

Hazard reduction Grass Tree burning on public land

Frequently Asked Questions

What is hazard reduction Grass Tree burning?

Hazard reduction burning, prescribed burning, controlled burning and planned burning are interchangeable terms that describe burning in a predetermined area for the management and control of fuel loads.

Hazard reduction burning mitigates the severity of wildfires/bushfires and reduces the potential impacts to the community and the environment by burning selected vegetation and ground fuels such as leaf litter, grasses and Grass Trees/Balgas in a controlled manner.

These types of fires are generally 'cool' and are undertaken in appropriate weather conditions so that the fire burns slowly at low intensity.

What are fuel loads?

Fuel loads are the amount of combustible material in an area and can accumulate over time. Dead material is more flammable than live material and includes the dry dead skirts on Grass Trees/Balgas, dead grasses and dead leaves and bark that fall from trees and shrubs. Fuel loads are expressed in terms of tonnes per hectare (t/ha).

Hazard reduction burning can reduce fuel loads providing increased safety for nearby residents and assets.

What vegetation will be burnt?

Through site visits and discussions held between City officers, Department of Fire and Emergency Services officers and environmentally-based independent consultants, it has been agreed that the targeted burning of Grass Trees/Balgas, including underlying and nearby leaf litter, is the recommended fuel reduction strategy for applicable City managed reserves.

Why burn Grass Trees/Balgas?

Grass Trees/Balgas make up a high proportion of vegetation within the City's reserves. Many have long unburnt dead skirts which are an extreme source of fuels. Grass Trees/Balgas can benefit from hazard reduction burns, as fire will stimulate the Grass Tree/Balga to flower and seed.

For further information the City has developed a Grass Trees/Balgas Fact Sheet.

Why is the City introducing a Hazard Reduction Grass Tree Burning Program?

A coordinated and planned approach is required to address fire management within the City in order to mitigate the risk of fire occurrences that could result in damage to life, property and the environment.

The introduction of hazard reduction Grass Tree burning within applicable reserves/bushland areas has been recommended as a bushfire mitigation strategy by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to reduce bushfire risk in applicable areas.

Who will be carrying out the hazard reduction Grass Tree burns?

Hazard reduction Grass Tree burns will be undertaken by highly qualified, trained and experienced personnel.

When will hazard reduction Grass Tree burns take place?

Hazard reduction Grass Tree burns are 'cool' burns and are usually conducted in autumn/winter or during mild weather when the dry summer fuels have increased in moisture content and fire behaviour is easier to manage. 'Cool' burns are undertaken often in the early morning or in the late afternoon/evening when weather conditions are suitable.

Specific times and locations of hazard reduction Grass Tree burns are scheduled in liaison with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and will be subject to suitable weather conditions.

Which reserves/bushland areas will hazard reduction Grass Tree burns be carried out in?

Applicable City reserves and bushland areas will be assessed in liaison with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Hazard reduction Grass Tree burns will only be undertaken where it is jointly agreed by the City and the Department.

Specific times and locations of hazard reduction Grass Tree burns are scheduled in liaison with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and only a small number of reserves will be burnt each year, as required.

What will happen after a hazard reduction Grass Tree burn?

Post-fire weed control will be undertaken and burnt areas will be monitored to assess weed growth to support the sustainability and regeneration of native vegetation.

Will the hazard reduction Grass Tree burn negatively impact the bushland?

Fire is a natural part of the Australian landscape. The hazard reduction Grass Tree burn will be implemented as a cool, low intensity burn over small areas, targeting Grass Trees/Balgas and surrounding leaf litter. This will reduce negative impact on the bushland, assist in regeneration, ie maintaining floristic diversity and protecting against the more severe consequences of a high intensity, uncontrolled wildfire/bushfire.

Will the hazard reduction Grass Tree burn create a lot of smoke?

The hazard reduction Grass Tree burn will create smoke; however, as part of the burn planning there are appropriate procedures to reduce the impact of smoke. Burns should only be carried out:

- During mild, cooler weather conditions;
- When the soil has a higher moisture content;
- During low wind and with suitable wind direction to minimise impact to the community; and
- As low intensity 'cool' burns.

Residents living nearby to a reserve/bushland area scheduled for a hazard reduction Grass Tree burn, will be notified directly prior to the burn taking place.

What can I do to minimise the impact of smoke to me and my family?

To minimise the impact of smoke the following are recommended:

- Shut doors and windows;
- Turn off air-conditioners;
- People with asthma, pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses and conditions exacerbated by smoke should take precautions in line with their medical advice; and/or
- Visit the Department of Health website for further information at health.gov.au

What if a hazard reduction Grass Tree burn gets out of control?

Hazard reduction Grass Tree burns will be undertaken by highly qualified, trained and experienced personnel. As part of the pre-burn prescription, a detailed risk assessment which covers scenarios, such as the burn escaping, will be undertaken.

How will the community be notified of a hazard reduction Grass Tree burn taking place?

Residents living nearby to a reserve/bushland area scheduled for a hazard reduction Grass Tree burn, will be notified directly prior to the burn taking place.

The City will also notify the general community about any upcoming hazard reduction Grass Tree burns via the following:

- Public notice on the City's website and emailed to subscribers;
- Text/email notifications; and
- Social media posts.

What else is the City doing to reduce bushfire risk?

The following bushfire management actions are already implemented by the City:

- Weed control (mechanical and chemical);
- Installation and maintenance of firebreaks on City owned and managed land;
- Manual fuel load reduction;
- Firebreak inspections on all vacant land and bushland;
- Fuel assessments on bushland greater than 2,000 square metres/0.2 hectares;
- Controlled access to sites; and
- Community education.

Who do I contact for further information?

For further information on the City's Hazard Reduction Grass Tree Burning Program, please contact City Rangers on **1300 655 860** or email info@joondalup.wa.gov.au

To be informed of when a hazard reduction Grass Tree burn is taking place:

- Subscribe to the Public Notices Online Newsletter at joondalup.wa.gov.au; and/or
- Register for inclusion on the City's Hazard Reduction Grass Tree Burning Notification Register to receive notification via text message or email.