

# Slashing in national parks

**We undertake planned slashing throughout our reserves each year to reduce the risk of the spread of fire**



*Before and after slashing work in Sturt Gorge Recreation Park*

## **Removing fine fuels reduces the risk of fire spreading**

Bushfires are spread by dry fine fuels: these are fuels that are smaller in diameter than your index finger.

When flames come into contact with dry fine fuels, the fuels heat up very quickly and ignite, causing the fire to spread.

Moist fuels, such as green grass, require more heat than the flames can provide to ignite and so they do not burn.

Coarse fuels, such as fallen branches, take a long time to heat up and ignite: they may eventually catch fire and burn but they don't cause the fire to spread.

When a fire reaches an area where there is not a lot of fine fuel it slows down; if it reaches an area where there is no fine fuel it will stop spreading.

**Our slashing program reduces these fine fuels so that in the event of a bushfire, the fire will slow down or stop when it reaches a slashed break. The flames will be smaller in these areas making it easier for firefighters to suppress.**

Slashing removes fine fuel so if a fire occurs, it is less likely to spread beyond the slashed area.

## **We plan where to slash based on risk**

Our reserves protect and conserve our native plants and animals and provide areas for recreation.

We undertake fire management planning to determine how to reduce the risk of bushfires while preserving the natural values of our reserves. Slashing is just one of many fire management activities that we undertake.

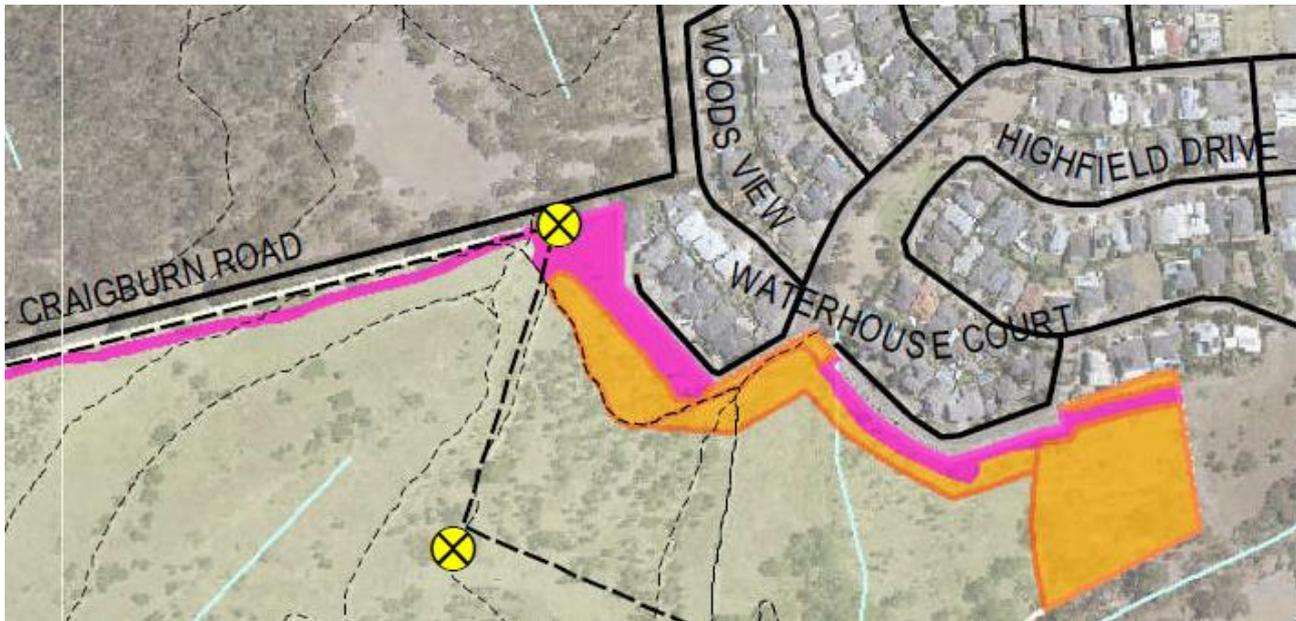
Slashing helps to stop the spread of bushfire and we look at where we need to reduce fine fuels to reduce the risk of fire spreading from the reserve and to reduce risk for firefighters.

When choosing where to slash we consider the park boundary, fuel types, adjacent land and the location of fire tracks. We also consider buildings and assets within and adjacent to the reserve.

The width of slashed breaks are narrow alongside roads because roads serve as fuel breaks. We use wider slashed breaks near houses and other buildings.

We slash along our network of fire tracks to both ensure safe access for vehicles and to provide low-fuel breaks to slow the spread of fire.

We have a slashing plan for each of our reserves based on these considerations. These plans identify which areas will be slashed by machine and which areas will be hand-slashed.



*Planned machine (pink) and hand (orange) slashing*

In areas which cannot be slashed, we reduce fuels through other means such as prescribed burning, vegetation thinning or weed control.

### **We slash once the grass cures**

Our slashing program is in place to reduce fire risk. Grass becomes a fire risk once it cures and turns brown, and that is when we slash it.

While the grass is green, it contains too much moisture to burn well and it does not pose a fire risk.

Slashing the green grass too early is ineffective as the grass continues to grow and repeat visits are necessary.

We slash annually in accordance with our plans but the exact timing of the slashing varies due to seasonal variability.

The grass will cure at different times from one year to the next. In dry years the grass cures early; wetter spring periods cause the grass to cure later.

We monitor the curing rates across our region and commence slashing when the grass cures.

We typically start in reserves to the north as these areas are dryer and warmer and the grass cures there first. We then work our way south to complete the program.

### **Once the tractor has been it's not over!**

After the tractor has completed the bulk of the slashing in a reserve, our seasonal fire crew follow-

up selected areas with hand slashing. They slash areas by hand that the tractor can't get to.

Our fire crew also work on prescribed burns in spring so they may not be there immediately after the tractor.

Just as with the tractor slashing, our hand-slashing is planned and we know where we need to send the crews.

We do not consider the slashing in a reserve complete until both the machine and hand slashing has been finished.

### **A shared responsibility**

Planning and being prepared for a bushfire is a shared responsibility and it is important to have a Bushfire Survival Plan, prepare your property well prior to the fire danger season, and have a plan for total fire ban days.

The CFS has resources to help you understand your role in bushfire preparedness and planning:

**[cfs.sa.gov.au](http://cfs.sa.gov.au)**.

## **More information**

**[DEWFireManagement@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEWFireManagement@sa.gov.au)**  
**[environment.sa.gov.au/topics/fire-management](http://environment.sa.gov.au/topics/fire-management)**