

# BUILDING FOR BUSHFIRE

## Hazard Management Area



**A hazard management area is an area of defensible space around a dwelling or other habitable building.**

The size of the hazard management area and the distance to the bushfire-prone vegetation has a direct bearing on the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) determined by an Accredited Bushfire Hazard Practitioner. The assessor will nominate specific dimensions and conditions for the HMA which must be maintained to ensure ongoing protection.

The dimensions of the hazard management area are presented within a bushfire hazard management plan, prepared by an Accredited Bushfire Hazard Practitioner. A hazard management area has two important roles. Firstly, it is much easier to defend your home when most flammable material close to your home has been removed. Secondly, it aids the protection of occupants and fire fighters who may be defending your home. The inclusion of this defensible space forms part of a consolidated approach, which together with building construction standards, provision of firefighting water supplies and good property access, are designed to make living in bushfire prone areas safer.

The definition of a hazard management area is provided as follows:

***A hazard management area means the area, between a habitable building or building area and an area of bushfire prone vegetation, which provides access to a fire front for firefighting, which is maintained in a minimal fuel condition and in which there are no other hazards present which will significantly contribute to the spread of a bushfire.***

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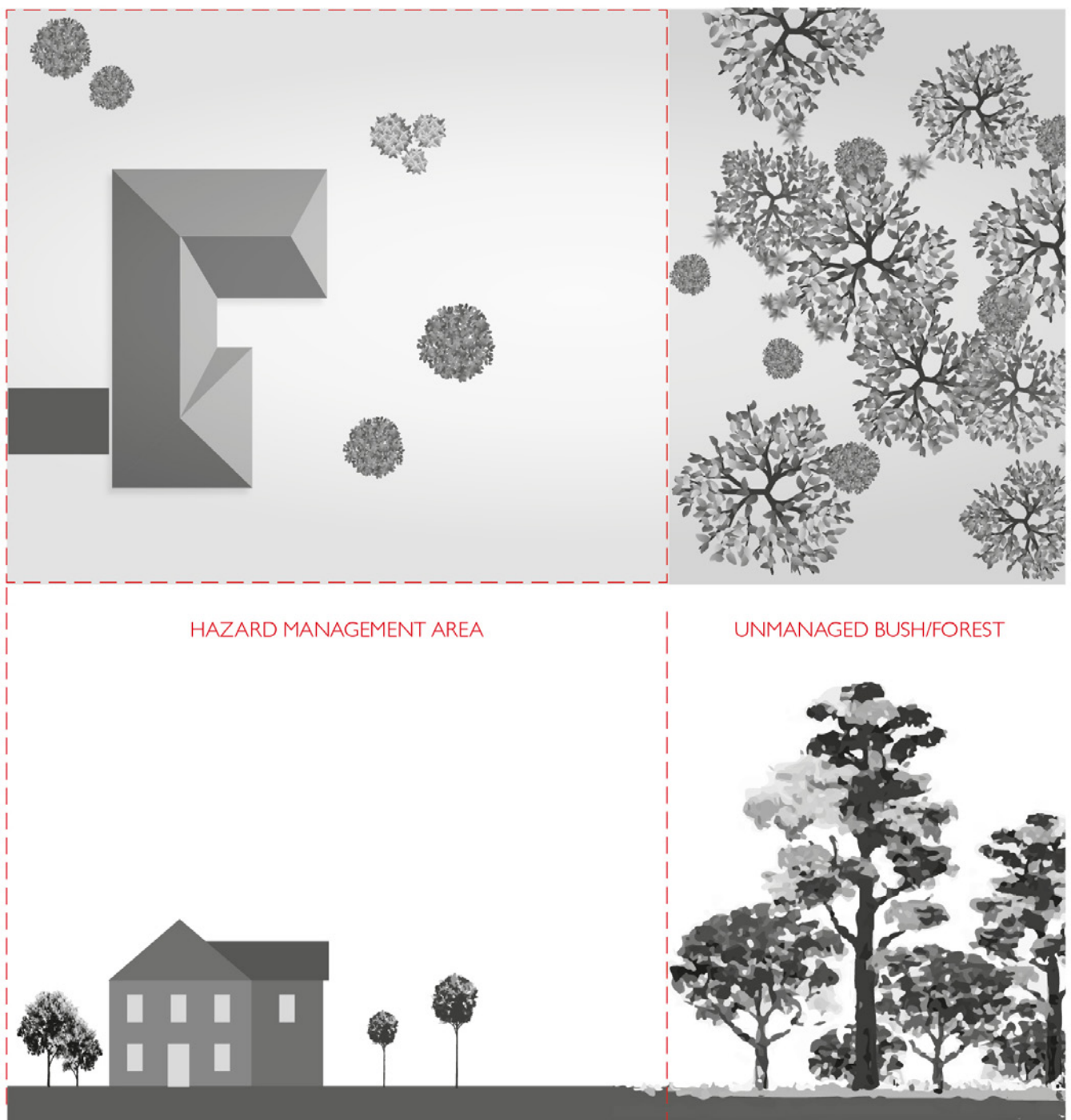
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A hazard management area must be maintained in a low fuel condition throughout the bushfire season. This will include a number of strategies such as:

- Removing of fallen limbs, sticks, leaf and bark litter
- Maintaining grass at less than a 100mm height
- Removing pine bark and other flammable mulch (especially from against buildings)
- Thinning out understory vegetation to provide horizontal separation between fuels
- Pruning low-hanging tree branches (<2m from the ground) to provide vertical separation between fuel layers
- Pruning larger trees to maintain horizontal separation between canopies
- Minimize the storage of flammable materials such as firewood

- Maintaining vegetation clearance around vehicular access and water supply points
- Use of low-flammability species for landscaping purposes where appropriate
- Clearing out any accumulated leaf and other debris from roof gutters.

Additional site specific fuel reduction or management may be required. An effective hazard management area does not require removal of all vegetation. Rather, vegetation must be designed and maintained in a way that limits opportunity for vertical and horizontal fire spread in the vicinity of the building being protected. Retaining some established trees can even be beneficial in terms of protecting the building from wind and ember attack.



**Figure 1** highlights vegetation controls in the hazard management area

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Accredited person** – in this context means an Accredited Bushfire Hazard assessor, holding the appropriate qualifications and insurances and being accredited in accordance with the requirements in the *Fire Service Act 1979*.

**Bushfire attack level (BAL)** – the bushfire attack level as defined in AS3959 – 2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas as ‘a means of measuring the severity of a building’s potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact, using increments of radiant heat expressed in kilowatts per metre squared, and the basis for establishing the requirements for construction to improve protection of building elements from attack by bushfire’.

**Bushfire hazard management plan** – a plan showing means of protection from bushfires in a form approved in writing by the Chief Officer of the Tasmania Fire Service

**Bushfire-prone area:**

- (a) land that is within the boundary of a bushfire-prone area shown on an overlay on a planning scheme map; and
- (b) (i) where there is no overlay on a planning scheme map; or
  - (ii) where the land is outside the boundary of a bushfire-prone area shown on an overlay on such a map, land that is within 100m of an area of bushfire-prone vegetation equal to or greater than 1 hectare.

**Bushfire-prone vegetation** – contiguous vegetation including grasses and shrubs but not including maintained lawns, parks and gardens, nature strips, plant nurseries, golf courses, vineyards, orchards or vegetation on land that is used for horticultural purposes.

**Habitable building** – a building of Class 1-9 of the Building Code of Australia.

**Hazard management area** – the area, between a habitable building or building area and bushfire-prone vegetation, which provides access to a fire front for firefighting, which is maintained in a minimal fuel condition and in which there are no other hazards present which will significantly contribute to the spread of a bushfire.

**Property access** – the carriageway which provides vehicular access from the carriageway of a road onto land, measured along the centre line of the carriageway, from the edge of the road carriageway to the nearest point of the building area.



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