

Niluksha Herath
Manager Western Victorian Renewable Integration RIT-T
Australian Energy Market Operator
Via electronic lodgement
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22 October 2019

File: 13/03/010

Dear Niluksha,

MOORABOOL SHIRE COUNCIL SUBMISSION – FIRE DANGER

Introduction

Moorabool Shire Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the Western Victoria Renewable Integration Project Assessment Conclusion Report (PACR). This second submission is intended to be read in conjunction with our original submission provided in June 2019.

As per our recent briefing from AEMO, it is understood that now that the PACR is complete, the next step is awarding the contract to commence the project. And that, it will be the responsibility of the successful tenderer to carry out stakeholder engagement, approvals and confirm the alignment.

Therefore, it is acknowledged that the project has not advanced regarding alignment location since our original submission. However, Council feels it is important to raise the issue of fire danger in the Moorabool Shire and the risk that 500kV transmission lines may impose on the community if put above ground in the wrong locations.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, established in response to the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, was to investigate causes, responses and how to prevent such fires from happening again. Electricity infrastructure was determined to have caused a number of the fires, including some of the deadliest.

As a result of the Commission, the Victorian Government contributed \$750 million to the Powerline Bushfire Safety program to reduce the risk of bushfires caused by electrical assets. This program targets areas of greatest risk. This included replacing existing bare wire powerlines with insulated overhead or underground powerlines. Priority was given to replacing those bare wire powerlines that are located in the areas of highest bushfire risk, where it provides the best safety outcome to the community.

Moorabool Shire was not impacted by the Black Saturday fires directly but has a long and continuous history of fires. This is recognised by the State through designation of three towns/settlements as extreme and nine very high or high fire risk areas in the Victorian Fire Risk Register.

Moorabool Shire Fire Risk Areas

Moorabool Shire has three extreme fire risk areas that were identified by the State Government after the 2009 bushfires:

1. Blackwood,
2. Dales Creek, and
3. Greendale.

Further areas that are identified in the high to very high-risk area for fire danger included in the Victorian Fire Risk Register include:

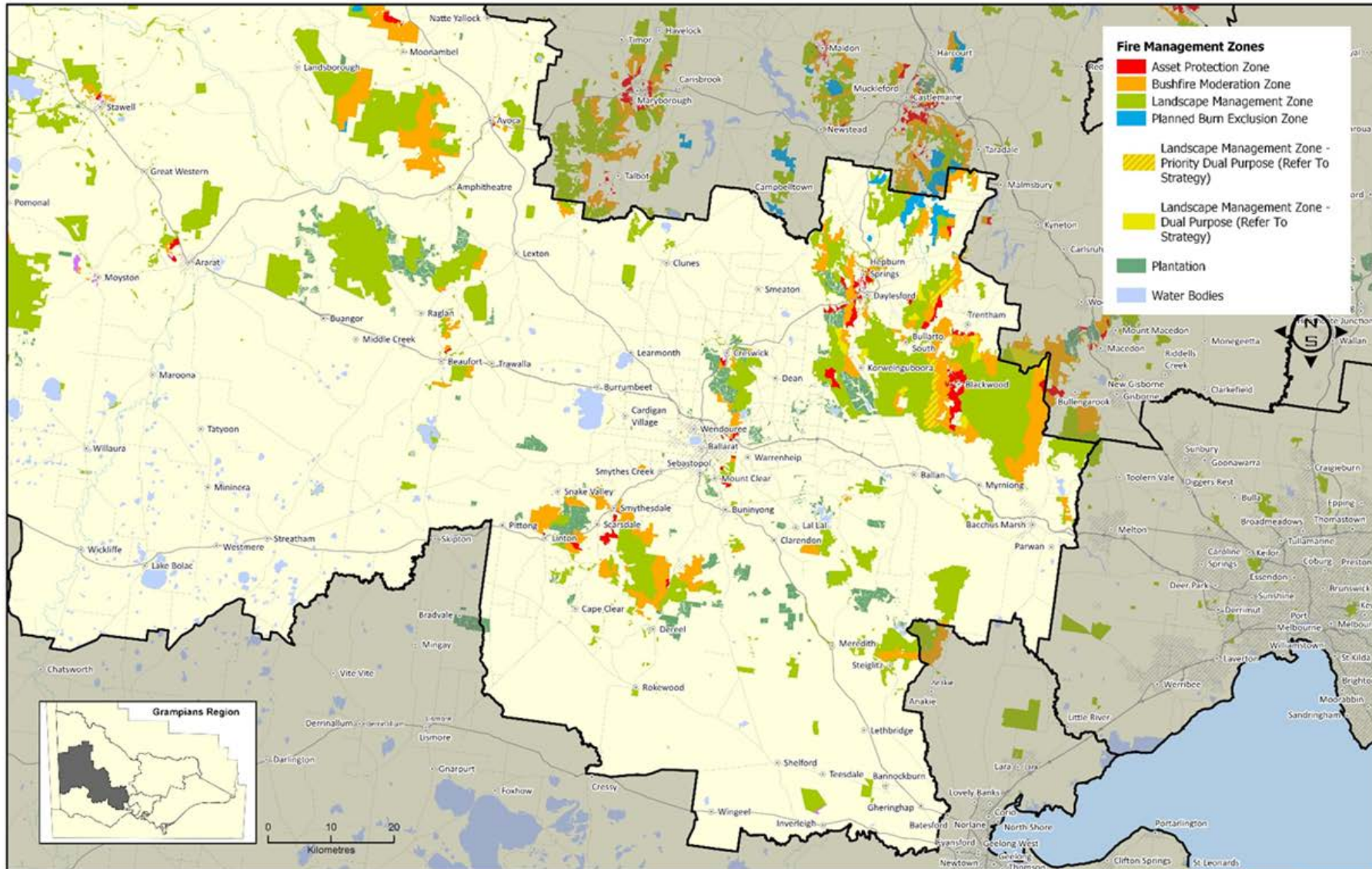
- Darley
- Korweinguboorra/Spargo Creek/Blakeville
- Coimadai
- Long Forest
- Mount Wallace and Beremboke
- Gordon
- Mount Egerton
- Myrniong
- Lal Lal

Strategic Bushfire Management Planning which has been occurring across the Grampians Region is integrated planning with Country Fire Authority, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Parks Victoria and Councils and numerous other agencies and infrastructure owners to minimise the risk of bushfire on communities.

Fire management zones have been identified and mapped for the Region for state owned, council owned and privately owned areas and are provided below.

East Grampians Region - Draft FMZ

As of: 30/08/2019

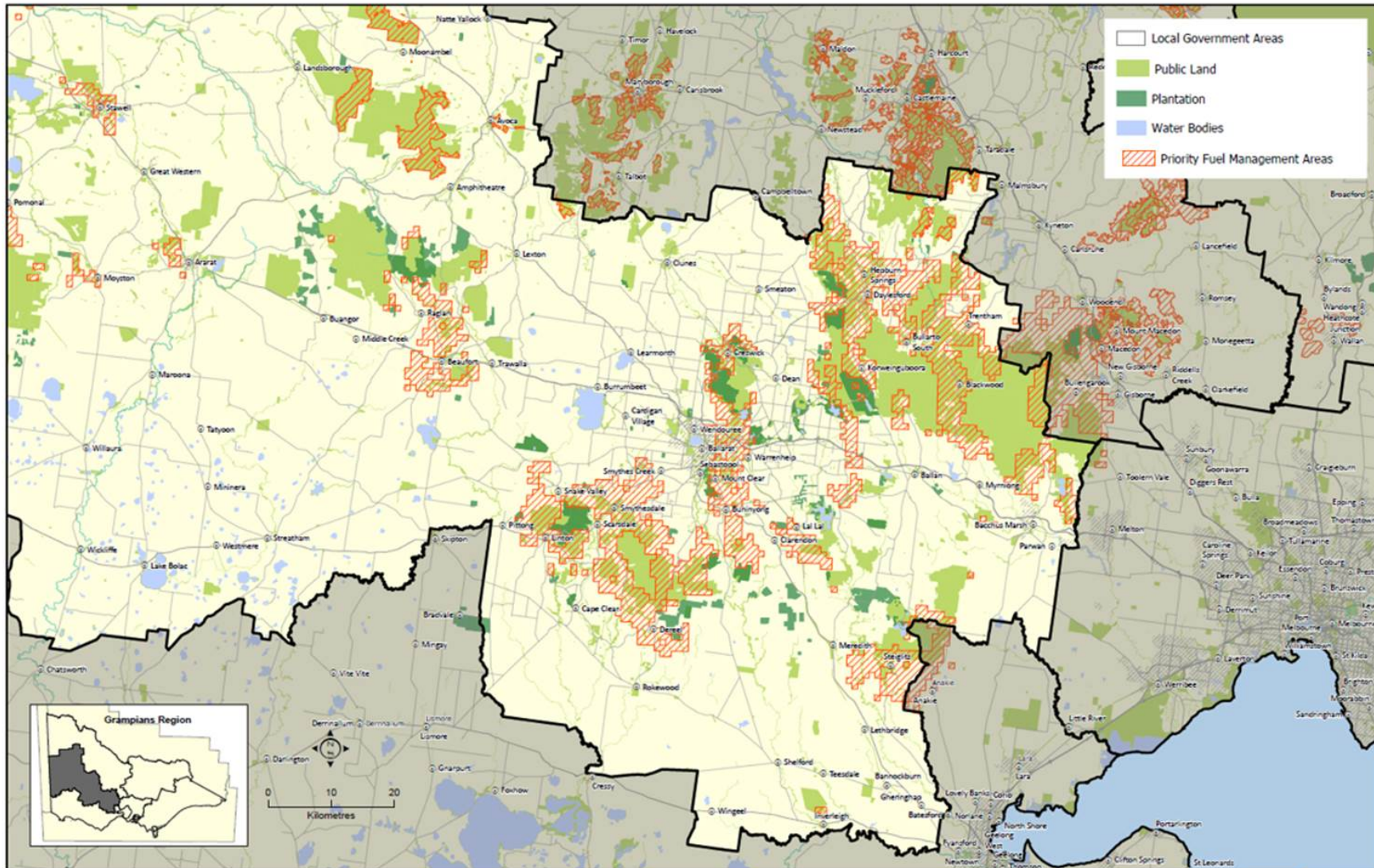



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SAFER TOGETHER

VICTORIA
State Government

Eastern Grampians Region - Priority Fuel Management Areas



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Climate and Bushfire Season

The climate in the Moorabool area is dominated by warm dry summers and cool wet winters. In recent years there has been a significant decrease in average spring and autumn rainfalls. The bushfire season generally runs from December to April.

Prevailing weather conditions associated with the bushfire season in the Moorabool Shire area are warm to hot north westerly winds accompanied by high temperatures and low relative humidity followed by a cool south westerly change.

Under the State Government climate change projections, Moorabool Shire can expect:

- To be hotter with the greatest increases in temperature expected in summer;
- To be drier with greatest decreases in rainfall expected in spring; and
- To have fewer rainy days but increasing rainfall intensity.

It is understood that these predicted changes in climate have the potential to increase the fire risk across Moorabool Shire.

Conclusion

Again, Council recognises the importance of this project and welcomes detailed consultation with the successful project contractor. However, the safety of our residents must be the number one priority. Council requests the increased fire danger is to be a priority concern when investigating potential alignment options.

Not only can transmission lines cause fires and impact high risk human settlement areas, but fires near transmission lines are dangerous, cause damage to the infrastructure and interrupt electricity supply. Poor alignment decisions will not only put the community at greater risk, but also the transmission infrastructure.

It is Council's view that the most appropriate way to address our concerns would be through the undergrounding of the powerlines, ideally for the extent of the project, or at a minimum at key locations where the powerlines are likely to increase the risk to human life due to fire management issues.

We welcome further discussion regarding our submission.

Yours sincerely



Henry Bezuidenhout

Executive Manager Community Planning and Economic Development