

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate



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NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

...for our community

The process of reducing fuels is known as hazard reduction

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR A BUSH FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION CERTIFICATE

INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides guidance on how to fill in an application for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate.

The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) recognises the need to minimise the impact of fire on the community and the environment. In partnership with the community we can reduce the impact of fires by pursuing a policy of fuel management, through the process of bush fire hazard reduction work.

Bush fire hazard reduction work can be achieved by a variety of means as described in Section 5 below. For more information please refer to the RFS publication *Before You Light that Fire*.

Before undertaking any bush fire hazard reduction work many environmental factors need to be considered. The Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate provides a streamlined environmental approval process to authorise the conduct of bush fire hazard reduction work. An assessment will be done using the Bush Fire Environmental Code and Bush Fire Risk Management Plan.

The RFS is responsible for issuing Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates to private landholders in most of NSW.

To apply for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate you need to obtain an application form from your local RFS or from the RFS website www.rfs.nsw.gov.au. The form should be completed and then lodged with your local RFS fire control centre.

The RFS must give you an answer within the agreed time frame after lodgement of the application. This period may be as short as 7 days, but in some cases may be longer, if agreed to.

There is no cost to either apply for or to receive the Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate.

In considering bush fire hazard reduction work it is recommended that an Asset Protection Zone be created. An Asset Protection Zone is an area surrounding an asset, managed to reduce the bushfire hazard to an acceptable level. (For more information please refer to the RFS publication *Guideline for Asset Protection Zones*):

PLEASE NOTE: If your original Development Application provided for an Asset Protection Zone or other hazard reduction work you do not need a certificate to carry out the activity. A hazard reduction certificate is also not needed for agricultural activities such as ploughing a crop or stubble burning.

**RFS is responsible for issuing
Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates**

HOW TO FILL IN YOUR APPLICATION FOR A BUSH FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION CERTIFICATE

Please print neatly in BLOCK LETTERS with a black or blue pen only.

IMPORTANT: Complete your details carefully to avoid delays in processing your application.

Section 1 - Personal Details.

Please fill in your name, home telephone, work telephone, street address and email address (if you have one). You also need to fill in your Lot DP numbers (these can be found on your rates notice). These details are required as it may be necessary to contact you for any additional information needed for the assessment.

Section 2 - Location of hazard reduction.

As the area to be treated might not be the same as listed in the personal details please ensure that an adequate description of the location where the work is to be carried out is supplied.

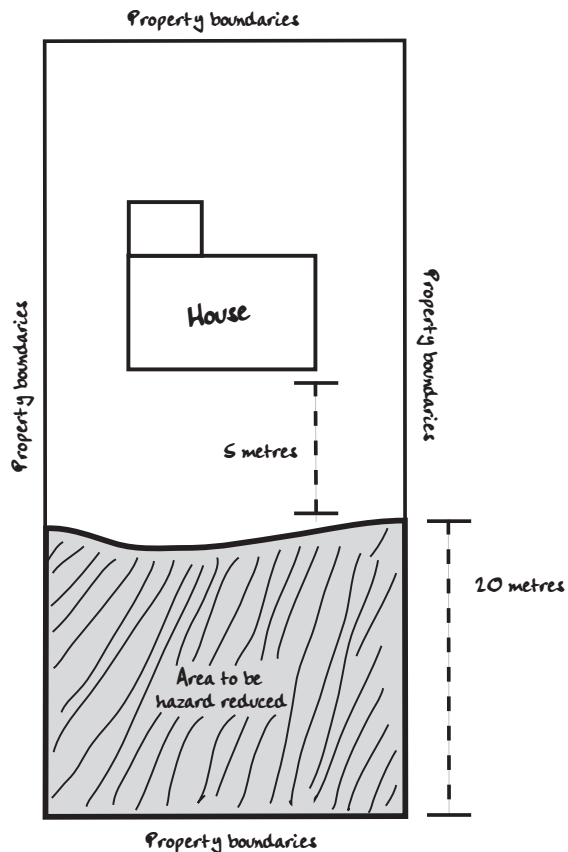
You must attach a map to this application. You can either provide a topographic map, a street directory map or a sketch on an A4 sheet of paper.

The map should show the area to be treated and the assets being protected. If you are using more than one method for hazard reduction indicate the location of each method on your map.

The more information that you can supply the faster the approval process should be.

Example A - Neat sketch on A4 paper

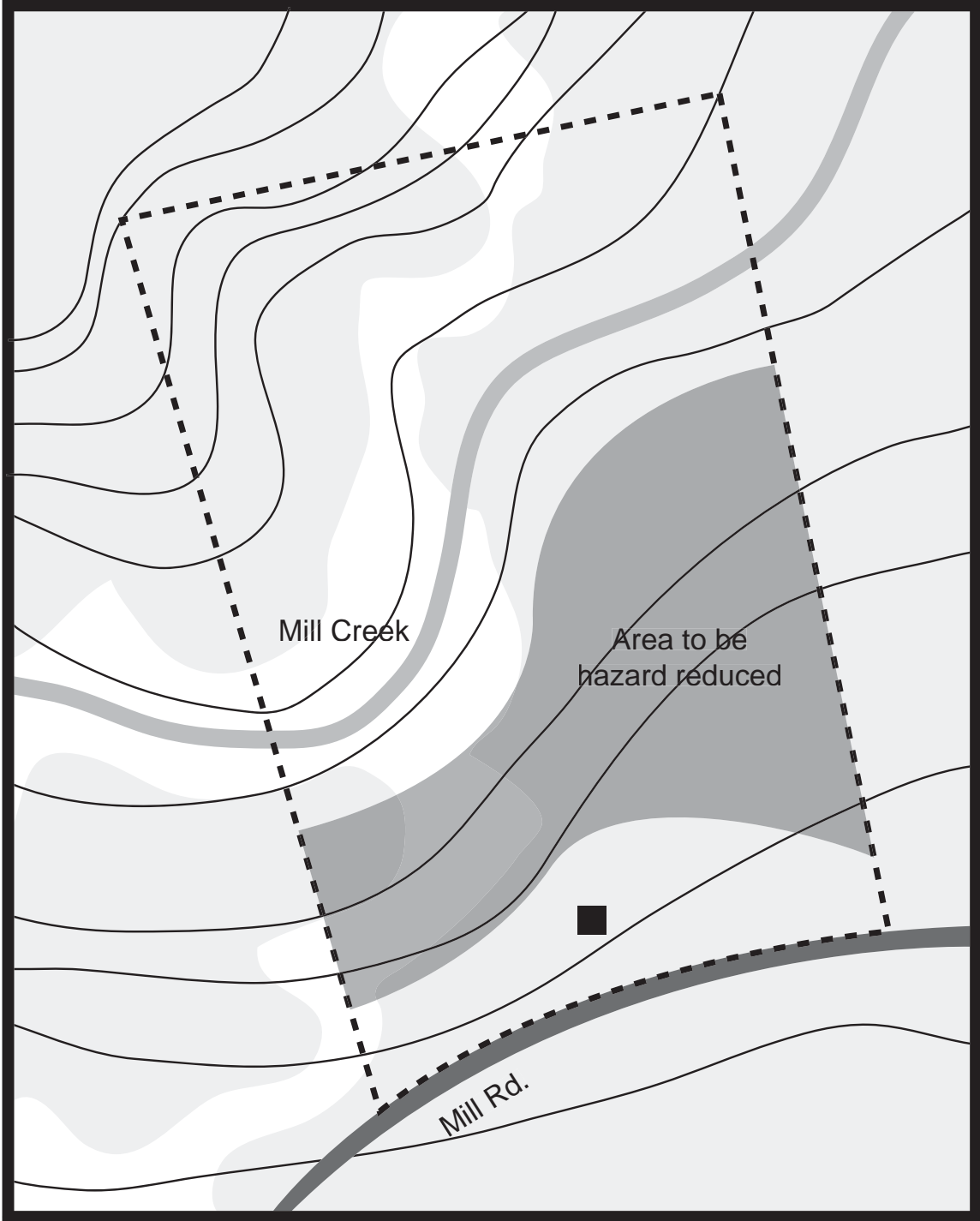
If the area to be treated is only small (less than 0.25 hectares (50m x 50m)) then attach an A4 sheet of paper with a sketch of a map. The map should be as detailed as possible showing the area to be hazard reduced and the assets to be protected.



Example B - Topographic Map

Please provide the address and map reference. Use a six figure AMG or GMA grid reference from a topographic map for your area. Ensure that you supply the name of the map. e.g. Mill MT. 9030-IV-S, 761635.

Eg.
Property Address:
5 Mill Rd.
Mill Mountain



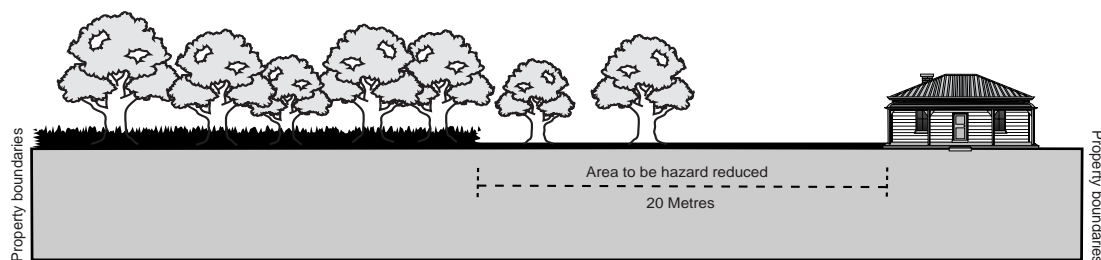
Section 3 - Assets being protected.

As the purpose of undertaking hazard reduction is to protect built assets, you should indicate which existing assets the proposed hazard reduction will protect. Choose either HOUSE or OTHER BUILDING. If OTHER BUILDING please specify the type of building.

Section 4 - How far hazard reduction is from the asset.

It is necessary to ensure that the proposed hazard reduction will successfully protect assets. The requirements of an environmental assessment to issue a certificate allow for a greater level of clearing adjacent to assets.

Indicate how far this hazard reduction will be from the asset. The distance should be shown in metres.



Section 5 - Method of hazard reduction.

There are a number of methods that you can use and some methods are more effective when combined with others. Please indicate the method by which you will be reducing the fuel. Please tick one or more boxes. If your method doesn't meet any of the listed items you have the opportunity to list another method.

Various methods can be used to create and maintain effective fuel breaks on your property. These include the following methods:

A - Burning

Burning off is an economical and simple method of removing unwanted litter and fire hazards from larger areas. However, it must be planned carefully and carried out with extreme caution under correct weather conditions, otherwise there is a real danger that the burning off will get out of control. More bush fires result from escapes from burning off work than from any other single cause. Planning for the use of fire must ensure that it will do the job (See RFS publications *Before You Light that Fire* and *Guidelines for Low Intensity Hazard Reduction Burning* or *Guidelines for Pile Burning* brochures).

B - Pile Burning

In order to use this method you may need to justify that you cannot dispose of the material by the normal garbage collection or reuse it on site (composting). For example, if the pile is too large or access is too difficult to reasonably allow for removal or for economical reasons. In order to minimise smoke, the pile should be dry before burning. For more information, please refer to the RFS publication *Guidelines for Pile Burning*.

C - Mowing / Slashing / Trittering

Slashing and mowing are economical methods of fuel break preparation. To be most effective, the cut material should be removed or allowed to rot down well before summer starts. Slashing and mowing may leave grass in rows thus increasing fuel in some places. Trittering or turbo mowing also mulches leaving the fuel where it is cut. Mechanical removal is not permitted on slopes of greater than 18° due to the potential for soil erosion.

D - Ploughing / Grading

Ploughing and grading can produce effective breaks. However, these may need constant maintenance. Also, the loose soil may erode in steep areas, particularly where there is high rainfall and strong winds.

Ploughing and grading is not permitted on slopes greater than 10°. Generally this will need to be associated with an existing practice.

E - Hand clearing

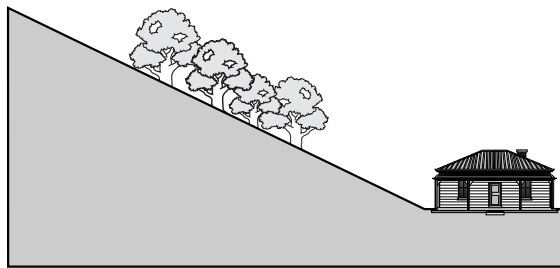
Hand clearing is often used to remove or manage fine fuels and leaf litter close to a dwelling. These hazards can be removed by hand tools such as rakes and hoes and then can be manually removed or burnt in piles if necessary.

F - Tree removal

The complete removal of a tree may be necessary in some circumstances. However, a Certificate cannot be used to gain approval for operations such as land clearance or circumventing other regulations such as Tree Preservation Orders. See RFS publication *Guidelines for Asset Protection Zones* for further information.

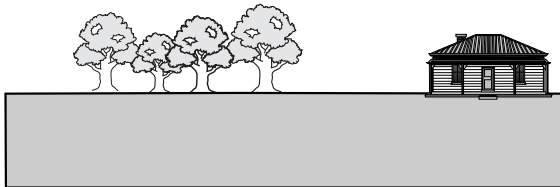
Section 6 - Mechanical clearing

If the work involves mechanical clearing around an asset you will need to indicate the slope of the hazard. Please tick UPSLOPE, LEVEL or DOWNSLOPE.



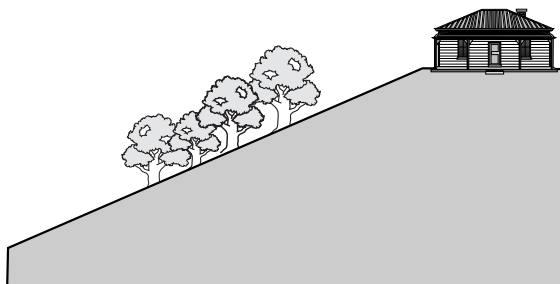
UPSLOPE

UPSLOPE means that the hazard reduction works are being conducted uphill from the asset being protected.



LEVEL

LEVEL means that the hazard reduction works being carried out and the asset being protected are on the same level.



DOWNSLOPE

DOWNSLOPE means that the hazard reduction works are being conducted downhill from the asset being protected. Indicate approximate slope in degrees.

Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate becomes effective for a period of 12 months from the date of issue.

Section 7 - Proposed date

Please indicate a date on which you propose to do the work. If the application is approved the Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate becomes effective for a period of 12 months from the date of issue.

If you intend to burn during the Bush Fire Danger Season or light a fire which is likely to be dangerous to any building you will also need to apply for a fire permit. The Bush Fire Danger Period is generally from the 1st October to 31st March and may be varied by the Commissioner of the RFS. For more information read the RFS document *Before You Light that Fire*.

Section 8 - Last treatment.

If known, indicate how the area was last treated for bush fire hazard reduction works. Please tick the appropriate box.

Section 9 - Time since last treatment.

This section should only be filled in if you know the time of last treatment. The timing between treatments can indicate the need to undertake hazard reduction. If known, indicate how many years since the area was last treated. Circle the nearest year.

Section 10 - Vegetation type.

To ascertain the effectiveness of your proposed hazard reduction you should describe the vegetation as best as you are able (see Appendix A for a list of vegetation formations in NSW). Tick the appropriate box on the application form. If there is more than one vegetation type tick **all** the types of vegetation that are present.

Section 11 - Has a consent or approval for removal of vegetation on this land been refused within the last three years?

Circle YES, NO or UNKNOWN. If YES, please supply details. For example, has an approval for a tree to be removed been refused within the last 3 years and if so, when did you seek approval and why was it refused.

Section 12 – Provide details of any known threatened species, population or ecological community?

If you know of any threatened species you must provide the information. This will assist with the assessment process.

Methods that can be utilised to reduce fire hazards have the potential to adversely impact on biodiversity, including threatened species. It is therefore important that threatened species, populations and ecological communities are identified so that measures can be taken to reduce the impacts of hazard reduction.

The RFS will do a database search when assessing the application to check for threatened species.

Section 1 – Provide details of any known Aboriginal site or relic?

If you know of any Aboriginal sites you must provide the information. This will assist with the assessment process.

Section 14 - Are you aware if any of the work is on land in which the following applies?



a conservation agreement under Division 7 of Part 4 of *the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*



a property agreement entered into under Part 5 of the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*



a trust agreement entered under Part 3 of *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001*



a property management plan under Section 91 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

In each of the above instances you will be aware if they apply or not. Some landowners may have entered into agreements with Government agencies to ensure protection of environmental values on their land. Circle YES or NO. If YES, please provide a copy of the agreement with this application.

Section 15 - Does the proposed hazard reduction require work on neighbouring land.

In the case of multiple properties for one hazard reduction activity, one certificate can be issued to cover that activity provided the activity has the approval of all land owners or managers.

Circle YES or NO. If YES attach a written authority from each landowner or land manager authorising the work on their land.

An example of a typical letter of authorisation would read like this, "I, (Name of person), of (Address) consent to the proposed bush fire hazard reduction work being carried out on my property using the method(s) (List of proposed method/s)". Ensure the letter is signed and dated.

Section 16 - Authorisation.

Please ensure that you sign and date this section. By signing you are consenting to the proposed bush fire hazard reduction work and attesting that the information on the form is correct to the best of your knowledge.

Section 17 - Time for determination.

The RFS is obligated to provide an assessment within 7 days. However, because of the complexity of some proposals or because of the volume of applications the legislation does allow for a longer period to be negotiated with the applicant. Please discuss this with an RFS officer when lodging your application.

Circle either 7, 14, 21 or 28 days.

Please ensure that you sign and date this section.

HOW WILL AN ASSESSMENT BE MADE

The Rural Fire Service will consider the following when making an assessment:

Areas of Statewide Significance -

A Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate cannot be issued in coastal wetlands, littoral rainforest and critical habitat as defined in the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. These areas require a more thorough environmental assessment before works can proceed.

Genuine Hazard Reduction -

A certificate can only be issued for hazard reduction works that are consistent with the local Bush Fire Risk Management Plan and only applies for land mapped as a hazard in those plans.

Certificates will not be provided for operations such as land clearance, domestic or industrial rubbish burning, avoiding Tree Preservation Orders or other regulations or ordinances.

Smoke Management -

The RFS will consider whether smoke from the hazard reduction is likely to impact on the community. Conditions may be added to the certificate.

Protection of Creeks, Rivers and Wetlands -

The RFS will consider the best practice to minimise fire and exclude mechanical hazard reduction from stream banks, in order to protect water quality and to prevent bank erosion. Conditions may be added to the certificate.

Soil Erosion -

The RFS will consider potential damage to soil which could lead to soil erosion, especially from mechanical methods of hazard reduction. Conditions may be added to the certificate.

Flora, Fauna, Biodiversity -

The RFS will consider the potential impact on threatened species and vegetation communities sensitive to various hazard reduction methods and the desirable minimum fire intervals for vegetation formations for New South Wales.

Aboriginal and European Cultural Heritage -

If present, this needs to be checked to ensure that sites are protected during hazard reduction activities or that the hazard reduction work itself protects these sites. Some applications may need to be referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service by the RFS, and conditions may be added to the Certificate.

Vegetation Clearing -

Consideration will be given to the minimum standards required to provide adequate fire protection while providing for the retention of some vegetation

GUIDELINES FOR LOW INTENSITY HAZARD REDUCTION BURNING

The RFS has produced a brochure outlining environmental best practice guidelines for hazard reduction burning. Please read this document before you start the hazard reduction burn. Burning needs to be carefully managed so that it doesn't damage the environment, it is safe to carry out, it is confined to the prescribed area and smoke effects are taken into account.

ONCE THE CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED

Once the certificate is issued you must comply with the conditions specified. You must also comply with other notifications and approvals and notify the RFS once the hazard reduction is complete.

WHAT TO DO IF A CERTIFICATE IS NOT ISSUED

The intention of this certificate process is to provide a streamlined environmental assessment for most hazard reduction activities. However, this streamlined process cannot be used all the time as some areas require more detailed assessments. An assessment may be required under parts of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* or other legislation.

If a certificate is not issued you are unable to undertake your proposed bush fire hazard reduction works. You may, however, apply the environmental assessment system, which was used prior to this streamlined process. Details are available from your RFS.

List of Vegetation Formations for NSW

Formation	Description
A. Rainforests	Forests dominated by trees with soft broad leaves (non eucalypts), with vines, ferns and palms in the understorey. Coast and tablelands in mesic sites on fertile soils.
B1. Wet sclerophyll forests	Tall forests dominated by straight-trunked eucalypts with dense understories of shrubs with broad soft leaves, ferns and herbs. Relatively fertile soils in high rainfall parts of coast and tablelands.
B2. Semi-mesic grassy forests	Tall forests dominated by straight-trunked eucalypts, with mixed grassy understories and sparse occurrences of shrubs with broad soft leaves. Coast and tablelands in high rainfall regions and along major inland watercourses on relatively fertile soils.
C. Swamp sclerophyll forests	Forests of hard-leaved trees (eucalypts, paperbarks, casuarinas) with scattered shrubs and continuous groundcover of water-loving sedges and herbs. Floodprone flats and plains and riparian zones principally along the coast and inland rivers.
D. Sclerophyll grassy woodlands	Woodlands of eucalypt trees, with dry understories of grasses, herbs and sometimes scattered shrubs. Rolling terrain with fertile soils and moderate rainfall on the coast, tablelands and western slopes.
E1. Dry sclerophyll shrub/grass forests	Eucalypt forests with mixed understories of hard-leaved shrubs and grasses. Moderately fertile soils in moderate rainfall areas of the coast, tablelands and western slopes.
E2. Dry sclerophyll shrub forests	Low forests and woodlands dominated by eucalypts, with understories of hard-leaved shrubs and sparse groundcover (few grasses or sedges). Regions receiving high to moderate rainfall on the coast, tablelands and western slopes, often in steep areas.
F. Semi-arid woodlands	Open woodlands dominated by eucalypts, acacias and casuarinas, with open understories of hard-leaved shrubs, grasses and forbs, including many ephemeral species. Low-moderate rainfall regions of the near western plains, including infrequently flood-prone sites.
G. Heathlands	Dense to open shrublands dominated by shrubs with small, hard leaves and sedges. High rainfall regions of the coast and tablelands on infertile soils, often in exposed topographic positions.
H. Alpine complex	Mosaics of low herbfields, grasslands and shrublands. High, snow-prone parts of the southern ranges.
I. Grasslands	Closed tussock grasslands with a variable compliment of herbs and few if any woody shrubs or trees. Fertile soils of the tablelands and western floodplains.
J. Freshwater wetlands	Swamp forests, wet shrublands or sedgeland, usually with a dense groundcover of sedges. Throughout NSW on peaty or gleyed soils with impeded drainage.
K. Estuarine and saline wetlands	Low forests, shrublands and herbfields of mangroves, succulent shrubs (saltmarsh) or marine herbs (sea grasses). Coastal estuaries and saline sites of the western plains.
M. Arid and semi-arid shrublands	Open shrublands of hard-leaved shrubs, hummock or tussock grasses and ephemeral herbs. Low rainfall regions of the far western plains.

