

Title: Employee Code Red and Fire Danger policy
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Revision History:

Date	Action	Who
October 2013	Draft	Chris Price Emergency Management Fire Coordinator
November 2013	Draft reviewed by key unit stakeholders	Liz Peddie Coordinator HR & Risk
December 2013	Circulated for staff feedback	Liz Peddie Coordinator HR & Risk
February 2014	Updated with feedback	Liz Peddie Coordinator HR & Risk

1. Purpose

This policy provides an overview for employees on the specific arrangements for “Code Red” and other fire danger rated days and outlines the employment restrictions during such periods.

This policy supports the public Council policy “Service Provision on Code Red Days” which indicates that that we will operate with altered or reduced service levels when a Code Red Day is declared; and that the CEO may implement these provisions on other declared fire danger days.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that:

- Staff have clear guidance and are aware of appropriate procedures on code red days
- People are not working within isolated/higher risk areas where communications may be marginal
- Workplace health and safety considerations are appropriately addressed.
- Both plant and staff resources can be most efficiently re-grouped and deployed if Council is called on to provide direct support to any fire combating operations as requested by emergency services
- Essential services are maintained where possible
- Council’s operations minimize the risk of a fire starting

2. Rationale

Council needs to have clear guidelines for staff that align with the public advice given to all members of Victorian communities.

3. Definitions

Acronym	Title
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
BPA	Bush Fire Prone Area
CFA	Country Fire Authority
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
EMT	Emergency Management Team
FDR	Fire Danger Rating
HACC	Health and Community Care
MERO	Municipal Emergency Resource Officer
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
RDO	Rostered Day Off
TFB	Total Fire Ban

Fire Danger Days

Victoria adopted the national Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) to help communities understand information about fire danger. These ratings recognize the significant increase in severe bushfire conditions over the past decade and the greater level of danger to the community and potential loss of life.

The FDR which is a combination of words and numbers, gives an expert assessment of the potential fire behaviour, the difficulty of suppressing a fire and the possible impact on the community. The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) in consultation with fire agencies determines the ratings for any given period or day.

The Fire Danger Rating incorporates a range of other factors relating to that area and day, including:

- the length of time the fire danger index has been elevated,
- extent of fire already in the landscape,
- fuel load and dryness,
- likelihood of weather events such as lightning

Code Red

The "code red" fire danger warning was developed as an additional category for measuring days such as 7 February 2009, where the contributing factors represent an unprecedented fire danger risk and past policies such as "stay and defend", may not be appropriate to prevent loss of life. Code Red days, although relatively rare historically, are predicted to increase in the future due to climate change.

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has summarized the FDR's as follows



EXTREME:	The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared, well constructed and you can actively defend it.
SEVERE:	The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.
VERY HIGH:	If you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave, the safest option is to leave at the beginning of a day.
HIGH	Check your Bushfire Survival Plan
LOW-MODERATE:	Check your Bushfire Survival Plan

On Code Red Days the Country Fire Authority (CFA) advises people living in high risk bushfire areas to leave the area the night before or early in the morning and to enact their bushfire survival plans.

Fire Danger Ratings are generally forecast up to four days in advance enabling some level of preparation.

Severe and Extreme ratings

The Chief Executive Officer may direct that Council enact parts of this policy on severe or extreme fire danger days based on advice from the Emergency Management Coordination Group (EMCG) and the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO).

Service delivery arrangements will be considered and may need to be suspended or reduced to emergency/essential services only. A key factor for this decision will be the extent of fire already in the landscape.

Managers of departments who provide non-essential services, in consultation with their General Manager, will decide on which services to withdraw and will keep workers informed of changes to their working arrangements.

If normal working arrangements are modified or cancelled then workers may be redeployed to other duties.

4. Scope

This guideline applies to all employees of the Murrindindi Shire Council, including contractors, committees and volunteers engaged in Council business, who are deemed workers under Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation.

This policy is in operation during the Fire Danger Period as declared by the CFA. The dates of the Fire Danger Period are available from the CFA website and may vary from year to year due to seasonal variation in environmental conditions and rainfall.

5. Policy

5.1. General Restrictions

Employment Restrictions on Code Red days

Code Red rating days will have an effect on Council employees and employment in general with schools, kindergartens and pre-schools in some high risk areas closing for the duration of the period. Clause 5.4 (below) provides guidance on applicable leave arrangements for those employees who may be unavailable for employment on these days due to family responsibilities and/or need to implement their own personal fire plan.

Murrindindi Shire is classified largely as bushfire prone (refer appendix 10.3 Bushfire Prone Areas), as such precautions need to be taken for the wellbeing of Murrindindi Shire employees.

Employee responsibilities include:

- Plan your work activities with your Manager including the cancellation of non-essential travel in high risk areas
- In case of fire, employees should make every effort to ensure they are not in danger and should contact their supervisor
- Employees undertaking essential approved travel within the shire are to take adequate water to maintain hydration
- Employees unable to attend work due to activation of their personal fire plans for the FDR should prearrange their release with their manager failing that they *must* make contact with their manager as soon as possible on the day
- Children and/or animals cannot be accommodated at the workplace without the prior agreement from the relevant General Manager
- Perform duties in a manner that does not represent an unacceptable level of risk to the health and safety of
 - themselves
 - other employees
 - the Council's customers or visitors
 - contractors or volunteers
 - the wider community.

Retreat from HIGH RISK areas

During Code Red days duties and scheduling will be amended so that employees are not located within high fire risk areas or in designated high risk areas such as (but not limited to) Kinglake, Marysville and Toolangi.

This process may include:

- Telephone contact to clients notifying change in scheduled visits.
- Rescheduling of road works, parks and gardens activities and depot operations.

- Rescheduling of inspections and meetings.
- Cancellation of non-essential travel in rural areas.
- Potential closure of some services for the period.

Restriction of travel through Bushfire Prone Areas

CFA define Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA) as: “An area that is recognised as prone to bushfire attack and has been formally designated under Regulation 804 of the Building Regulations 2006.”

BPAs are generally outside of metropolitan centres or the built-up areas of towns. These areas may contain higher fuel loads and increased fire risk (see Appendix 2 for a map of BPAs in Murrindindi Shire). Except for the central urban areas of Yea and Alexandra, most of the Murrindindi Shire is classified by the State Government as bushfire prone.

All travel on Code Red Days involving Councillors, staff, contractors or volunteers will be kept to an absolute minimum. Travel for the delivery of essential services will be subject to manager approval. All non-essential travel and meetings will be suspended.

Travelling through rural areas will only be permitted in certain circumstances and it meets the following requirements:

- Must obtain permission from supervisor prior to travel;
- Duty must be of genuine urgency and is unable to be rescheduled to another day due to potential safety or health consequences (i.e. Tree over road, etc);
- Employees are not to travel alone where possible;
- Predetermined communication regime to be confirmed including regular contact at designated intervals;
- Employees are adequately prepared and trained in regard to actions to be taken if caught in a bushfire event.

Equipment not to be used

Using chainsaws, whipper snippers or mowers, heating bitumen, grinding, welding, soldering or gas cutting are prohibited activities on declared Total Fire Ban (TFB) and Code Red days. Similarly on TFB or Code Red day, self-propelled farm machinery, tractors, slashers, earth-moving, excavating or road making machines are not to be used within 9 metres of a fire hazard (eg- grass, crops, stubble, vegetation etc).

Equipment such as graders, front-end loaders and bulldozers may also create a fire danger and these items should not be used on Code Red days unless for emergency situations.

5.2. Specific Department Code Red Provisions

Code Red Day Communications to Staff and the Community

Internal

When code red days are predicted this policy will be made available to all staff on the prior evening of a forecast Code Red Day by the Communications Team, by email or the Daily Update

page of Murri (intranet). Restrictions will then be determined by individual managers and coordinators who can advise their staff.

External

Council will endeavour to issue a media release outlining its services available. Council's website will include a specific banner that will be updated regularly on the availability of Council services for that day.

Individual or specific communications to the external community or clients who are reliant on council services will be the responsibility of given departments. These responsibilities are listed below under the relevant headings.

Emergency Management Team

On Code Red days, the Emergency Management Coordination Group (Consisting of the MERC, MERO and MRM) will meet as early as practicable at the Alexandra Office to ensure all preparations are in place. The Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) in the Meeting Room will be put on stand-by and contact will be made with the Emergency Services (predominantly DEPI, CFA and Victoria Police) to advise them of staff fulfilling the MERO and MRM roles.

The EMCG will review this policy and email it around the organization to ensure staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Where required staff and contractors will be put on standby and will complete local work where feasible.

Infrastructure and Development Services

Most infrastructure maintenance operations and capital works will be suspended on Code Red Days, with staff available to enact emergency standby arrangements.

All non-essential property inspection services associated with planning, building, health and infrastructure approvals will be suspended.

Council's local law enforcement services will continue to respond to emergency callouts, where there is imminent danger to human life. All non-essential patrols and inspection services will be temporarily postponed.

Kerbside waste collection

Kerbside waste collection is undertaken by Cleanaway and will follow their guidelines. See Appendix 1.

Landfills and Resource Recovery Centres

Resource Recovery Centres will not operate and Council's Landfill site will have restricted operations.

Resource Recovery Centres have a high potential for fire on such days. Code Red days will mean Resource Recovery Centres do not operate and the Landfill will have a very restricted operation, mainly during the morning. The Waste Management Coordinator will liaise with Council's EMO on fire risks and maintain a watch with the CFR on fire notifications within the shire through any early warning and early notification systems.

Resource Recovery Centres and Landfill

All Resource Recovery Centres will be closed to the public on Code Red days. All RRC staff rostered for work on a Code Red day will stay at home unless otherwise directed.

The Landfill will be closed to all deliveries with the exception of Council vehicles and Council's Contractor for kerbside collection, and may open earlier:

- Mechanical plant will not be used to cover waste or to handle any materials including green organic wastes at the Landfill. Staff will attend the Landfill site to supervise the area and direct arrivals away from the site (all account holders will be advised of the Code Red policy and will refrain from deliveries). Kerbside collection contractors will tip at the location determined by the landfill operator as being the most suitable at the time, this may include the current tipping area or a designated temporary holding area for rubbish collected.
- The Council kerbside collection service contractors may undertake their normal kerbside collection on Code Red day as per their operating procedures to ensure that public hygiene and normal commercial activity is not compromised. The collection will be undertaken in whole or part as the contractor sees fit for the location to be collected, the landfill will accommodate the collected rubbish at the site.
- Landfill attendants will be at work as normal, however they will be instructed to secure the site and liaise with the kerbside contractor and to operate the site for their delivery only. Once the kerbside collection tipping has finished operators will secure the site and return home.

Road works / Parks & Gardens

Given the expected weather severity during declared Code Red days, the type of works that can be safely carried out by either Roads or the Parks and Gardens Units will be limited. Field operations will take a precautionary approach and activities that carry "any" risk of starting an incident will be placed on hold until the Code Red day passes, unless these works are required as part of the emergency response. All road construction works will cease for the period of Code Red.

Parks and Gardens staff will be restricted to township maintenance activities (non-mechanical activities) and be available for emergency response as required.

Road maintenance crews will be required to provide a continuity of service as long as it is safe to do so, as determined by the Team Leader, Coordinator or Manager. This may include reallocation of staff to Parks and Gardens or other alternate duties for the period of the Code Red.

Hazard response is to continue to maintain road safety with the level of the "hazard" to be actioned being set by the supervisor. This will reflect large hazards that will impact on all road users such as traffic leaving a fire prone area or emergency services vehicles heading to an emergency.

If roads and maintenance staff are sent out on emergency preparation work they will be required to maintain vigilance and have regular programmed contact with the depot office, and be available at short notice to attend emergencies. Radio 774-ABC to be utilised within all vehicles and a contact roster is to be set by the supervisor prior to units leaving the depots. Two staff minimum will be required for each unit.

Plant (including water and fuel tankers) will be checked ensuring they are filled, service ready and put on standby as determined by the MERO.

Aged and Disability Services

Aged and Disability Services will be restricted to delivery of essential services.

Council staff will where possible contact vulnerable clients informing them of the fire danger and a possible reduction or cessation of services.

Children's Services

Family Day Care and In Home Care will operate in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) directives to local primary and secondary education facilities.

Child care will continue to be offered in Eildon, Alexandra and Yea, subject to educator availability.

Services based in areas where local schools are directed to close on code red days will not operate.

Council staff will liaise with the relevant educators who will notify clients by phone when a Code Red day has been predicted, if services are to be closed.

Maternal and Child Health

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services in Yea and Alexandra may operate subject to staff availability. Other MCH Services will not operate. Home visits will not proceed on code red days and will be rescheduled.

On Code Red Days home visits by Maternal and Child Health Staff will only occur in low-risk townships before 12 noon and no visits will be made in outlying areas at all during Code Red Days.

Maternal and Child Health Clients will be notified by phone when a Code Red day has been predicted and that services will not be available in high risk areas.

Swimming Pools

Alexandra and Yea swimming pools will remain open subject to staff availability. Coordinator Youth and Recreation Services and the Aquatics Coordinator will work to enable the pool be staffed appropriately.

This may require re-allocation of other Council staff from non-essential roles, to operate pool entry and to ensure operational policies in relation to unaccompanied minors is being followed, enabling lifeguards to monitor the pools.

Marysville and Eildon swimming pools will be closed. Appropriate signage will be displayed advertising the closure.

Private bookings and programs scheduled for a code red day will be cancelled in Marysville and Eildon. In Alexandra and Yea, Private bookings and programs occurring on a code red day may be cancelled to prioritise public use of the pool.

Library Services

Alexandra Branch Library and Yea Office/Library will remain open during normal operating hours subject to staff availability. It is anticipated that there may be an increase in patrons using these services if they have evacuated a fire prone area.

Kinglake Council Office/Library will remain open subject to staff availability. Should the office close it will be published on Council's website.

Mobile Library services will not operate.

Meetings

Due to the extensive travel that may be required by Council personnel and members of the public, any Ordinary or Special meetings of Council that are scheduled on a Code Red day will be cancelled and re-scheduled.

In addition any scheduled meetings of Delegated Committees of Management (S86) or Council appointed Advisory Committees (S87) will also be cancelled and re-scheduled.

Contractors and volunteers

The relevant Coordinator or Supervisor will notify volunteers and contractors of restrictions on a code day.

Volunteers' safety and processes will be addressed separately through Council's Volunteer Policy.

Contractors – all Council specifications and contracts must state that a contractor must comply with the Code Red, Severe and Extreme Fire Danger Day Policy.

5.3. Emergency Preparedness

The need to have staff available to attend emergencies (fires and storms), at short notice will require many staff to remain at work on "standby" or "on call" mode such as coordinators, team leaders, water tanker drivers, grader operators, plant operators, traffic control personnel and other staff as required.

Staff activation in an after-hours emergency will be coordinated by the relevant coordinator as per the after hours roster and overseen by the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO). Additional staff outside of the roster may be called to standby and or assist at the determination of the MERO.

On a Code Red Day, Team Leaders will be located at each depot and all Operations Coordinators will be located at either the depot or office. Emergency breakouts will require all units to be returned to depots and the main office for further instruction. Heavy plant (Graders, Water Tankers etc) will be placed on standby at all depots and strategic points enabling short response timeframes.

5.4. Leave options for affected staff

Council will not refuse any reasonable request on a Code Red Day, Severe Day or a Day of Extreme Fire Danger from employees to take the relevant leave so as to action their Personal Bush Fire Survival Plan.

The following leave arrangements are outlined for employees that may be unavailable to attend employment duties during Code Red days subject to approval from the relevant supervisor.

Where possible staff must obtain leave approved in advance (there is generally but not always prior notice of a declared Code Red day). In circumstances where this is not possible staff must

- the employee must notify their supervisor by telephone of such absence at the first opportunity on the day of absence
- complete the appropriate leave application on their return.

Paid Leave (Code Red Fire Danger days)

In circumstances where the work place is deemed unsafe and/or alternate duties are not available, employees may be granted paid leave for the duration of the Code Red fire warning or to the close of business that day.

Organise Home Based Work Arrangements Prior to Any Event

The Council and the employee may enter a formal agreement where the employee can work from home. (OH&S conditions apply and for an approved short-term/emergency arrangement only).

Existing leave entitlements or accrued time

Employees will be asked to use existing leave available, such as annual leave or Long Service Leave provisions or accrued time (rostered, time in lieu, banked rostered days) in the event of their inability to attend work.

Carer's Leave

Employees with responsibilities to care for dependent members of their immediate family or household may use carer's leave entitlements for the purposes of emergency in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

Casual staff can access carer's leave but their leave is unpaid.

Unpaid Leave

Employees may apply for Leave Without Pay in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

Emergency Services Leave

Employees who are a registered member of an emergency service (such as the CFA or SES) and have received an official request from that emergency service to assist with response may access emergency leave as outlined in Council's *Emergency and Defence Services Leave Policy*.

5.5. Further Information

Further information pertaining to Bushfires Emergencies and Fire Danger Ratings can be obtained from:

- The Victoria Bushfire Information line 1800 240 667
- CFA Website www.cfa.com.au

5.6. Communication

It is the intention that this Policy will be circulated via email and placed on notice boards following each declaration of an upcoming Code Red Day. Whilst all effort will be made to advise staff of Code Red Days, the timing of such declarations may not allow for the distribution of this guideline on all occasions.

Staff should communicate with their supervisor to determine their roster or changed requirements in anticipation of a code red day.

6. Supporting Documents

- Murrindindi Shire Council and Lake Mountain Alpine Resort Municipal Emergency Management Plan – Section 3.11 – Public Information and Warning.
- Municipal Fire Management Plan.
- MSC Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP).
- Country Fire Authority website <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/about-the-fire-danger-period/>
- The Emergency Management Act 1986
- The Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

7. Related Policies

- Council policy – Service Provision on Code Red Days
- MSC Emergency and Defence Services Leave Policy.
- MSC/Community Services Aged & Disability Services Policy No. 48 (Extreme Heat)

8. Governance

Policy implementation is the responsibility of Departmental Managers until such time as the CEO or EMCG enacts the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) and overrides this policy during declared emergencies.

9. Responsible Officer

GM, Corporate and Community Services or delegated officer.

10. Human Rights Charter

This policy has been developed with consideration of the requirements under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Cleanaway (Council's current kerbside collection provider) Code Red Policy

OPERATION OF VEHICLES IN BUSHFIRE PRONE AREAS NATIONAL INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



Purpose of the Procedure

Transpacific Cleanaway Pty Ltd has a duty of care to ensure that all employees are provided with a safe workplace. This includes vehicles wherever they may be on company business.

Transpacific Cleanaway Pty Ltd operates in regions that are at risk from bushfires during certain times of the year (1 November to 30 April). It is important that employees understand the dangers that bushfires pose to their own personal safety and that of other road users. For this reason Transpacific Cleanaway Pty Ltd has adopted this procedure.

Aim

To provide employees with clear instructions as to what action they should take in relation to days of extreme fire danger (Extreme and Code Red)

On days of 'Extreme' fire danger, Transpacific Cleanaway drivers may operate their vehicles in affected areas provided there is no immediate or perceived risk.

If "Code Red" fire danger is declared for any area where collections are scheduled to occur, all employees rostered to work in these areas must receive notification from their supervisor's or manager's prior to commencing their shift. Employees must not operate any vehicle in a "Code Red" fire danger area until they have spoken to their supervisor or manager. If a driver is not notified before their rostered shift, they must seek permission from their supervisor or manager prior to entering a "Code Red" fire danger area.

On Extreme and Code Red fire danger day's drivers could be requested to start their shift at an earlier start time.

It is the supervisors and managers responsibility to check the CFA website www.cfa.vic.gov.au to determine the fire conditions for the following days. All drivers are to monitor local ABC radio, keep their mobile phones handy and monitor the UHF radio if available.

Before commencing their shift all drivers are to familiarise themselves with any one-way or dead-end roads and turn around points, as well as the locations of any Neighbourhood Safe Places within their collection areas.

If there is a perceived, new or immediate risk drivers should not enter the affected area or if they are already in the area they should evacuate if safe to do so or act as directed by emergency services.

If a driver identifies a fire in his/her area then they must contact emergency services using 000 (or 112 on mobile phones) then evacuate the area and contact their supervisor or manager.

Transpacific Cleanaway will provide a copy of the policy to all new and current employees and conduct training prior to the start of the bushfire season.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Cleanaway (Council's current kerbside collection provider) Code Red Policy

All employees are expected to be familiar with this policy. Any queries are to be directed to the supervisor or manager.

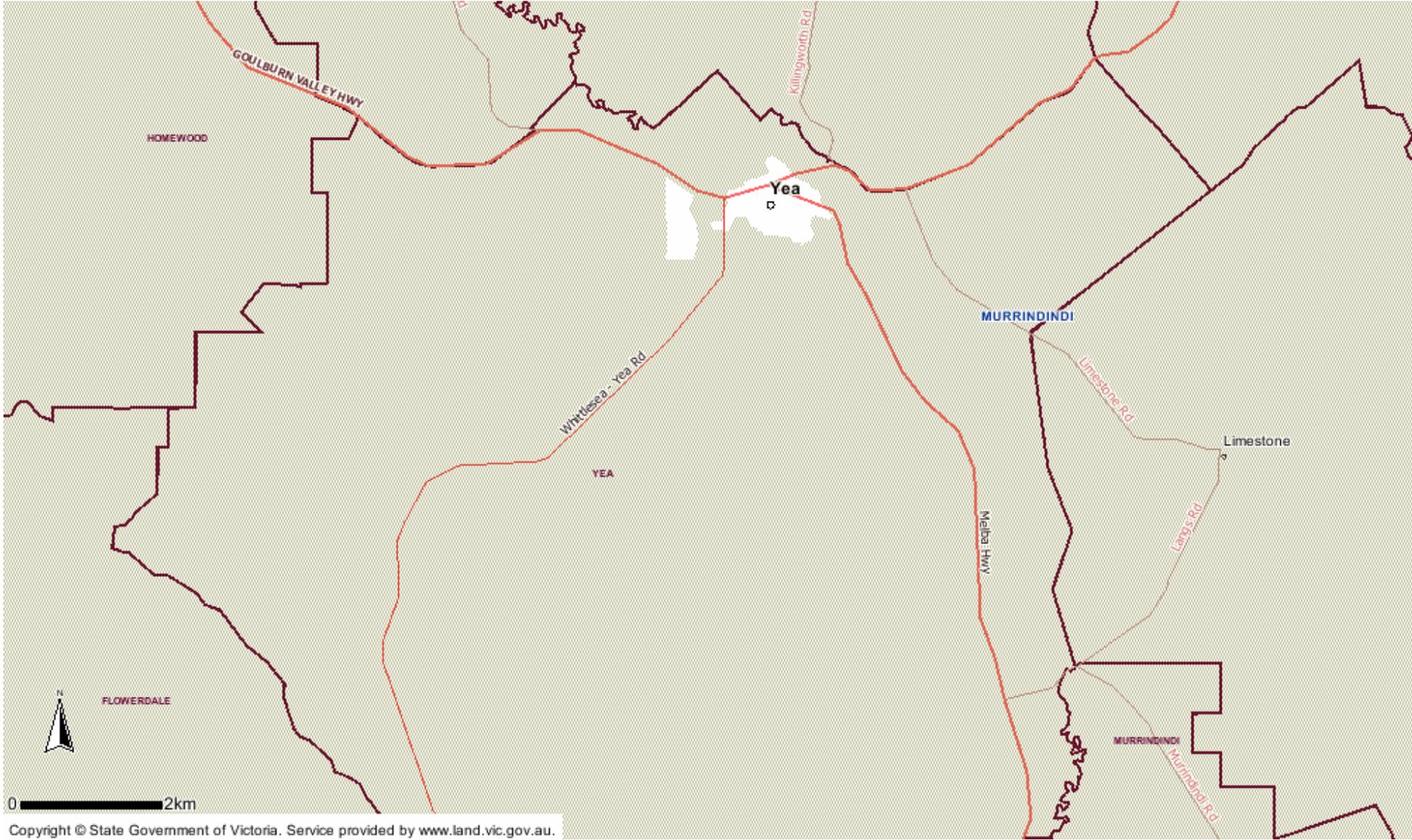
Sub- contractors and employees are bound by this procedure. Failure to observe the procedure will constitute grounds for review or termination of contract or employment.

Transpacific Cleanaway will communicate this procedure to all relevant councils and shires.

Appendices

Appendix 2 Bushfire Prone Areas

Note: Bushfire Prone Areas are in Grey

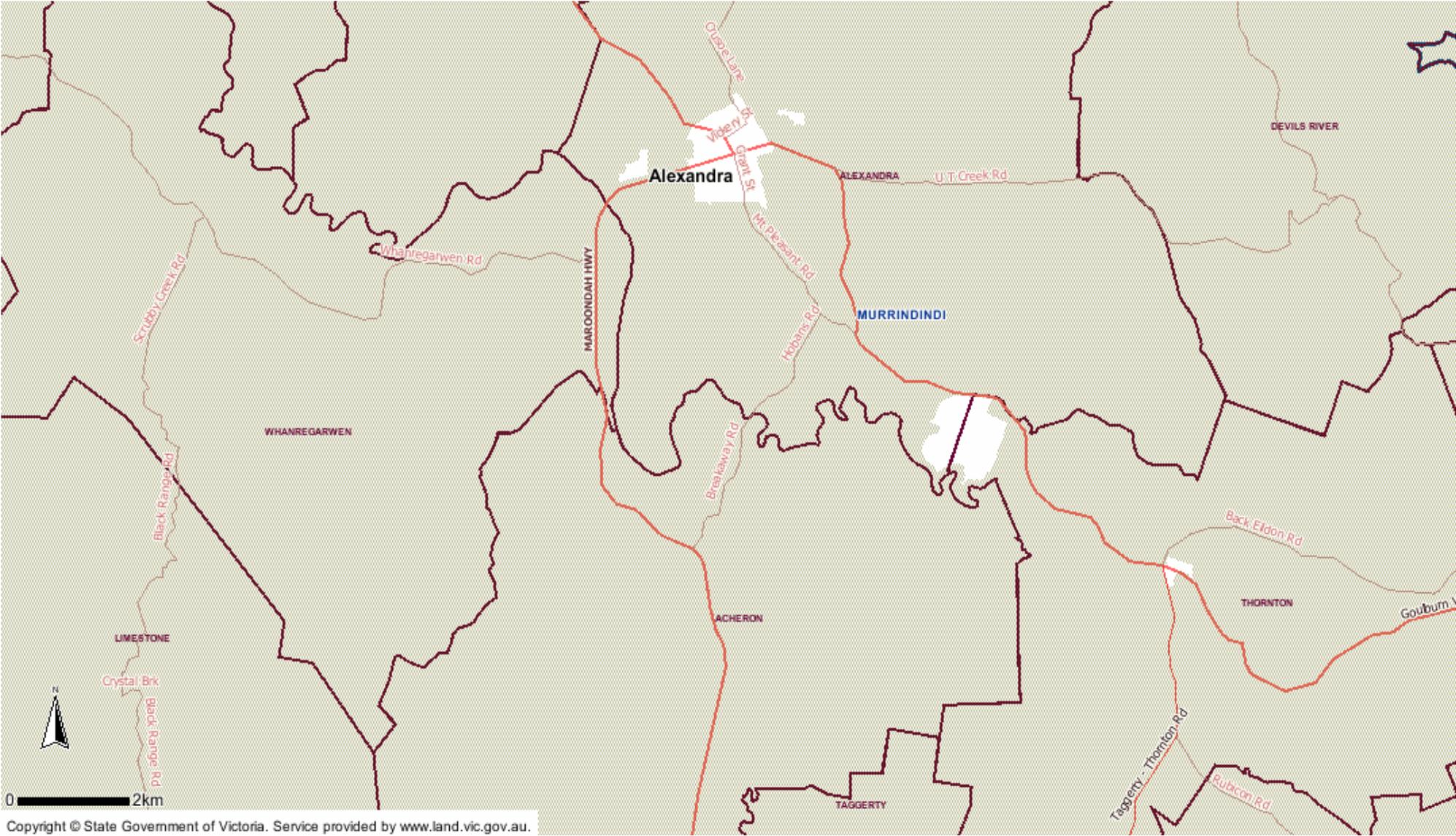


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Appendices

Appendix 2 Bushfire Prone Areas

Note: Bushfire Prone Areas are in Grey



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