

Astronomical Society of NSW Inc (ASNSW)

B: Wiruna Bushfire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan

“Wiruna” – 48 Old Ilford Rd, Ilford

Lot 7, DP 747954

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1 Bushfire Emergency and Evacuation Summary

1.1 Facility Details

Site: This plan is for Wiruna, 48 Old Ilford Rd, Ilford

Primary action: Close the site and Evacuate

Contact person: Joe Cauchi – Chief Fire Warden – 0428 363 878

Personnel: All persons on site are Society members, volunteers and visitors.

Occupancy: No permanent occupants.

Attendees at new-Moon weekends: 10 to 40 (approximately)

Attendees at annual Star Party: Up to 320

Number of attendees with support needs: Nil

1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Position	Name	Area of Responsibility	Mobile phone
Chief Fire Warden/Deputy	Joe Cauchi Trevor Oates	Sound alarm; Meeting Hall, Bunkrooms; Gas cylinders; Communications	0428 363 878 0412 046 020
Area Warden	Ken Wallace	"Bon Glen" (Regular camp sites)	0400 432 747
Area Warden	Trevor Gerdes Rob Lucas	"Barry Gerdes Lodge" (house at rear of property)	0404 892 657 0401 249 487
Area Warden	Warren Neal Jeff Portelli	Observing field, Imaging alley, Lower Camp Ground (Mixed weekend camping/observing)	0439 536 802 0418 800 999
Area Warden	Greg Priestley	Bush Kitchen, Lounge	0414 300 885
Area Warden	Peter Moore	Backup: Communications; Alarm; All areas	0418 433 388

1.3 Emergency Contacts

Name of organisation	Office/Contact	Phone Number
NSW Rural Fire Service	Local Fire Control Centre: Mid Western Regional Local Government Area (Cudgegong office)	02 6372 4434
NSW Rural Fire Service	Bush Fire Information Line	1800 679 737 1800 NSW RFS
NSW Rural Fire Service	Website: https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/	
Two-Mile Fire Brigade	Dave Murray	0427 377 090
Police	Bathurst	02 6332 8699
	Mudgee	02 6372 8599
	Lithgow	02 6352 8399

1.4 Evacuation Procedures

- Chief Fire Warden sounds alarm and contacts attendees at Barry Gerdes Lodge.
- All attendees assemble at Emergency Assembly Point north of the Meeting Hall.
- Attendees who have signed in are all accounted for.
- Attendees leave by own transport according to safest route as advised by Chief Fire Warden and proceed home.
- It is estimated that an orderly evacuation could be completed in one hour.

1.5 Sheltering Procedures

- If unsafe to leave, the designated refuge is the Meeting Hall.
- Barry Gerdes Lodge is a secondary refuge only to be used if unsafe to get to Meeting Hall.

2 Context

2.1 Location of Property in High Fire-Risk Area

The property “Wiruna” is located at 48 Old Ilford Rd, Razorback (Ilford). It is adjacent to, and contains, natural bushland. It is recognised that this poses considerable fire risk at certain times of year and under normal loads of undergrowth and ground cover. The property is identified on the Bushfire Hazard Map for Midwestern Regional Council as shown on Figure 2-1 below.

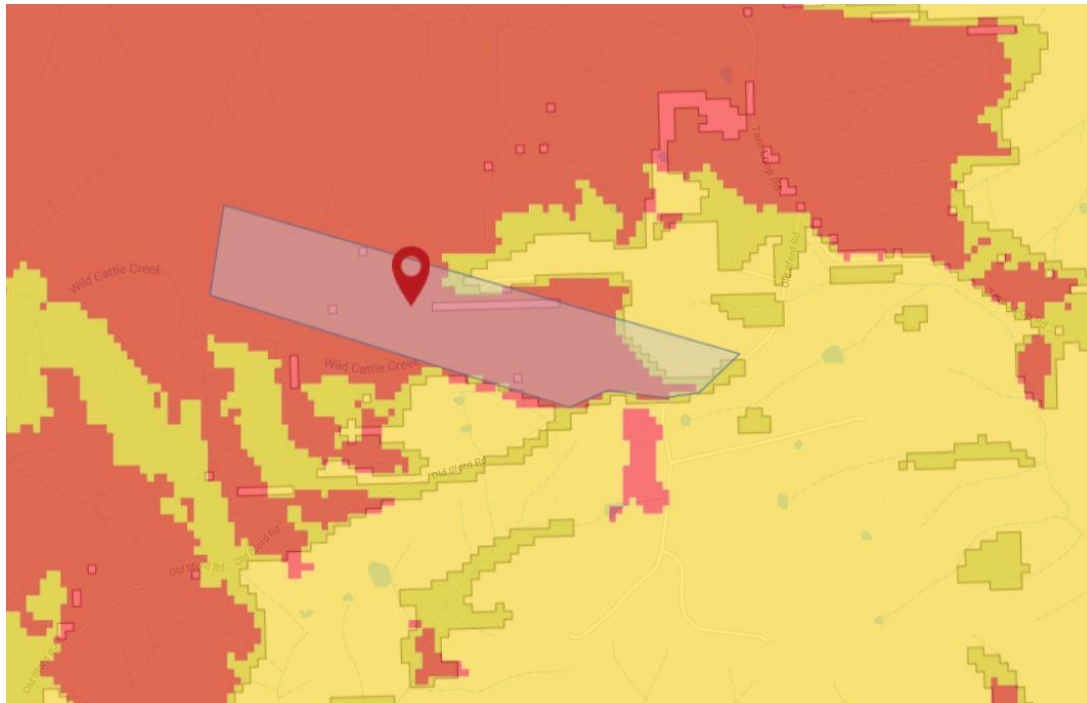


Figure 2-1 – Bushfire Prone Land Overlay

2.2 Usage of Property

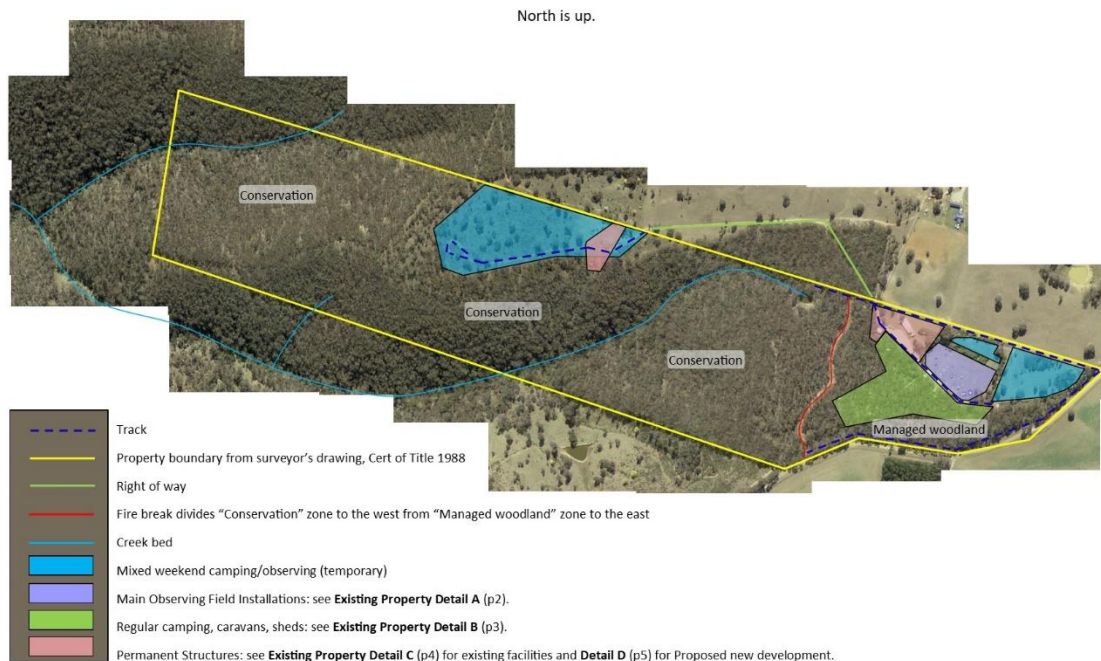
An outline of the usage of the property is shown on Figure 2-2. It should be noted that the majority of active use occurs within areas of the lowest hazard level under the three-part categorisation. The only exception is the regular camping area in the eastern portion of the property which is partially in a high hazard area.

A bushfire hazard assessment has been carried out for the property, covering the current and proposed uses of the land, and also addressing the existing dwelling on the cleared area mid-way along the northern boundary, and also the Meeting Hall, which is located within the eastern cleared area. This has been carried out under the provisions of “Planning for Bushfire Protection” and the relevant sections of Australian Standard 3959.

This has identified that the site should not be occupied when the Fire Danger Rating is extreme or catastrophic. However, should the property, while occupied, be threatened with an event that would make evacuation dangerous, the Meeting Hall has been upgraded as a last place of refuge.

Astronomical Society of NSW Inc. (ASNSW) - OVERVIEW OF "WIRUNA", 48 Old Ilford Rd, Razorback (Ilford)

Plan 1: Existing Overall Property Usage Diagram



2

Figure 2-2 – Existing Overall Property Usage Diagram

Page numbers in the above figure refer to other figures in the set of plans (Plans 1-7) supplied with the Statement of Environmental Effects and DA Report.

The property is used by members on scheduled new-Moon weekends and for the annual South Pacific Star Party. It is to be noted that:

- The property is not occupied as a permanent place of residence, thus reducing the risk to life.
- The risk of a fire accidentally breaking out (e.g., escaping from a fireplace or camp fire on the ground) is managed through the Wiruna Property Management Plan (document C) and the Star Party Event Management Plan (document D) which are used to manage events on the site.
- Risk to life if a bushfire comes through the area is reduced in that it is unlikely that the property will be occupied in the case of extreme or catastrophic fire danger rating periods (Figure 3-2), or during a bushfire event (refer Wiruna Closure Policy at 3.3 below).
- The property is currently open to members regularly on only about 40 days per year. Special group visits and maintenance weekends may add another 10 days per year.

At all times of occupation, at least one person who is very familiar with the society's fire emergency procedures is on the property.

3 Bushfire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan

3.1 Access and Map of Evacuation Routes

The property's main driveway runs directly off Old Ilford Rd. Well-maintained access roads run from the western end of the driveway to the south of the Main Observing Field and through to the southern edge of the camping ground that fronts Old Ilford Rd. An access road also runs south-west into the long-term camping area in the managed woodland zone (to the east of the firebreak).

Road access to the property is set out in Figure 3-1, below.

The preferred egress route in the case of evacuation is shown in red on Figure 3-1.

The recommended egress route out of Ilford would be selected based on the fire event characteristics. Routes may differ from the preferred route shown. However, if the preferred route is not available, the decision may be made to SHELTER.

Within the property, access to the western cleared area is via a right-of-way through the northern neighbour's property. This traverses a bushland area as shown on Figure 2-2. It should be noted, however, that an alternative route in the event of a fire is across the cleared ground of the neighbouring property.

At the eastern end of the property, the Old Ilford Rd boundary has vehicular access inside the boundary fence that connects with the firebreak, i.e., it is possible to circumnavigate the entire eastern portion of the property (including the camping areas) by 2-wheel drive vehicle.

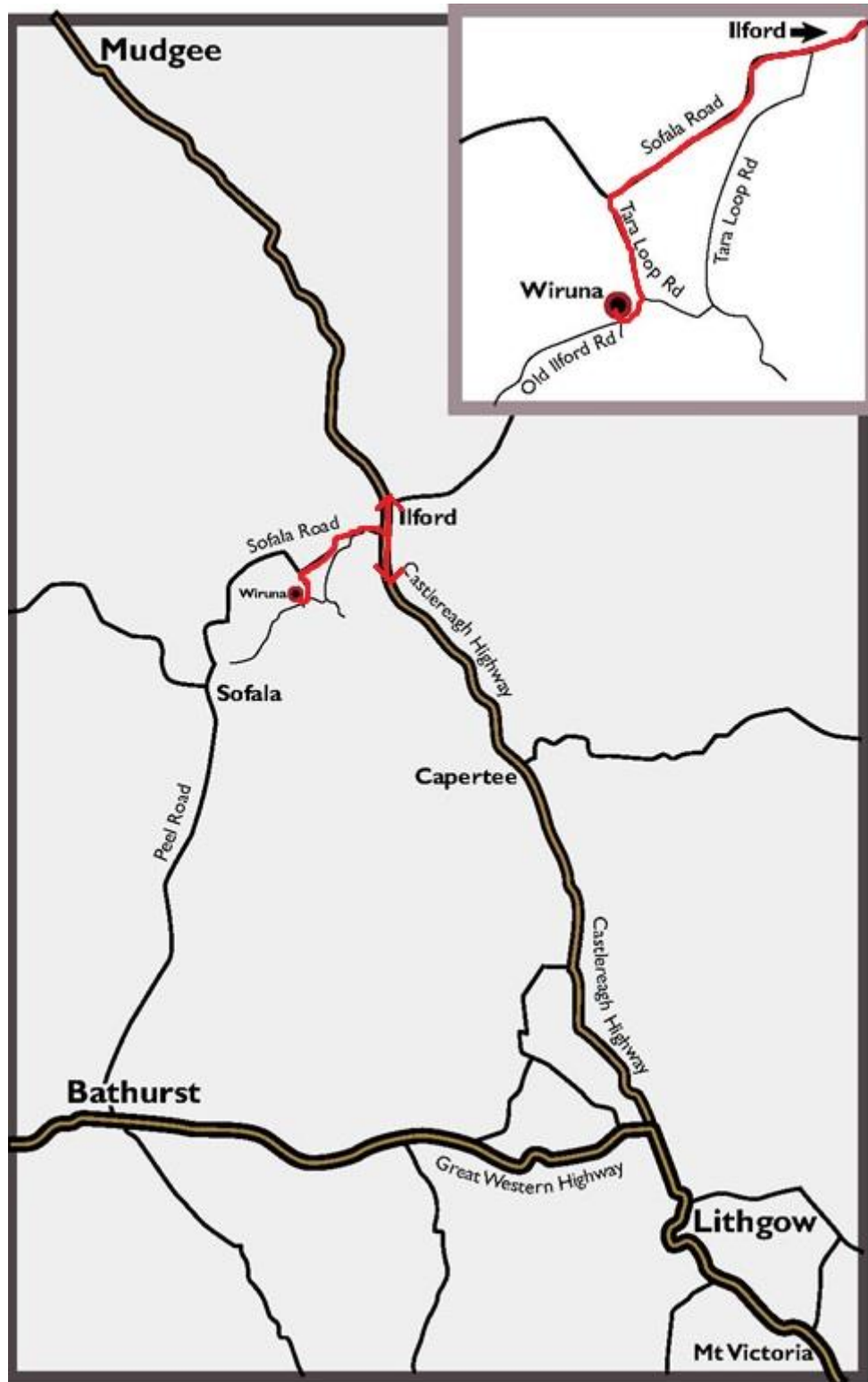


Figure 3-1 – Access routes to the property

In the event that there is actually someone on the property in time of bushfire, the Primary Action to follow is to EVACUATE via route shown in red.

3.2 Induction, Sign-In, Emergency Information, Training & Equipment

- a. **Induction:** First-time visitors attending scheduled new-Moon weekends are given a Safety Briefing on arrival (by a committee member or experienced member). A description of the Safety Briefing may be found here:
<https://www.asnsw.com/safety>.
- b. **Signing In:** All attendees are required to sign in using the Attendance Book in the Bush Kitchen. Attendees may also sign a second attendance book if they are staying at Barry Gerdes Lodge.
- c. **Emergency information and equipment** kept in the Meeting Hall includes:
 - i. An Emergency Flip-Chart (site hazards, fire procedures, emergency contacts, emergency evacuation procedure, property diagram);
 - ii. Detailed site maps showing the locations of all on-site caravans, tents and major structures;
 - iii. Regional topographic maps;
 - iv. A loud hailer and procedure to sound the alarm over the PA;
 - v. A first aid kit and a minor injuries kit.
- d. **Training:** The society's chief fire warden and other fire wardens will review emergency procedures and conduct refresher exercises, as deemed appropriate, annually at the working bee conducted in the month prior to the Star Party. Guidelines are available in Step 6 (p22) of:
https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/29271/DPP1079-Emergency-management-and-evacuation-plan-FORM.pdf
- e. **Fire Extinguishers:** There are pairs of chemical fire extinguishers at three locations on the property (the Meeting Hall, the Bush Kitchen and on the verandah of the dwelling called "Barry Gerdes Lodge"). There is a single chemical fire extinguisher at the long-drop toilet adjacent to the lower camping ground.
- f. **Fire Blankets:** Three locations: the Meeting Hall, the Bush Kitchen and the kitchen of the dwelling called "Barry Gerdes Lodge".
- g. **Knapsacks:** There are two 16-litre fire-fighting knapsacks and two 19-litre soft-style knapsacks kept in the Bush Kitchen/Lounge area. These can be filled at the Kitchen sinks and deployed at short notice for control of small fires in the managed woodland and open grassed areas of the property. They may be maintained full of water during the summer months.
- h. **RFS Water Tank:** A dedicated 5000-gallon (19,000 litre) steel water tank with Storz fittings is available for use by emergency services in the event of a major bushfire. It is located adjacent to the Bush Kitchen.

3.3 Fire Danger Ratings, Wiruna Closure Policy, Triggers for Evacuation

Fires in the area are monitored using the NSW Rural Fire Service application “Fires Near Me”. This free application allows the centre of the monitored area to be selected ensuring that, whether on-site or off-site, the chief fire warden has up-to-date information about any fires in the area, their status, and also the fire danger rating.

Fire danger ratings are set out in Figure 3-2, below:

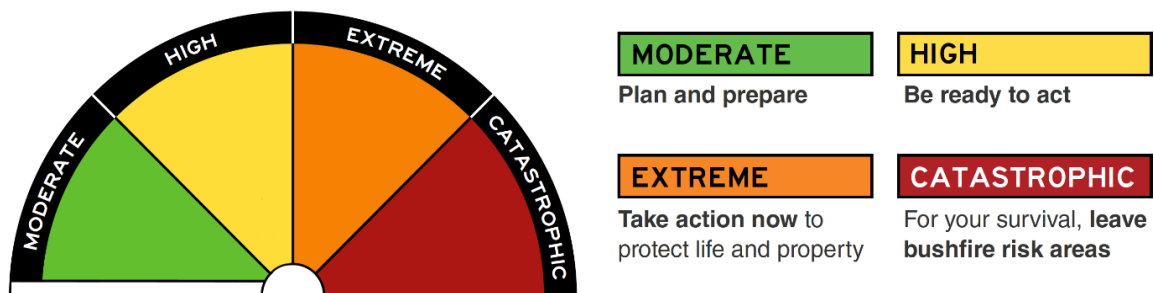


Figure 3-2 – Fire Danger Ratings

- a. WIRUNA CLOSURE POLICY: If the fire danger rating is greater than “High” or there are any uncontrolled fires currently burning in the area (i.e., anywhere near the Ilford-Sofala Road, Castlereagh Hwy, Turon River, 50km to the west or in the region thus bounded) and the property is unoccupied, **the property will remain closed** and members will be notified of this by email.
- b. TRIGGER TO EVACUATE: If fire breaks out anywhere in the area (cited above) and the property is occupied, **the property would close** and members and guests would be required to evacuate immediately if safe to do so.
- c. TRIGGER TO SHELTER: If situation b. occurs and evacuation is not able to be safely carried out, “stay in place” will apply using the Meeting Hall as a fire refuge.
- d. FIRE ON THE PROPERTY: If fire breaks out on the property when it is occupied, and initial attempts to extinguish it with fire extinguishers and/or the fire-fighting trailer are unsuccessful, emergency services would be called and persons other than the fire warden would **evacuate** if safe to do so or **shelter**, if necessary, as above.

3.4 Evacuation Plan, Duties and Responsibilities, and Last Place of Refuge

- a. **Notification to Evacuate:** Attendees will be alerted of an emergency with a siren incorporated into the PA system. If that fails, a loud hailer with siren is available as a backup. These serve the main area. Occupants at the house at the rear of the property may be contacted by mobile phone or two-way radio.
- b. **Duties and Responsibilities:**
 - i. The decision to sound the emergency siren will be made by the chief fire warden, based on available information about a fire or other emergency situation.
 - ii. Upon hearing the emergency siren, everyone on the property is required to assemble at the Emergency Assembly Point adjacent to the Meeting Hall (refer Figure 3-3 below).
 - iii. At the Emergency Assembly Point, area fire wardens will collect their orange vests and will check their areas (if safe to do so) to prompt anyone who has not complied or is not aware of the emergency. Areas to be checked are:
 - 1. "Bon Glen" (Regular camping area)
 - 2. Bush Kitchen
 - 3. Meeting Hall and bunkrooms
 - 4. Lower Camp Ground (Mixed weekend camping/observing)
 - 5. "Barry Gerdes Lodge" (house at rear of property)
 - 6. Main Observing Field (including observatories)
 - iv. Parents of children on site are responsible for ensuring their children also accompany them to the Emergency Assembly Point.
 - v. Once assembled, the chief fire warden will provide updates to those on site and liaise with emergency authorities.
 - vi. The chief fire warden will account for everyone who has signed in using the Attendance Book.
 - vii. **Recommendations about evacuation and/or refuge will be made by the chief fire warden at the Emergency Assembly Point**, based on information available at the time and recommendations made by Fire and Emergency Authorities. The chief fire warden will remain in contact with said authorities who may be in attendance, or in direct contact by personal phone or radio, or via 000.
 - viii. Any decision about evacuation or sheltering will be announced by the chief fire warden.
- c. **Training for Evacuation:** An Emergency Drill is run at the large, annual event, the South Pacific Star Party. The majority of visitors to Wiruna would have taken part in one of these drills. At the drill, the siren is sounded, and all participants assemble at the Emergency Assembly Point adjacent to the Meeting Hall.
- d. **Evacuation Routes:** Detailed maps of the exit routes shown in Figure 3-1 are kept in the Meeting Hall (adjacent to the Emergency Assembly Point) and would be used to indicate the safest route for evacuation.
- e. **Evacuation Transport:** Transport, in the event of evacuation, would be by each party's personal transport that was used to get to Wiruna.
- f. **If Unsafe to Evacuate: The Meeting Hall is designated as a last place of refuge.**
 - a. The chief fire warden or delegate will disconnect the gas cylinders supplying the amenities and will turn them so that the outlets face away from the bunkhouse adjoining the Meeting Hall.
 - b. Amenities are available in the adjacent building, with access from the north and the south sides of the Meeting Hall.

With the exception of the use of the Meeting Hall under Clause 5.c above, ALL structures and installations on the property are considered expendable in the case of a large-scale bushfire.

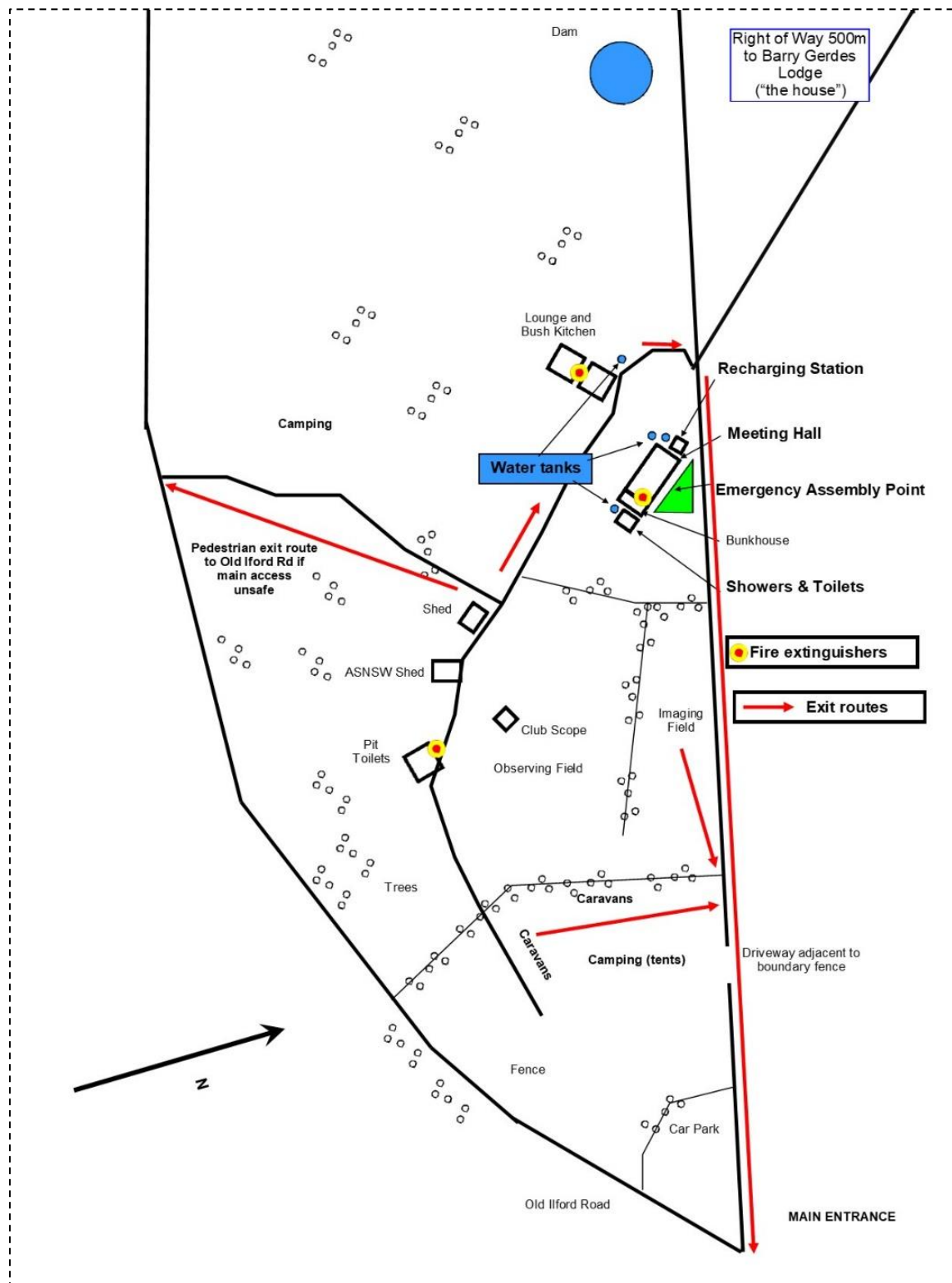


Figure 3-3 – Location of Emergency Assembly Point

4 Facility Management

4.1 Meeting Hall Suitability as Last Place of Refuge, and Asset Protection Zone

In 2021, the Meeting Hall was upgraded to BAL 12.5.

Ember Attack Prevention

The Meeting Hall has been fitted with:

- a. “Retroseal Ridge Seal” fittings to prevent ember penetration along the roof apex;
- b. “Retroseal Roof Seal” fittings to prevent ember penetration along the wall/roof joins of the long sides of the hall (behind the roof guttering);
- c. 2mm “ember guard” mesh to prevent ember attack along wall/roof joins and around flashings at gable ends;
- d. Ember-prevention brushes to close the small gap above the roll-a-door;
- e. 2mm “ember guard” mesh covering the ventilation shaft of each of the four “whirlybird” roof vents;
- f. Metal bush fire shutters on all windows.

Asset Protection Zone

In the *Inner Asset Protection Area*:

- a. there is minimal fine fuel at ground level which could be set alight by a bushfire;
- b. any vegetation in or near the Inner Asset Protection Area does not provide a path for the transfer of fire to the Meeting Hall – that is, the fuels are discontinuous;
- c. there are no wood piles or combustible material storage areas.

Also, the few shrubs and trees closest to the Inner Asset Protection Area:

- d. do not touch or overhang the building;
- e. are well spread out and do not form a continuous canopy;
- f. are not species that retain dead material or deposit excessive quantities of ground fuel in a short period or in a danger period; and
- g. are located far enough away from the Meeting Hall so that they will not ignite the Meeting Hall by direct flame contact or radiant heat emission.

An *Outer Asset Protection Area* of 40 metres radius from the extremities of the Meeting Hall has been identified, with a process of fuel reduction continuously carried out along the tree line to the south-west of the Meeting Hall.

The Asset Protection Areas are marked on the aerial photo of the Meeting Hall at Figure **Figure 4-1** below.



Figure 4-1 – Asset Protection Areas around Meeting Hall

Note that the tree in the photo overhanging the north corner of the hall has been removed since this photo was taken.

4.2 Fire Mitigation

- a. No open fires are permitted on the property other than camp fires in properly constructed, maintained and designated campfire sites.
- b. Camp fires must be attended when alight and extinguished when no longer in use. A camp fire is considered extinguished when it is cool enough that a hand can be safely placed on the fire remnants.
- c. During total fire bans that apply during any scheduled occupancy of the site, all society members are informed of the ban. Requirements during a total fire ban are included at 5.2 of this document.
- d. A firebreak is maintained between the main eastern section of the property (fronting Old Ilford Rd) and the natural woodland to the west.
- e. Undergrowth is managed in the area to the east of the firebreak, including the area assigned "Regular camping, caravans and sheds", and there is a policy in place to maintain cleared areas around structures and tent/caravan sites.
- f. A 6-metre cleared space is maintained alongside the boundary fence along Old Ilford Rd. This allows for easy access by emergency vehicles and also provides some measure of a firebreak between the managed woodland and the boundary fence.
- g. There are fire extinguishers at four locations on the property (Meeting Hall, Kitchen, Barry Gerdes Lodge, long-drop toilets).
- h. Smoke alarms are fitted to each of the four bunkrooms in the Bunkhouse near the Meeting Hall and each of the two bedrooms and the main living area of the house (Barry Gerdes Lodge) on the western part of the property. These smoke alarms are tested frequently and batteries are replaced annually prior to the South Pacific Star Party.
- i. Controlled hazard-reduction burns are utilised when the conditions are suitable (with an approximate 10-year frequency) in conjunction with RFS. The last burn-off took place on 22 August 2018 (report in separate document).
- j. All gas cylinders not in active use are stored away from all vegetation and the Meeting Hall in dedicated cages. This includes society-owned gas cylinders and member-owned gas cylinders (which may be used at their individual campsites only during visits).

4.3 Availability of Site as Emergency Staging Area

The Astronomical Society of NSW can make the Wiruna site available for use as a staging area for any emergency in the region. The Kitchen is suitable for preparation of meals, tea and coffee. The amenities blocks can be unlocked for use by emergency services personnel. All society-owned accommodation could be made available if required.

4.4 Photos of Facilities



Figure 4-2 – RFS water tank

The dedicated RFS water storage tank with Storz fittings.



Figure 4-3 – Ember-proofing of roof ridge and windows

Ridge Seal as installed on the roof ridge flashing and one of the metal bush fire shutters on the windows.

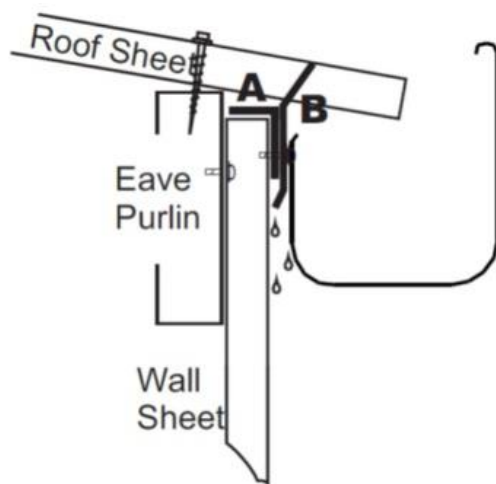


Figure 4-4 – Ember-proofing technique for wall/roof boundary at guttering edges

The Roof Seal product diagram - used on the roof/wall join of the long walls.



Figure 4-5 – Sealing of internal wall-roof boundary along gable

The ember mesh as installed over the flashings on the gables – breezeway end.



Figure 4-6 – Sealing of external wall-roof boundary on gable

The ember mesh as installed over the flashings on the gables – north-west end.



Figure 4-7 – Gas cylinder cages



Figure 4-8 – Property identification at Old Ilford Rd

Number 48 clearly visible on letterbox at main gate.

4.5 Proposed Improvements

- a. A trailer will be acquired, to be permanently ready on the property, with 1000-litre water tank, pump and generator – this could be towed and used for extinguishing a non-electrical fire.
- b. The dwelling (house at rear of property known as Barry Gerdes Lodge) will be upgraded to BAL 29 on the vegetation-facing south-west wall.
- c. The option of installing a rooftop water protection system (metal pipes and sprinklers) to the Meeting Hall, that can be operated from the existing electric pump (that supplies the adjacent amenities area), will be reviewed.

5 Additional Documentation

5.1 Wiruna Safety Procedures (from ASNSW website)

Extracted from: <https://www.asnsw.com/safety>, accessed August 2021.

Wiruna Remoteness and Safety Procedures

Safety

Please note that the site is remote and it takes some 45 minutes for an ambulance to get there. If you are attending the site for any purpose, and you have some known medical condition(s), please find a "buddy" on site and make sure they know about your condition and how to administer assistance in the case of an emergency. It is in your best interest to leave an emergency contact number (i.e. the number of someone off-site) with your buddy or the Vice-President Wiruna (who is normally in attendance) in case someone needs to contact others on your behalf.

Site Induction

First-time visitors to the site, on a regular new-Moon weekend, may receive or request a safety briefing (delivered by a committee member or experienced society member) covering:

1. The location of safety information in the Meeting Hall, including:
 - Flip-Chart (site hazards, fire procedures, emergency contacts, emergency evacuation procedure, basic site map);
 - Detailed site maps;
 - Regional topographic maps;
 - Loud hailer and procedure to sound alarm over the PA;
 - First aid kits, and minor injuries kit.
2. The four locations of fire extinguishers on the site.
3. Information about the unfenced dam, snakes and spiders and seasonal site hazards (detailed in the Flip-Chart).
4. The location of the Emergency Assembly Point and the means of alerting people on site to any emergency with a siren.
5. The anticipated procedure if an evacuation ever becomes necessary (refer Flip-Chart).

All visitors to the Annual South Pacific Star Party will receive a copy of the Wiruna Safety Information Brochure at Check-In, and will be prompted at Check-In to read and understand the document.

5.2 Total Fire Ban rules

Reproduced from:

<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans/total-fire-ban-rules>



A total fire ban means no fires out in the open. A total fire ban helps limit the potential of fires developing.

During a Total Fire Ban you cannot light, maintain or use a fire in the open, or to carry out any activity in the open that causes, or is likely to cause, a fire.

General purpose hot works (such as welding, grinding or gas cutting or any activity that produces a spark or flame) are not to be done in the open.

The NSW RFS strongly recommends you reconsider activities such as using a tractor or slashing, to help reduce the chance of a fire starting on your property. Under certain conditions, the NSW RFS may issue a [Harvest Safety Alert](#).

Why are Total Fire Bans declared?

Bush fires are more likely to spread and cause damage on days when the weather is very hot, dry and windy. These are usually on very high to extreme fire days.

To reduce the risk of fires damaging or destroying life, property and the environment the NSW RFS Commissioner may declare a Total Fire Ban.

Can I use an electric barbeque?

You can use an electric barbeque for cooking as long as it is under the direct control of a responsible adult, who is present at all times while it is operating, and no combustible material is allowed within two metres at any time it is operating.

Can I use a gas barbeque?

You can use a gas barbeque under the following conditions:

- It is under the direct control of a responsible adult, who is present at all times while it is operating;
- No combustible material is allowed within two metres at any time it is operating;
- You have an immediate and continuous supply of water; and
 - The barbeque is within 20 metres of a permanent private dwelling such as a home; or
 - The barbeque is within a designated picnic area and the appliance is approved by Council, National Parks or State Forest.

Can I use a barbeque or pizza oven which burns solid fuel (e.g. wood, charcoal or heat beads)?

No. A barbeque or wood fire pizza oven which uses solid fuel, such as wood, charcoal or heat beads, cannot be used outside during a Total Fire Ban.

Can I use fire during a Total Fire Ban if I have a fire permit?

Permits are suspended on days of total fire ban. Permits may resume after the total fire ban is lifted, as long as the permit hasn't expired.

More information on permits can be found on our [Fire Permit](#) page.

What is a No Burn day?

The EPA may prohibit the burning of fires in the open or in incinerators by issuing a No-Burn Notice (see section 133 [Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997](#)) if it is of the opinion that, because forecast weather conditions, burning is likely to contribute to the build-up of air pollution.

To find out if a No-Burn notice is in force:

- check the [EPA website](#); or
- check the Public Notices section of the Sydney Morning Herald. A No-Burn notice will be published in the newspaper on the day it is in force; or
- call the EPA Environmental Information Line on 131 555.

Are there any exemptions during a Total Fire Ban?

A range of activities may be exempt from Total Fire Bans, such as emergency infrastructure work, bee hive smokers, mining operations, sugar cane harvesting, use of fireworks or ceremonial fires. The NSW RFS Commissioner is responsible for exemptions to Total Fire Bans. These exemptions are detailed in the [NSW Government Gazette](#) each time a Total Fire Ban is declared.

How do I apply for a Total Fire Ban exemption?

If you want to light a fire, or carry out any hot works activities during a Total Fire Ban you can check the Government Gazette to see if there is a standard exemption that applies to your situation. If the standard exemptions don't cover your circumstances then you may apply for a specific exemption using our [Total Fire Ban exemption application form](#).

You will receive an acknowledgement email upon our receipt of your application however a minimum of seven days processing time is required for us to assess your application.

If approved the NSW RFS will issue an Exemption that contains any conditions that you must follow when lighting the fire or conducting your activity on the total fire ban day.

What penalties are there for lighting a fire during a Total Fire Ban?

Lighting a fire on a day of Total Fire Ban attracts an on the spot fine of \$2200. If the matter goes to court, you could be subject to a fine of up to \$5500 and/or 12 months gaol.

Penalties for a fire that escapes and damages or destroys life, property or the environment can attract much greater fines and gaol terms with maximums at \$132,000 and/or 14 years gaol.

Civil law suits can also be brought against the person responsible for a fire by those seeking compensation for losses sustained.