

Three Villages Strategic Plan: Managing our Natural Environmental Risks

Our three villages nestle into our beautiful national parks. In fact over 50% of the Shoalhaven is forested.



But our valued national parks are also susceptible to major fires and threaten our safety, welfare and properties. Our exposure is particularly significant with only one serviced road into and out of Bawley Point and Kioloa, which is accessed via Dangerboard Road at the back of Kioloa. Despite many years of lobbying, neither the Shoalhaven City Council nor the NSW Government have resolved the question of ownership to this point. However, in recent weeks, the responsible NSW Government Ministers have the issue under active consideration.

Fires have always been a part of our lives. We have seen destructive fires in 1928, 1939 (Black Friday; and along with the 1948 fires, lead to new legislation ultimately resulting in the formation of the bush fire brigades (which had been a rarity until then), along with an emerging support structure. Large fires burned in our area in 1952, 1968 and 1994. The black Christmas fires in 2001 also caused widespread damage. Most recently, the Black Summer Fires of 2019/20 had one of the most devastating impacts on the Shoalhaven and beyond in its history. Over 85% of the five surrounding national parks were burned.



How can we manage the inevitability of these devastating fires into the future?

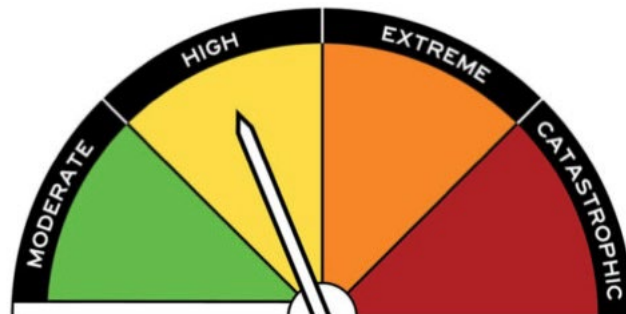
Fire fighting in our area has come a long way since the early 1900s. Well organised, trained and equipped firefighters supported by out of area brigades and aerial resources give us a better chance of controlling fires that threaten our villages. But as the Black Summer fires showed us, nature has the upper hand and sometimes thwarts even our best efforts.

Bawley Point and Kioloa are very fortunate to be served by two dedicated volunteer fire brigades. But we always need new members of the community to join the brigades and help support those who dedicate themselves to protecting our community.

New technologies such as drones, specialised live mapping applications and better use of satellites will also assist firefighters to respond more quickly to fires in their early stages and contain them before they threaten our villages.



The Australian Fire Danger Ratings



Community Engagement is now an important part of mitigating the impacts of fire on our residents and visitors. Both brigades spend time talking to residents and helping them prepare for a fire events, with advice on how to best protect their houses but most importantly getting ready to evacuate when warnings escalate. Fires Near Me phone apps, local radio stations, the community hub at the Kioloa Hall are all additional tools to help residents and visitors 'get ready'

Our local planning and land use policies will also have an impact on how well we can manage large fires in our area. The density of housing, while a natural part of village settlement, creates a risk that fire fighters are trained to manage. Ember attack is the real hazard to properties, along with the associated spread of fire to adjoining structures. Our villages are currently very fortunate to have large 'green corridors' in and around us. These help to create buffer zones where fire can be better contained and extinguished. Any future development sites should be large lots to maintain as much protection to dense residential areas as possible.

Other risks which may impact on us.

Reliable power supply to our villages is critical to our ability to manage a crisis. Power outages during the Black Summer fires created major problems for residents. This risk has been somewhat mitigated by the construction of a microgrid and associated community battery. While yet to be fully commissioned, this facility should give our communities greater protection.

While not as significant a risk as fire, flooding events can create significant problems for our community. The bridge over the Willinga lake and its tributaries leading to the ocean can become impassible. Flood mitigation plans are currently being developed to help reduce this risk.