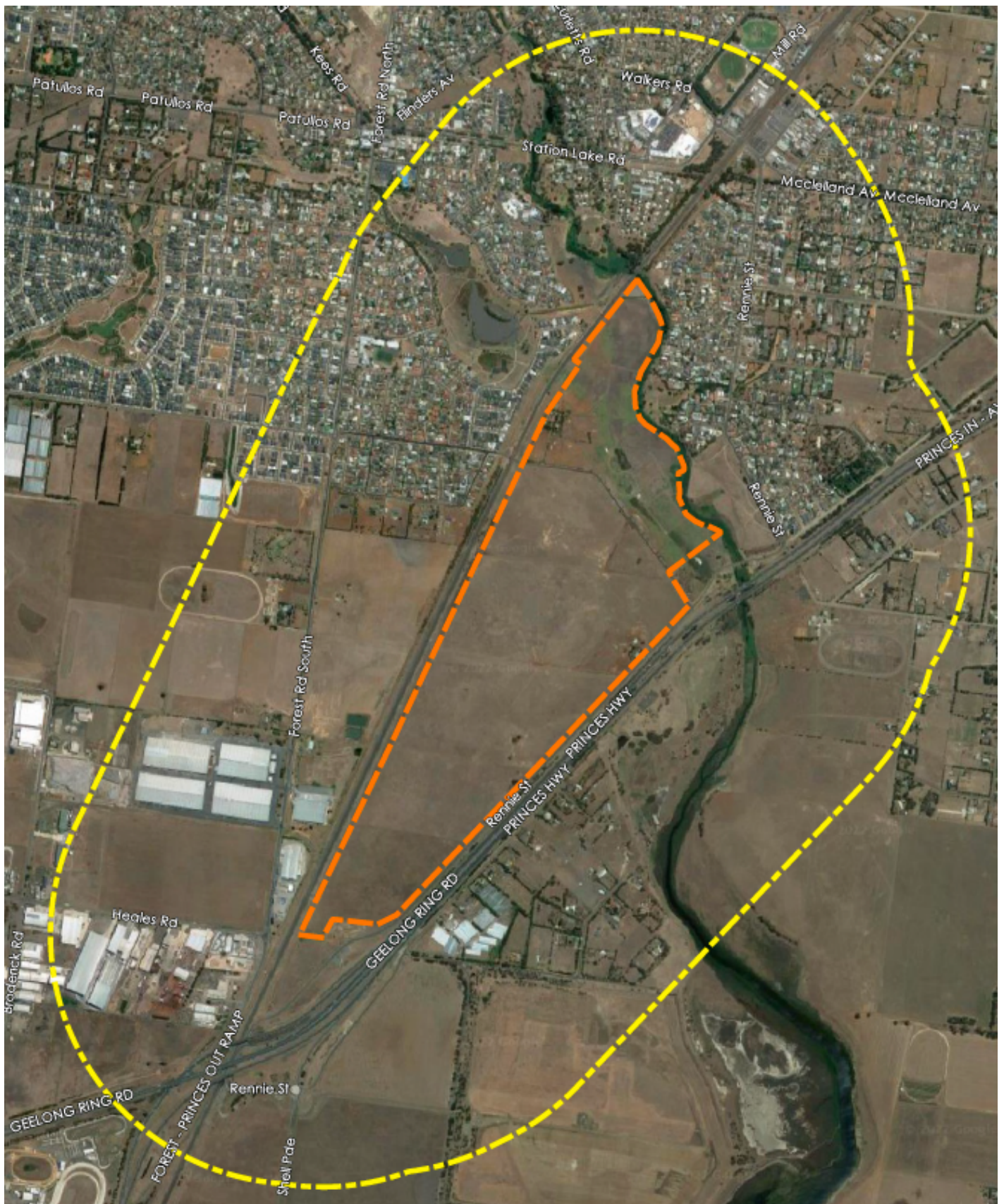
FIGURE 2. BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL ASSESSMENT (100 METRE RADIUS)



FIGURE 3. BUSHFIRE HAZARD LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT (30 KILOMETRE RADIUS)



FIGURE 4. BUSHFIRE HAZARD LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT (1 KILOMETRE RADIUS)





 1km buffer of study area  Study area



FIGURE 5. BUSHFIRE HAZARD LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT (400 METRE RADIUS)



REFERENCES

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APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1. MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR DEFENDABLE SPACE ZONES

The following vegetation management measures apply to the defendable space:

- Grass must be short cropped and maintained during the declared fire danger period.
- All leaves and vegetation debris must be removed at regular intervals during the declared fire danger period.
- Within 10 metres of a building, flammable objects must not be located close to the vulnerable parts of the building.
- Plants greater than 10 centimetres in height must not be placed within 3 metres of a window or glass feature of the building.
- Shrubs must not be located under the canopy of trees.
- Individual and clumps of shrubs must not exceed 5 square metres in area and must be separated by at least 5 metres.
- Trees must not overhang or touch any elements of the building.
- The canopy of trees must be separated by at least 5 metres.
- There must be a clearance of at least 2 metres between the lowest tree branches and ground level.
- Unless specified in a schedule or otherwise agreed in writing to the satisfaction of the relevant fire authority.



