

Bushfire Hazard Assessment

Aura South Early Release Area Bushfire Hazard Assessment

Prepared for: Stockland development Pty Ltd
4 November 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Bushfire Hazard Assessment has been prepared on behalf of Stockland Development Pty Limited (the Applicant) in support of a Priority Development Area (PDA) development application over land located at Bells Creek Road, Coochin Creek, comprising Lot 1 on SP332399 and Lot 2 on SP357748 (the site). The application seeks approval for the Early Release Area (ERA) of Stockland's Aura South project, within the Halls Creek PDA.

The development application seeks a PDA Development Permit for:

1. Reconfiguring a Lot (962 residential lots, 2 medium density lots, parks and balance land) in accordance with a Plan of Development;
2. Operational Works in accordance with a Plan of Development; and
3. Material Change of Use in accordance with a Plan of Development.

Declaration of the Halls Creek PDA established the planning framework required to accelerate the delivery of Aura South. As the first neighbourhood within the PDA, the ERA will bring forward 1,051 new homes, including three multiple dwelling sites accommodating about 80 apartments. This crucial housing supply will be supported by local services and infrastructure, five enterprise and employment lots, a neighbourhood centre, district sports and local parks, high-quality open space areas and active transport connections, establishing strong foundations for the new Aura South community.

Together, these elements will create a highly liveable, walkable and connected community which will contribute significantly to the delivery of housing, employment and community infrastructure in the southern growth corridor of the Sunshine Coast.

SMEC is supporting the Applicant in the preparation of the Bushfire Hazard Assessment and Management Plan (BHAMP) for the ERA of Aura South. SMEC's role includes the provision of bushfire planning services to ensure the ERA is underpinned by a robust understanding of bushfire risk, statutory requirements and strategic planning outcomes.

The BHAMP will comply with Economic Development Queensland's (EDQ) approved Halls creek Interim Land Use Plan (ILUP) by addressing relevant State environmental interests, demonstrating alignment with the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 (v26), and ensuring that the key bushfire safety outcomes of ShapingSEQ (Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 2023) are appropriately integrated into the proposed land use framework.

1.2 Plan purpose

The development is located within the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 Bushfire Hazard Area overlay mapping and is thus considered code assessable development subject to the Bushfire Hazard Area overlay code. A Bushfire Hazard Assessment is required to comply with the ILUP and satisfy the requirements of the Bushfire Hazard overlay code. The BHAMP includes:

- Desktop review of Site (section 1.3) mapping and applicable legislation.
- Site investigation including vegetation assessment and inspection of Site slopes and features.
- Bushfire hazard assessment and calculation of Potential Fireline Intensity (PFI) and Bushfire Attack levels (BALs) where appropriate.
- if required, a Bushfire Management Plan with applicable mitigation measures and considerations for the development.
- Confirmation of the State interests relevant to bushfire hazard and demonstration of how the proposed development appropriately responds to those requirements.

1.3 Site Context

The Site is the ERA of Aura South which is situated in the suburb of Coochin Creek on the Sunshine Coast, Lot 1 on SP332399 and Lot 2 on SP334580. This Site forms part of the northern portion of the Halls Creek PDA, within the Sunshine Coast Local Government Area. It is also immediately south of Stockland's master planned community Aura, within the Caloundra South PDA.

The Site has been extensively cleared from former forestry operations over many decades. The existing agricultural use is consistent with the current Regional Inter-urban Break zoning under the *Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014*. Figure 1 illustrates the Site location and immediate surrounds.

The Site is bordered by Beerwah State Forest to the south west, rural agricultural use to the north, Pumicestone National park to the southwest and to the north by Bells Creek Arterial Road.

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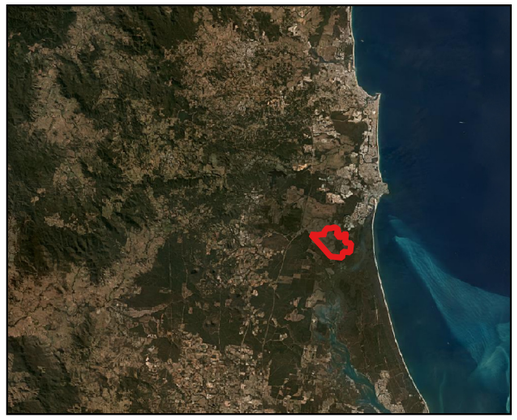
Figure 1: Site Context

Legend

- The Site
- 150m Bushfire Assessment Area

cadastre

- Lot Parcels



Project	Aura South (ERA)
Project No	30034129
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0 0.5 1 1.5 km

1.4 Qualifications

A suitably qualified person as per the Bushfire Resilient Communities Technical Reference Guide (BRC Technical Guide) (Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, 2019) is considered to:

- Have AQF level 8 qualifications in environmental science, environmental management (or equivalent discipline)
- Demonstrated experience in botanical survey and spatial analysis methods, including use of geographic information systems (GIS) software
- Demonstrated experience in the assessment of bushfire hazard and risks or technical qualifications in environmental science, environmental management (or an equivalent discipline)
- Demonstrated relevant industry experience in the assessment of bushfire hazard and risks for a minimum of five years.

The Ecologists involved in the preparation and review of the BHAMP meet this criterion through:

- Possessing a relevant environmental degree
- Extensive experience in botanical and bushfire hazard survey including experience in Queensland across a range of vegetation communities, development types and bioregions
- Extensive experience in the development industry in both ecology and bushfire consulting including major infrastructure projects and associated permits and approvals
- More than six years' experience working in the bushfire consulting industry (Mark McVeigh) and over 30 years (Jon Alexander)

2. Bushfire Policy

Bushfire Hazard Assessments in Queensland are governed by three policies:

- The Queensland State Planning Policy (SPP) (DILGP, 2017) and associated guidelines:
  - Bushfire Resilient Communities (BRC) Technical Reference Guide for the State Planning Policy State Interest 'Natural Hazards, Risk and Resilience - Bushfire' (Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, 2019)
  - Natural Hazards, Risk and Resilience – Bushfire, State Planning Policy State Interest Guidance Material (DILGP, 2019)
- The relevant local Council planning scheme (*Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014*)
- The Australian Standard AS3959:2018 – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Australian Standards, 2018)

Each policy aims to reduce the likelihood and impacts of bushfire hazards on life, property and environment.

2.1 Queensland's State Planning Policy (SPP)

The SPP ensures the State's interests in planning are protected and delivered as part of local government planning across Queensland (DHLGPPW, 2024). The SPP sits above local government planning schemes and planning provisions in the hierarchy of planning instruments under the *Planning Act 2016*. The SPP includes criteria, guidelines and requirements for undertaking Bushfire Hazard Assessment (BHA) in Queensland and outcomes required for acceptable development. These are contained within the SPP state interest guidance material: the BRC Technical Guide (Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, 2019) and the Natural Hazards Risk and Resilience – Bushfire (DILGP, 2019).

The SPP includes assessment benchmarks that may apply to development where it is both assessable under the local planning scheme and where it is inconsistent with the SPP.

Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA) mapping is provided as part of the SPPs resources to allow geographical representation of bushfire hazard to both map potential bushfire hazard (Potential Fireline Intensity) and to determine where BHAs should be required. Development within mapped BPAs trigger assessment against the SPP benchmarks. The mapping displays areas of Very High (>40,000 kW/m), High (20,000 – 40, 000 kW/m) and Medium (4,000 – 20,000 kW/m) Potential Bushfire Intensity. The potential impact buffer refers to any land within 100 m of medium or higher bushfire intensity.

The current SPP mapping for the Site is shown in Figure 2 along with the ERA boundary as an orange polygon. The Site contains High and Medium Potential Bushfire Intensity and Potential Impact Buffer.

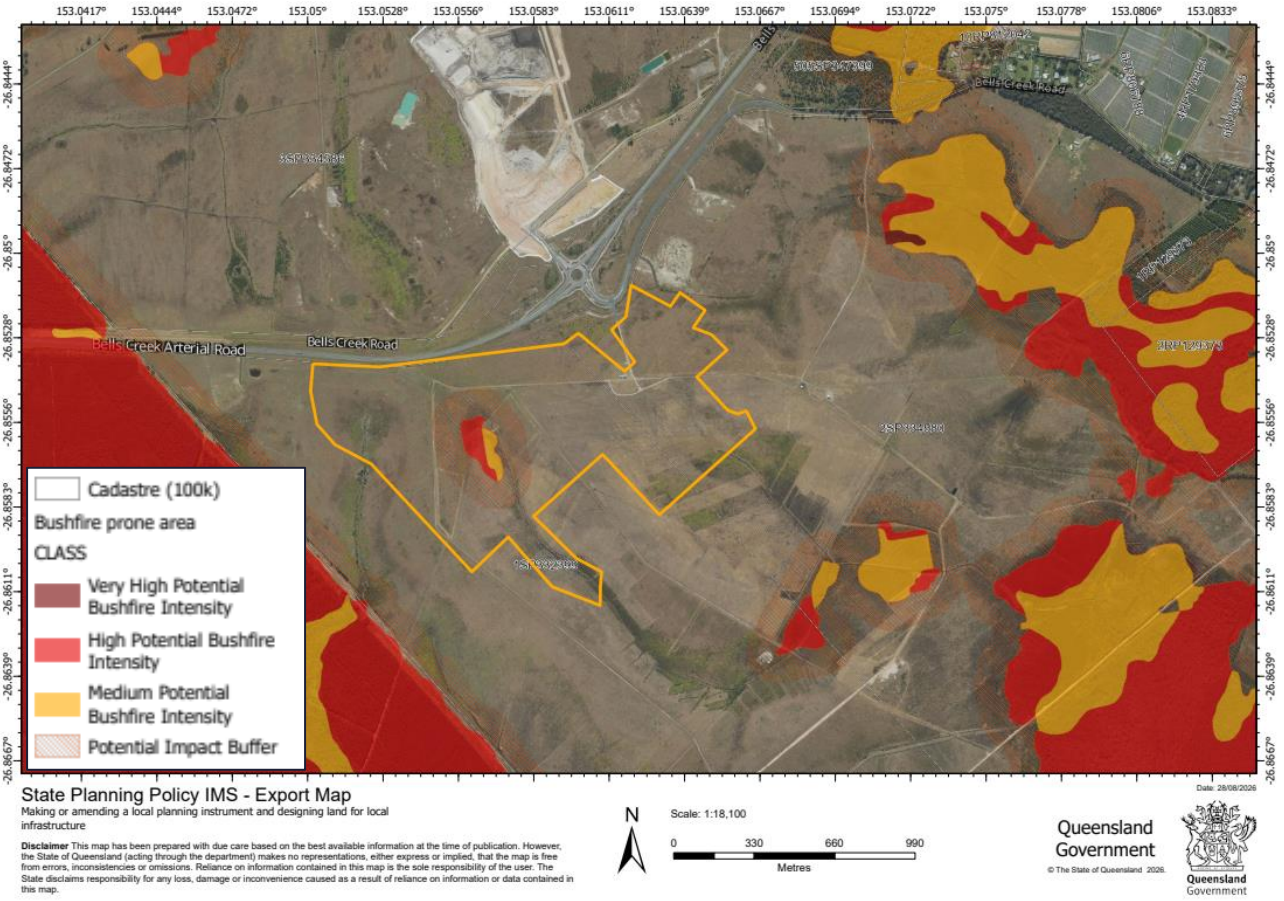


Figure 2: SPP Bushfire Prone Area Mapping (ERA shown as an Orange Polygon)

2.2 Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014

As of July 2026, the Aura South Project has been designated within a PDA and is thus exempt from compliance with the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme. Regardless, the planning scheme and associated mapping provides additional context in the formation of the BHA and by complying with the PDA ILUP and SPP methodologies this report will also demonstrate compliance with the planning scheme.

The *Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014* identifies Bushfire Hazard Overlay areas that trigger assessment under the Bushfire Hazard Overlay Code. The Site is currently mapped as containing areas of Medium Bushfire Hazard Area. SCC Bushfire Hazard mapping is shown in Figure 3 along with the ERA boundary as an red polygon.

The Planning Scheme also describes requirements for Bushfire Hazard Assessment and corresponding reporting through the Bushfire Planning Scheme Policy under Schedule 6. The Planning Scheme Policy provides a simplified method of calculating bushfire hazard. The Policy does allow for alternative methodologies where appropriate.

For the purposes of this development application, the methodology described in the Bushfire Resilient Communities (Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, 2019) has been used to provide a more accurate representation of bushfire risk while complying with both the Planning Scheme, QFES guidelines and the SPP.

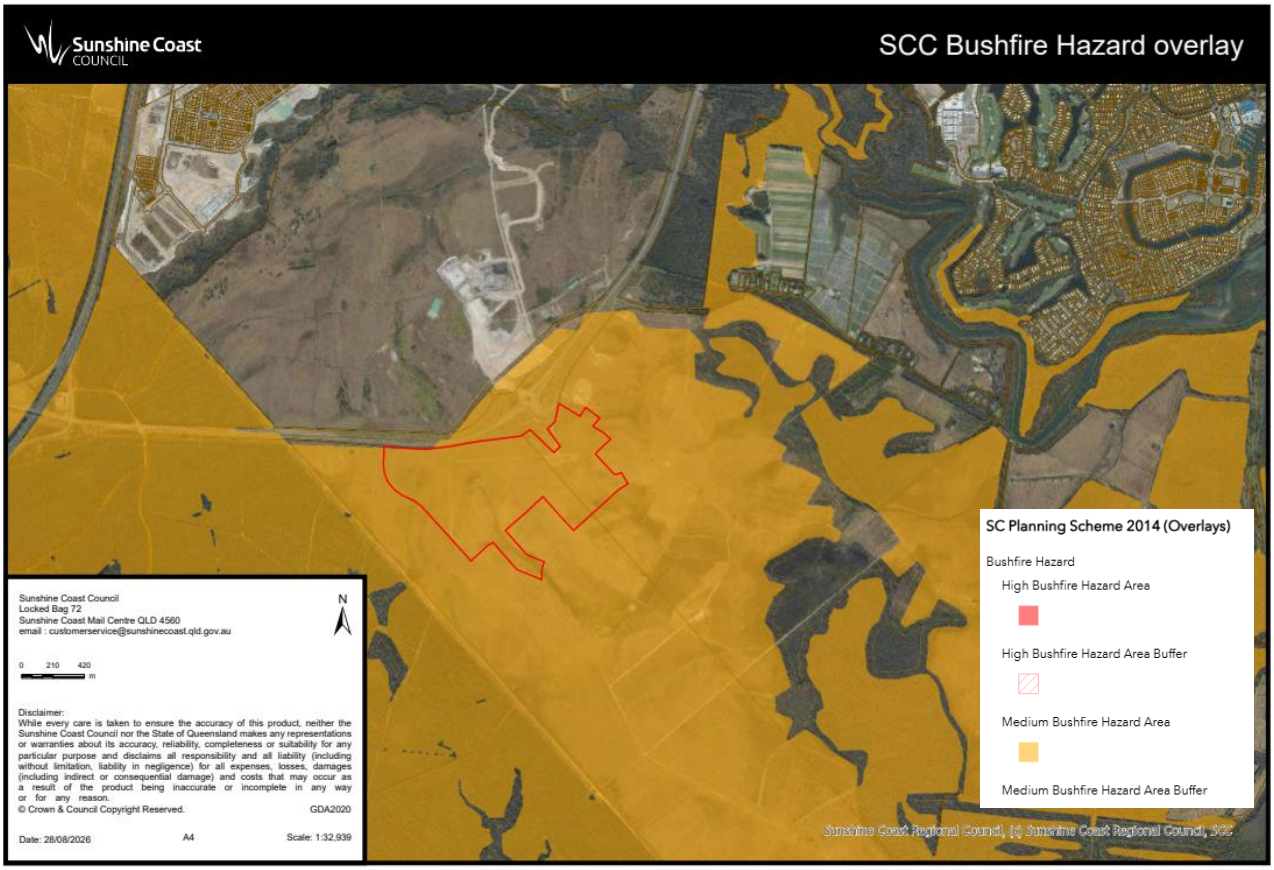


Figure 3: SCC Planning Scheme 2014 Bushfire Hazard mapping (ERA shown as a Red Polygon)

2.3 Halls Creek ILUP 2026

The Halls Creek PDA Interim Land Use Plan (ILUP) was approved in July 2026 and establishes the planning framework for the newly declared Priority Development Area. The ILUP provides guidance regarding bushfire risk management in Section 4.2.2.4:

“4.2.2.4 Bushfire (Refer to the SPP)

Development:

1. is designed and located to avoid natural hazard areas, or incorporates mitigation measures to achieve an acceptable level of risk that protects personal safety and property,

2. supports disaster management operations in natural hazard areas and does not hinder disaster management responses or capacity and capability,

3. ensures community infrastructure is sited and designed to maintain the required functionality during and immediately after a natural hazard event, and

4. avoids any increase in the exposure or severity of the natural hazard within the natural hazard area, and prevents potential damage on the site or to other property.”

As the ILUP directs assessment of bushfire risk to the State Planning Policy (SPP), this Bushfire Hazard Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the relevant SPP bushfire hazard assessment requirements and associated guidance. The methodology applied within this report is therefore consistent with the planning intent and bushfire risk management objectives of the Halls Creek PDA ILUP.

2.4 Australian Standard AS3959:2018

The Australian Standard AS3959:2018 – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Australian Standards, 2018) details the requirements for construction of buildings or structures within BPA. The AS3959:2018 aims to both reduce the extent of exposure to bushfire attack through the calculation of Bushfire Attack Levels (BALs) and increasing the resistance of buildings to bushfire through the use of construction design and materials. The AS3959:2018 applies where either a local planning scheme or SPP mapping designates a BPA (or similar). Where the AS3959:2018 applies, development and construction must be in accordance with the prescribed methodology within the standard.

3. Bushfire Hazard Assessment

A BHA was undertaken at the Site on 7th April 2026. The methodology underpinning the BHA consists of the following stages:

4. Desktop assessment to determine the Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI) values estimated at a 1:20 year (5%) Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP)
5. Site-specific assessment to ground truth vegetation communities and Vegetation Hazard Classes (VHC) within 150m of the Site to verify the accuracy of State and council BPA mapping and collect relevant data to map hazardous vegetation surrounding the Site
6. Asset Protection Zones (APZ) design using information obtained from the desktop and Site assessments to determine the required APZ width to achieve the relevant radiant heat flux thresholds in accordance with the SPP bushfire APZ width calculator or method 2 of Australian Standard AS3959:2018.

3.1 Fire Weather Severity and Climate

The Site is located within the Sunshine Coast – Coast Lowlands subregion of the Southeast Queensland Bioregion. Southeast Queensland (SEQ) features a humid subtropical climate distinguished by hot, humid summers and mild, dry winters (Bureau of Meteorology, 2025). Average summer temperatures generally range from 21°C to 29°C, with occasional peaks during heatwaves, while winter temperatures typically range between 10°C and 21°C, (Bureau of Meteorology, 2025). Rainfall in SEQ averages about 1,000–1,500 mm annually, most of which falls between December and March due to summer thunderstorms and the occasional influence of tropical cyclones (CSIRO & Bureau of Meteorology, 2015). Winters tend to be relatively dry, with clear skies and cooler nights, especially in inland areas where temperatures can dip lower than along the coast. The region's proximity to the Coral Sea helps moderate extreme temperatures and maintains relatively high humidity during summer months. Seasonal climate patterns in SEQ are also influenced by large-scale systems such as the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which can bring periods of wetter or drier than average conditions (Power, Casey, Folland, Colman, & Mehta, 1999).

The FFDI is an annual accumulated index of fire weather severity based on a combination of vegetation dryness, air temperature, wind speed and humidity. The FFDI (5% AEP) value was retrieved from the BPA dataset available on the Bushfire Resilient Communities MapViewer on the 8th May 2026.

The FFDI for the Site is split between 53 and 54. To be conservative with the bushfire risk calculations an FFDI of 54 was used.

3.2 Vegetation Hazard Classes (VHCs)

A desktop assessment determined that VHCs mapped within the 150 m assessment area include:

- 9.2 – Moist to dry eucalypt woodland on coastal lowlands and ranges
- 29.3 – Heathlands and associated scrubs and shrublands
- 40.4 – Continuous low grass or tree cover
- 41.4 – Discontinuous low grass or tree cover
- 43.6 – Water bodies or very low vegetation cover

Remnant Regional Ecosystem (RE) mapping of the assessment area shows the entire assessment area as containing areas of Plantation (category X) which is considered non-remnant under the Vegetation Management Act 1999.

Ground-truthed vegetation mapping was undertaken as part of the Site investigations, with vegetation being classified into two communities based on quaternary survey data and the Regional Ecosystem mapping methodology (Neldner, et al., 2025).

3.2.1 Vegetation Community 1 – Exotic grassland

Vegetation across the Site consists of an exotic grassland (Plates 1, 2 and 3). This community is dominated by a mixture of pasture and pasture invading species such as whiskey grass (*Andropogon virginicus*), South African pigeon grass (*Setaria sphacelata*), giant rat's tail grass (*Sporobolus pyramidalis / nepalensis*), red natal (*Melinis repens*), guinea grass (*Megathyrsus maximus var maximus*) and Qld blue couch (*Digitaria didactyla*). This community is devoid of trees and other woody species with only small exotic forbs such as *Verbena rigida* present amongst dense grass cover. The community is currently grazed by cattle.

Grass height is 0.5-1.5 m, with an average cover of 99%. Habitat features are largely absent from this community with the exception of dense grass cover which provides cover for least concern species such as quails. Some areas where the grass is seasonally inundated may provide foraging habitat for wading bird species.

This community is non-remnant and does not conform to any Regional Ecosystem. The majority of this community is expected to be cleared as part of the proposed Aura South development.

This community conforms to the **VHC 40.4 – Continuous low grass or tree cover**

3.2.2 Vegetation community 2 – Non-remnant alluvial heath (Wallum)

Vegetation occurring along the drainage lines and low-lying areas support a non-remnant heath community (Plates 4 & 5). This community is dominated by an assortment of sedges and rushes such as *Cyperus* spp., *Fimbristylis* spp., *Schoenus* spp., *Chorizandra sphaerocephala*, and *Juncus usitatus*. Small shrubs common in Wallum communities such as blue tongue (*Melastoma malabathricum subsp. Malabathricum*), *Baeckea frutescens*, *Sprengelia sprengelioides*, *Eriocaulon australe*, *Woollsia pungens*, *Allocasuarina littoralis*, *Melaleuca thymifolia*, *Ludwigia octovalvis* and *Hakea actites* are also present. Generally, plant diversity is high, typical of Wallum communities. As this community is grazed and regularly slashed, the community exists in a state of disturbance without any mature woody vegetation. Average height is low, around 0.5m high with a high coverage of 80-90%.

This community generally conforms to a non-remnant form of the Least Concern Regional Ecosystem 12.3.13.

This community would usually conform to the VHC 29.3 heathlands and associated scrubs and shrubland however as the community is under a constant state of slashing and grazing, and this is expected to continue unless developed as part of the Aura South Project, it more closely resembles the **VHC 40.4 – Continuous low grass or tree cover** properties as vegetation community 1.



Plate 1 – Vegetation Community 1



Plate 2 – Vegetation Community 2



Plate 3 – Vegetation Community 1



Plate 4 - Vegetation Community 2



Plate 5 – Vegetation Community 2



Plate 6 – Drainage line

3.3 Fuel loads

Fuel loads for the ground-truthed Vegetation Communities in Table 1 are calculated from Figure 14 of the Bushfire Resilient Communities technical reference guide (Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, 2019). Vegetation of 'prone' types 2 (grassland fire) and 3 (low hazard) are exempt from further assessment as they are unlikely to pose a significant bushfire risk as per Section 7.6 of the technical reference guide. In this instance both communities 1 and 2 are exempt from further assessment as they are prone type 2. Areas mapped as VHC 43.6 are also exempt from further assessment as they are not bushfire prone.

Table 1: Fuel Loads

Vegetation Community	VHC	Total Potential surface fuel load (t/ha)	Total overall potential fuel load (t/ha)	Prone type	Continuity
1	40.4 – Continuous low grass or tree cover	4.5	5.0	2	Continuous
2	40.4 – Continuous low grass or tree cover	4.5	5.0	2	Continuous

As no hazardous vegetation was identified during the assessment of fuel loads, no further assessment is required, and the Site is not considered to be bushfire prone or exposed to hazardous vegetation.

State and local council mapping (Figure 4) represents a strategic desktop assessment based primarily on regional vegetation mapping and does not account for site-specific vegetation condition, fragmentation or management. Ground-truthing (Figure 5) undertaken as part of this assessment identified that areas mapped as hazardous vegetation is not present. In accordance with the methodology outlined in the Bushfire Resilient Communities Technical Reference Guide, no further assessment is required.

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Figure 4: State Mapped Vegetation Hazard Classes

Legend

- The Site
- Bushfire Assessment Area

cadastre

- Lot Parcels

Vegetation Hazard Classes

- 9.2 Moist to dry eucalypt woodland on coastal lowlands and ranges
- 29.3 Heathlands and associated scrubs and shrublands
- 40.4 Low grass or tree cover in rural areas
- 41.4 Low grass or tree cover in built-up area
- 42.6 Nil to very low vegetation cover
- 43.6 Water bodies or very low vegetation cover



Project	Aura South (ERA)
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Figure 5: Ground-truthed Vegetation Hazard Class

Legend

- The Site
- 150m Bushfire Assessment Area

cadastre

- Lot Parcels

Vegetation Hazard Classes

- 40.4 – Continuous low grass or tree cover
- 43.6 – Water bodies or very low vegetation cover

0 0.5 1 1.5 km



Project	Aura South (ERA)
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Figure No	5
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4. Conclusion

SMEC has been engaged to provide bushfire hazard planning services for the Aura South ERA development as part of the Interim Land Use Planning process. A site survey confirmed the absence of hazardous vegetation within the 150m assessment area to the development area. A Bushfire Hazard Assessment identified the grassland and low heath vegetation within the assessment area is classified as Vegetation Prone Type 2 (grassland fire) and is considered to present a 'low bushfire risk'

The outcome of the Bushfire Hazard Assessment confirms that the Site does not contain and is not exposed to hazardous vegetation following the application of the BRC Technical Reference Guide. Accordingly, a Bushfire Management Plan is not required for non-bushfire prone development under the State Planning Policy or SCC's Bushfire overlay code.

5. References

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