

# C11 Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

In late 2009, the Department and the ACT Emergency Services Agency conducted a bushfire risk assessment of public schools. The purpose of the risk assessment was to guide the Department in any decision to close public schools on days when the ACT is declared as having an elevated (catastrophic or code red) fire danger rating.

Thirty-three public schools were identified as being at risk due to being located in an ember zone, adjacent to nearby vegetation and/or close to areas of the urban/rural interface.

Following this risk assessment a policy was developed, in consultation with the emergency services, under which identified public (and non-government) schools will be closed temporarily on days when a catastrophic fire danger rating is declared. Other schools are required to be on high alert on such days and prepared to close if necessary.

This policy will be reviewed with the development and release of a whole of government elevated fire danger plan by the ACT Rural Fire Service. The ACT Rural Fire Service will conduct school site risk assessments on ACT schools before the beginning of the next bushfire season.

All public schools have Emergency Management Plans consistent with the Department's Emergency Management Framework. These plans detail emergency response procedures for each school and cover a wide range of possible incidents and emergencies including bushfires.

A Bushfire Operation Plan is in place for Birrigai Outdoor School due to Birrigai's proximity to the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. The plan provides an outline of the Department's bushfire management strategy which ensures that both the school and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve are assessed together for bushfire prevention.

From 1 July 2010, the management of Birrigai at Tidbinbilla (including responsibility for the land, facilities and operations) will be transferred from the Department of Education and Training to the Department of Territory and Municipal Services.

In the 2003 ACT bushfires, 75 percent of Birrigai's facilities were destroyed. Mr George Lutton, from the Department, was a driving force in rebuilding Birrigai. In recognition of his dedication to his work and commitment to regenerating the area, a ceremony was held on the anniversary of his death. In June 2010, the refurbished theatre at Birrigai Outdoor School was renamed 'The George Lutton Lecture Theatre'.

**For more information contact:**

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