



Fuel Management

What's Happening? Where is it Happening? When is it Happening?

The forest surrounding Mallacoota is important to us all. It is our recreation and contributes to our sense of wellbeing. It also makes us vulnerable to fire. Fuel management around and within the town is one of the elements that contribute to our safety. As our climate changes, we are becoming more at risk from fire.

Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic), combining DELWP and Parks Vic, is the responsible agency with CFA and the EGSC also involved. It is their job, according to various legislations, to DO the work of fuel management in our towns and parks, forests and public and private lands. Private landowners have an equal responsibility to manage their own properties and keep them clean of fuel loads.

All agree that the community is central to these decisions! These agencies are committed to working with the community. It has been the intention of the Mallacoota Bushfire Fuel Management Planning Group, now a Working Party under the umbrella of MADRA, to facilitate these discussions. The group consists of volunteer community members and representatives from each of the agencies mentioned above.

How does it function?

FIRST: The group underwent an education program. Why does the bush burn? How can we judge its flammability? How can we better protect our town and its assets? How can we do better to protect our environment and decrease the risk of burning? What tools are available to do this? How do we balance reducing risk with other factors that are important to this community: biodiversity, beauty and amenity.

Last year we presented a series of (ongoing) webinars to share some of that knowledge with you. (go to www.madrecovery.com to view)

NEXT: Initially 4 areas of high risk were selected, more areas and districts will be addressed as time allows, these will include Karbeethong, Lakeside Drive, Genoa and Gipsy Point. The current areas under discussion are Shady Gully, Mortimer's Paddock, the back of Terra Nova Drive and the Western Front. These areas have been visited and suggestions for management discussed by the working group. These draft suggestions then need to be presented to those community members adjacent to and most affected by any fuel

reduction. These discussions have been impossible due to Covid restrictions but will now take place. Currently, these discussions are set for the 28th April.

There will be a range of ideas expressed at these meetings: we expect that – we are all passionate about our environment – but we also hope we can find some agreement. This will take time and we need to get it right. We are grateful for a range of comments/suggestions already received from our community members. They are a valued part of this process.

WHAT THEN: It is our aim to come up with four clear management plans that deal with our current fuel management needs and project a rolling timetable into the future – a plan that is flexible and is annually revisited, revised and assessed. These plans need to be costed, resourced, prioritised and submitted as part of the Joint Fuel Management Plan that is then signed off by the Fire Agency Chiefs.

Let's be clear, this is a process that will take years to properly implement and it will need hundreds of thousands of dollars to facilitate.

Often funding can be found elsewhere and of course we will actively attempt to source that money.

In the meantime, Mallacoota needs attention paid to the removal of hazardous trees and general maintenance and repair. This is the job of the various agencies responsible, in and around the town, that is generally the East Gippsland Shire and on the edges of town DELWP. We will continue to advocate for this work. Landowners should also continue to do their own maintenance on their properties for the best outcomes against future fires.

Questions and comments can be relayed to MADRA.

Thanks,

Lyn Harwood

on behalf of the Fuel Management working party of MADRA

NOTE: The FFMVic's Gippsland Bushfire Management Strategy 2020 is an overarching strategy for both public and private land, with fire management zones, how risks are identified etc. It is a public document that is a good reference point for people to get an overall understanding of the process. It is available from:

https://www.safertogether.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0028/493534/DELWP_Bushfire_ManagementStrategies_2020_Gippsland_rr.pdf