



Bushfire Plan 2019 - 2020

**(to be read in conjunction with the college's
Emergency Management Plan 2019)**



Comet Bay College
BUSHFIRE PLAN (2019-2020)

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NOTE: Emergency Contact Details have been removed from this online version of the Bushfire Plan for privacy and confidentiality reasons.

Introduction

This Stand-alone Bushfire Plan is for **Comet Bay College** and has been designed to assist Principals and their staff to prepare for a total fire ban, catastrophic fire danger rating, or a bushfire. Letters to staff and parents are included in the appendix as well as notices regarding the plans of closures of the school.

The preparation of this plan should be developed in accordance with the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Policy* and the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* with input from local emergency management agencies.

Comet Bay College currently has 1788 students and 164 staff.

The school is surrounded by cleared residential land except for the North Western corner of the block which is approx. 2 hectares of densely vegetated wetland on the corner of Bluestone Parkway and Warnbro Sound Avenue.

In the majority of situations a fire in this location will be affected by the prevailing sea breeze blowing the fire and smoke towards the north east – affecting the Maths block and Year 8 area – and into the grounds of the Golf Course.

This intersection is also the major thoroughfare for access to and from the school.

Evacuating nearly 2000 people from the site presents an enormous logistical risk in a time critical situation hence several zones have been identified as **SAFER LOCATIONS**.

Overview

General Information

This Bushfire Plan (BP) has been developed during Term 3 of this year.

The BP outlines required actions to prepare the school before the bushfire season as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* (refer Appendix A).

The BP also outlines activities to be undertaken by staff and students at the different levels of a bushfire emergency including:

- on days of Total Fire Ban;
- Catastrophic fire danger rating;
- when there is a fire in the local district;
- when a bushfire is threatening or impacting on the site; and
- during the period immediately after a bushfire has impacted on the site (known as the 'Recovery Phase').

Evacuating nearly 2000 people to an off-site location is neither a quick nor practical exercise. The school has therefore identified areas of the school as **SAFER LOCATIONS**.

Each area that is nominated as a **Safer Location** building for this school has been prepared for a bushfire emergency and will safely accommodate a large portion of the number of persons normally at the school.

Distribution

The Principal will prepare and update the Stand-alone Bushfire Plan in readiness for the bushfire season and then upload through the Department's SharePoint system.

The Principal or delegated officer will publish a copy of the school's bushfire plan on the schools website.

- Details of the website to be provided to families of new students by the Principal or delegated officer during the enrolment process.
- The Principal will ensure that all new staff members, relieving staff and visitors are briefed about the requirements of the BP during the site induction process.

All staff members are to receive pre fire season updates during Term 3 and ongoing information and instruction about the contents and requirements of the BP during Term 4 and Term 1 staff meetings

Bushfire Preparation checklist (refer to Appendix A)

The safety and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors is at all times the Department's main priority. Staff are not expected to fight bushfires.

The school will review (and update where appropriate) the plan on an annual basis.

Any bushfire advice received by the school from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) or external experts needs to be documented identifying the date and source of the advice.

Date of Review	Reviewing Officer	Date Submitted	Next scheduled Review
13/09/2016	Phil Casas – Associate Principal		
13/08/2018	Stewart Pryer		12/08/2019
05/08/2019	Stewart Pryer – Associate Principal		12/08/2020

Communication

There are several levels of communication requirements at school level before, during and after bushfire events.

Preparing for Bushfire Season

- The Principal must ensure all students and staff are aware of the school's bushfire plan. It is also necessary to ensure that relief staff and parents have been made aware of the school's bushfire plan. A copy of the school's bushfire plan should be published on the schools website. Suggested draft text for the school newsletter is available in Appendix A6 of the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*.
- The Principal should establish contact with emergency services, including DFES, the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, the LEMC and CESM.
- Schools located in bushfire prone areas need to incorporate key bushfire messages in their curriculum.
- Communication plans (including emergency contacts and a telephone tree) need to be in place for evacuation or planned closure. See Appendix D for a Communication Plan, Appendix E for sample emergency contacts and Appendix F for a sample telephone tree.
- The school has an effectively working emergency warning or alert system and emergency communication equipment is available and working.
- Schools have in place systems to account for students, staff and visitors in an emergency, such as class rolls (or equivalent) and visitor registers. Consideration should be in place for situations such as a loss of power affecting the ability to print from electronic sources.
- Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses if appropriate (notification of contractors if pre-emptive closure is invoked; the availability of buses if off-site evacuation is required).

Pre-emptive Closure

- The Department's Incident Controller (normally the Deputy Director General Schools or delegated officer) will make the decision to close a school based upon advice from Emergency Services and this will be relayed to the Principal via the Regional Executive Director.
- If an order to evacuate is directed by the Incident Controller, the evacuation order will be relayed via a variety of communications methods including the [Bushfire Warning System](#). It is paramount that schools gather information pertaining to fires from official sources in order to make an informed decision on whether to stay on-site or evacuate off-site. A link to the [DFES Bushfire Warning System](#) has also been included to ensure the process for off-site evacuation is correctly applied.
- The Principal is to notify staff and parents of closure using emergency contacts and the telephone tree. See also the draft letter to parents in Appendix A7 of the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* advising of pre-emptive closure, being mindful of parents' level of literacy and understanding of English.
- All other necessary parties are advised including (but not limited to) other schools that may have siblings at your school, community users of the school facilities (including before and after school care, community kindergartens or holiday programs), on site contractors and Parents and Citizens Association (P & C).
- If appropriate, bus contractors will be contacted to arrange for the evacuation of students to a designated area.
- Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be posted as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*, both physically at the school and electronically on the website.

During Evacuation

- The school will contact their Regional Executive Director and the Department's Media Unit.
- The school will contact parents via phone or email, ensuring they have a mobile phone contact number for the school (It would be preferable that parents restrict calling the school at this time to emergency calls only).
- The school will notify bus contractors and out of school programs.

- The official broadcaster of Emergency Events is ABC radio. Your local station will be ABC local radio. They will provide up to date information during a bushfire event in your area.
- The DFES website provides up to date information on fire events. Refer to <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/>.

NOTE: DFES uses the national Emergency Alert system to send community warning messages via mobile telephones in affected areas. (Information can be obtained from <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/pages/default.aspx>).

The Principal communicates directly with Regional and Central Office personnel including any media communications. Staff should not comment directly to media.

Reopening the School

- The Regional Executive Director is to advise the Principal when the school can re-open.
- Parents need to know when the school is reopened. In the event of a pre-emptive closure details are contained in the template letter (*Principal's Guide to Bushfire* advising of pre-emptive Closure – Appendix A7).
- The Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be physically removed from the school premises and website.
- All parties that were advised of closure (e.g. bus contractors, out of hours users, P&C) should be advised of reopening.

Types of Fire Event

In the event of a Total Fire Ban, catastrophic weather warning, or bushfire, the **BP** will be activated.

1. Total Fire Ban

In the event of a Total Fire Ban the **BP** will be invoked: (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures).

This means:

- no fires must be lit or used in the open air;
- all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping are not allowed; and
- 'hot work' such as metal work, grinding, welding, soldering, gas cutting or similar is not allowed unless there is an exemption.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services advice is that chainsaws, plant or grass trimmers or lawn mowers can be used during a total fire ban in suburban or built up areas which are cleared of flammable material, but not in bushland or other areas where their use is likely to cause fire.

It is also necessary to ensure:

- The equipment or machinery is mechanically sound.
- All reasonable precautions are taken to prevent a bushfire starting.

It is recommended postponing the activity altogether to minimise the risk of fire.

Individuals could be fined up to \$25,000 or jailed for 12 months or both if the Total Fire Ban is ignored.







For information on activities that can or cannot be carried out during a Total Fire Ban visit www.dfes.wa.gov.au/totalfirebans/Pages/TotalFireBanWhatCantIDo.aspx.

If the information required is not available from the website, telephone the Total Fire Ban Information Line 1800 709 355.

This information is also available by visiting www.dfes.wa.gov.au.

2. Catastrophic Fire Danger

The Catastrophic Fire Danger Index (FDR) has been added to the Australia-wide FDR system since the 2009 bushfires in Victoria. If a fire starts in catastrophic conditions, its impact potential includes death or injury to people and destruction of buildings.

Category	Fire Danger Index (FDR)	Action
 Catastrophic	100+	Schools on Bushfire Zone Register closed on instruction from Deputy Director General, Public Schools, through Regional Executive Director. School to invoke Communication Plan and cancel bus services. Appendix B (refer to the <i>Principal's Guide to Bushfire</i> for all procedures and sample messages).
 Extreme	75-99	Monitor Emergency WA & DFES websites Normal school operations (any fire that starts is likely to be so fierce that even a well prepared and well-constructed school may not survive a fire).
 Severe	50-74	Monitor Emergency WA & DFES website Normal school operations (The threat of a bushfire increases)
 Very High	32-49	Monitor Emergency WA & DFES website Normal school operations (The threat of a bushfire increases)
 High	12-31	Normal school operations (The threat of a bushfire increases)
 Low/Moderate	0-11	Normal school operations
<p><i>Guidance notes:</i> At each rating the fire behaviour and potential impact will be different. Check the FDR for the area by visiting the following links: https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#firedangerratings Further information can be obtained at: https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/bushfire/pages/firedangerratings.aspx</p>		

In the event of a catastrophic weather warning the **BP** will be invoked as per the flow chart at Appendix B

2.1 Planned Pre-emptive Closure

Regional executive directors will contact principals of affected schools directly when a planned (pre-emptive) closure is to be invoked in a particular part of the State. The lead time for a planned closure varies depending on weather patterns, but every attempt is made to give principals as much notice as possible to prepare written documentation for parents. Schools should have telephone trees in place to provide this information at short notice or after hours.

Once advised that your school is to undertake pre-emptive closure, you need to notify your school community that a closure is imminent. The Principal needs to send letters to parents and provide each staff member with a memo that clearly states when the closure is planned to occur and that the school is on standby. It may be that between declaration of the closure and the day of closure, weather conditions improve sufficiently to remove the need to close and the school can therefore stand down its pre-emptive closure plans. The Regional Executive Director confirms with the principal the final decision to close the school no later than **4.30 pm** the day before the planned closure. If weather conditions become less severe after **4:30 pm**, the closure goes ahead regardless, in order to provide a level of certainty to parents.

The DFES is the final authority on advice about which schools are in danger and the level of risk at the time. The Deputy Director General Schools makes the final decision as to whether or not a planned closure of public schools is to proceed, based on DFES's advice.

2.2 During a Planned Closure

The principal must stay informed of current fire danger rating and any fire activity by monitoring local media (local radio, especially the ABC, and television) and by regularly checking for updates with DFES.

2.3 Re-opening School

Parents need to know when the Catastrophic FDR has been downgraded and that it is therefore safe for their children to return to school after a planned closure. The template letter to parents contains advice on how parents can monitor the situation. The school will need to put communication plans in place, such as placing a notice on the school website and providing a phone number for parents to call for information about the reopening of the school. Consideration needs to be given to how parents who do not have internet access or who have diverse needs (e.g. multicultural, special needs) will be provided with information.

3. Bushfire

In the event of a bushfire threatening the school, the school will notify DFES and the **BP** will be invoked by way of the school siren (or hand held siren)

3.1. Bushfire – Warnings

During a bushfire, emergency services provide as much information as possible through a number of different channels.

If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, the College will activate the Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan immediately.

Before a bushfire starts, Fire Danger Ratings can provide advice about the level of bushfire threat on a particular day and how difficult and dangerous conditions will be if a fire starts. They are based on weather conditions forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology.

During a bushfire, DFES and the Parks and Wildlife (P and W) Service of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions issue community alerts and warnings for bushfires that threaten lives and property. They are only issued once firefighters have arrived at the scene and determined that there is a threat or potential threat to the community. The alert level changes to reflect the increasing risk to life.

DFES and Parks and Wildlife (P and W) Service of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions will issue the following four bushfire warnings.

3.1.1



means a fire has started but there is no known danger. This is general information to keep you informed and up to date with developments.

Turn off evaporative air conditioners and ensure roof vents are closed. Undertake regular checks and patrols of the school for bushfire activity, paying special attention to the evaporative air conditioners.

3.1.2



means there is a possible threat to lives and property. Conditions are changing, you need to leave the area or prepare to move students, staff and visitors to their pre-determined Safer Building Location and not an open area on the site or evacuate.

If an order to evacuate is directed by the Incident Controller, the evacuation order will be relayed via a variety of official sources such as the DFES website and Emergency WA website. It is paramount that schools gather information pertaining to fires from official sources in order to make an informed decision on whether to stay on-site or evacuate off-site.

3.1.3



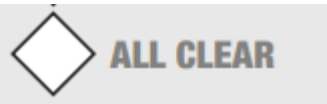
means you are in danger as your area will be impacted by fire. You need to take immediate action to survive.

You will be advised whether you can leave the area or if you must shelter where you are as the fire burns through your area. An emergency warning may be supported with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS). These factors should be reviewed on a regular basis as they may change at any time and without notice.

If an order to evacuate is directed by the Incident Controller, the evacuation order will be relayed via a variety of communications methods including the [Bushfire Warning system](#).

It is paramount that schools gather information pertaining to fires from official sources in order to make an informed decision on whether to stay on-site or evacuate off-site.

3.1.4



means the danger has passed and the fire is under control, but you need to remain vigilant in case the situation changes. It may still not be safe to return to school.

Further information in relation to Bushfire Warning System is available on the DFES Website and a video is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_H0D-38AGQ&feature=youtu.be

3.2. Bushfire – Act

3.2.1 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is open

3.2.1.1 Evacuation Procedure

School to evacuate off-site on advice from DFES

- All classes remain with their teachers and support staff.
- All other staff and visitors report to the administration building.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors, roof vents and windows must be closed **and evaporative air coolers turned off**.
- Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by the fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes and liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens will control the response and must liaise with DFES or emergency services as soon as possible.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

Parent Access

Schools must have clear communication methods with parents. Parents must be advised **NOT** to pick up students and to monitor official communication channels for specific access information. Appendix D and Appendix E Communication Plan and Emergency Response Contact List must be completed with local content to ensure the school's individual communication requirements are detailed and used.

3.2.1.2 Safer Location Procedure – if evacuation is not possible

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All classes in transportable buildings to be relocated to **The Gymnasium**.
- School move to Safer Building Location ([Appendix C](#)) if the Principal cannot ascertain impact of a bushfire to school or on advice from DFES.
- All classes to remain within the designated Safer Building Location. See [Appendix C](#) for a sample safer location evacuation diagram.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors, roof vents and windows must be closed and **evaporative air coolers turned off**. Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes and liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of the DFES or emergency services who will then take over.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

Parent Access

Schools must have clear communication methods with parents. Parents must be advised **NOT** to pick up students and to monitor official communication channels for specific access information. Appendix D and Appendix E Communication Plan and Emergency Response Contact List must be completed with local content to ensure the school's individual communication requirements are detailed and used.

3.2.2 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is closed

If the Department of Education Incident Controller makes a decision on school closure based upon advice from Emergency Services the Regional Executive Director will inform the Principal of closure.

The Principal is to notify staff and parents of the closure using the emergency contact list

The Department of Education Incident Controller will, in consultation with the Regional Executive Director, identify alternative accommodation of students and staff if required. The Department's Media Unit will utilise media outlets to make public announcements of school closures, temporary alternative accommodation and contact number(s) for further information.

The Department's Incident Controller in consultation with DFES will inform the Regional Executive Director when the school can reopen, who will inform the Principal accordingly.

3.2.3 Recovery

The priorities for the school during recovery are

- Health and Safety of individuals;
- Social Recovery; and
- Physical (Structural) Recovery.

General

- When possible, return to normal routine as soon as possible.
- Attend to staff and student welfare, considering counselling support.
- Provide information for families and the community of any impact (including if there is none) on the school and school routine following the bushfire.
- Undertake a check of any equipment or stock used and arrange for replacement/replenishment.
- Address any physical damage to the school, isolating areas if required and if necessary relocate to alternative accommodation. Contact Building Management and Works to commence repairs. The Department should be advised of any damage caused by the bushfire.
- Attend to security if necessary (Contact Head of Security at Central Office on 9264 4825).
- Manage Administrative details including insurance.


Debrief

- What worked, what didn't?
- Was anything overlooked?
- What could you and your staff do better next time?
- Should roles change?
- If changes are made, incorporate them into the formal plan and advise the appropriate parties including staff and other authorities.
- Share the knowledge with other schools.
- Test the revised bushfire management plan and procedures.

For further details and contacts refer to the Recovery Section of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* and *The Principal's Guide to Bushfire*.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: COMPLIANCE: Bushfire Preparation Checklist

	Department of Education	Bushfire Preparation Check List for the Summer Months
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Principals should be thoroughly familiar with their current plans for dealing with bushfires.

All staff members should be aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plans.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Tick when task has been completed, or write NA if not applicable()

Evidence

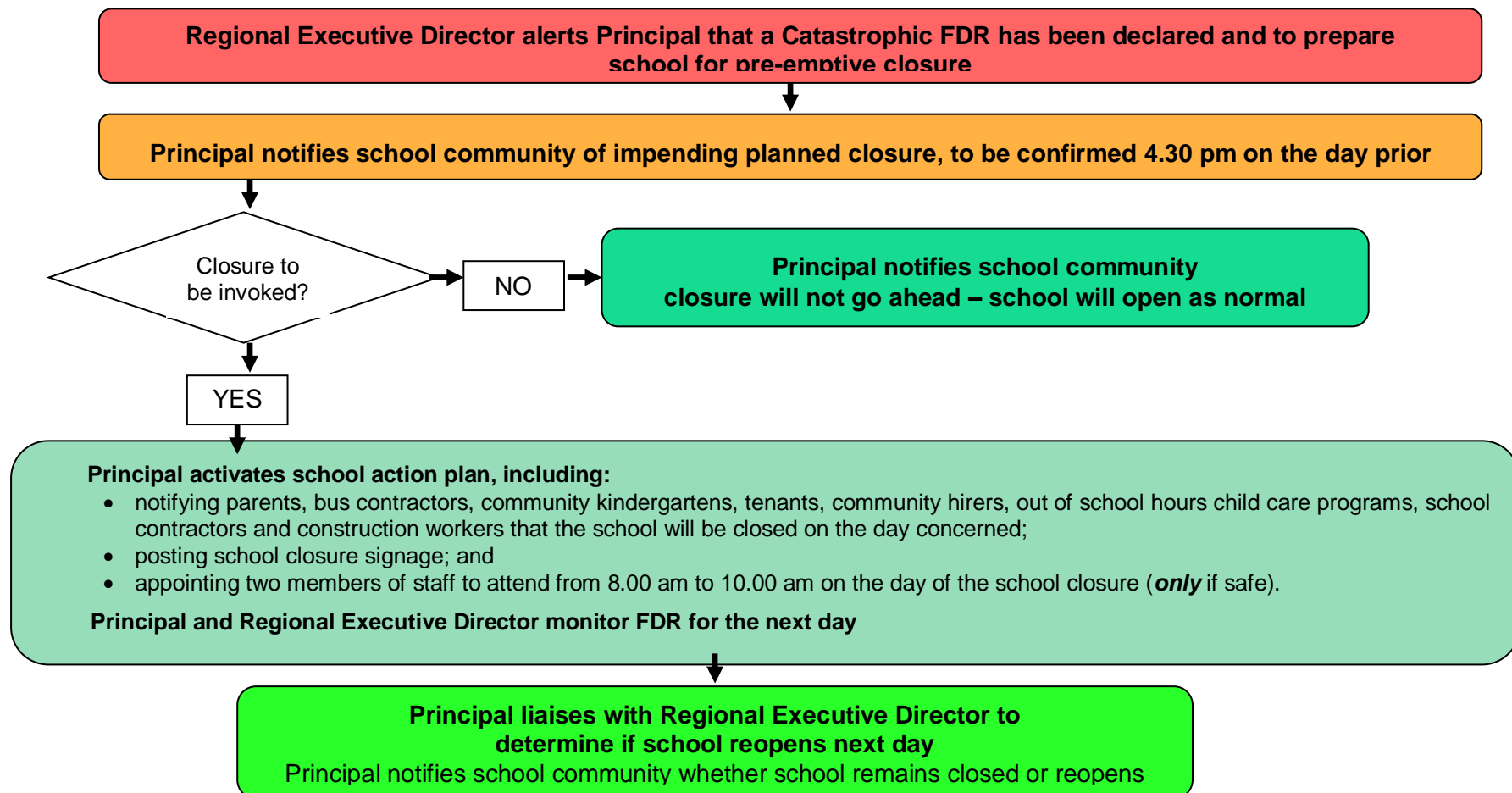
Has the school checked the Bushfire Zone Register on Ikon and downloaded the latest Stand-alone Bushfire Plan.	√	26/07/2019
Principal is thoroughly familiar with the schools current <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> , and where applicable, the stand-alone bushfire plan.	√	Plan reviewed August 2019
Students, staff, relief staff and parents/carers have been made aware of the school bushfire plan.	√	Website CONNECT Notice to parents Attached to Staff Handbook
The Stand-alone Bushfire Plan has been reviewed prior to the bushfire season (31 August each year) and a copy uploaded to the electronic portal and on the school's website.	√	August 2019
The Principal or delegated staff establish contact with local emergency services, DFES, the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, Local Government Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), local government representative or Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) (if there is one for the area), and incorporated their feedback into the plans (as required).		
Local Emergency Services, outlined above, are informed of your nominated pre-determined Safer Location as part of your Emergency Critical Incident Management Plan procedures.	√	
Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register understand the bushfire warning system (refer DFES website page 8) and the Emergency Alert telephone warning system (www.emergencyalert.gov.au).	√	
Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register need to incorporate key bushfire messages in the curriculum.	√	Covered in HASS
Schools know how to turn off evaporative air conditioner units, including awareness of the location of the switches, and how to close roof vents.	√	
Communication plans (include telephone tree) are in place for directed evacuation or planned closure	√	
Evacuation drills practised prior to the start of the bushfire season and at least once per term during the bushfire season. The	√	

bushfire season typically runs from late October to April in southern WA and June to late October in northern WA. Note this is a minimum of three drills per year.		
School has a correctly functioning emergency warning or alert system.	√	
Emergency communications equipment is available e.g. mobile telephones, hand-operated fire alarm (portable siren), portable radios and spare batteries.	√	
Class rolls and visitor register (or equivalent) are readily accessible in an emergency to account for students, staff and visitors.	√	
First aid equipment is available and staff members trained in first aid have been identified.	√	
Evacuation kit should be checked at least once per term.	√	
Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses (notification of contractors if pre-emptive closure is invoked; availability of buses if off-site evacuation is required)	√	
Procedures are in place to restrict use of machinery (e.g. angle grinders, mowers, and machinery with internal combustion engines) in close proximity to bushfire fuels where they may start a fire on severe fire danger days.	√	
A Safer Location within the school building should be identified and prepared in the event that an off-site evacuation is not possible (Refer page 4 of the Guide).	√	
Asset Protection Zone (APZ) (20 metre radius), cleared of all rubbish, long dry grass, bark and flammable materials.	√	

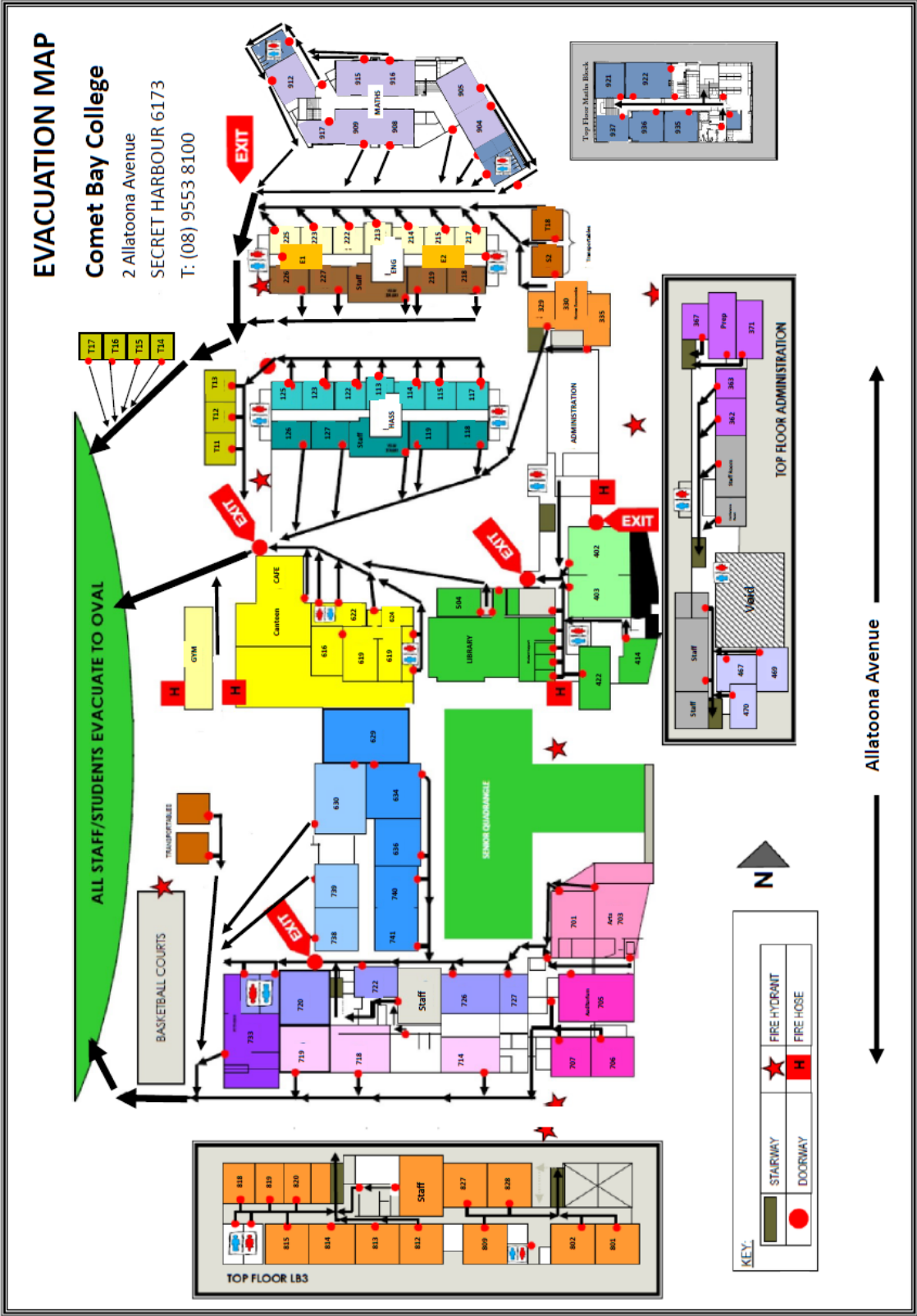
Appendix B: Catastrophic Event Flow Chart

In the event of a catastrophic weather warning, the **Bushfire Plan** will be invoked as per the following flow chart: (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures and sample letters).

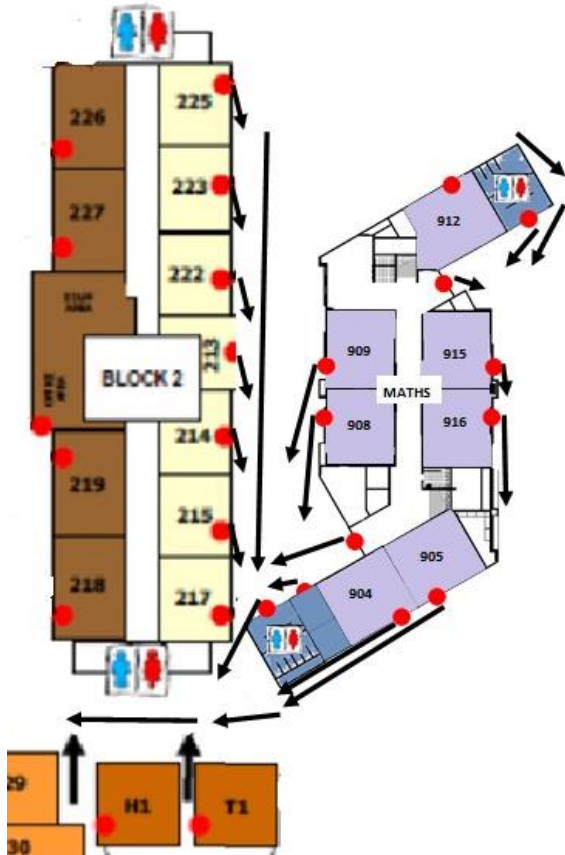
PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSE TO Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating



Appendix C: School Site Plan and Evacuation Routes



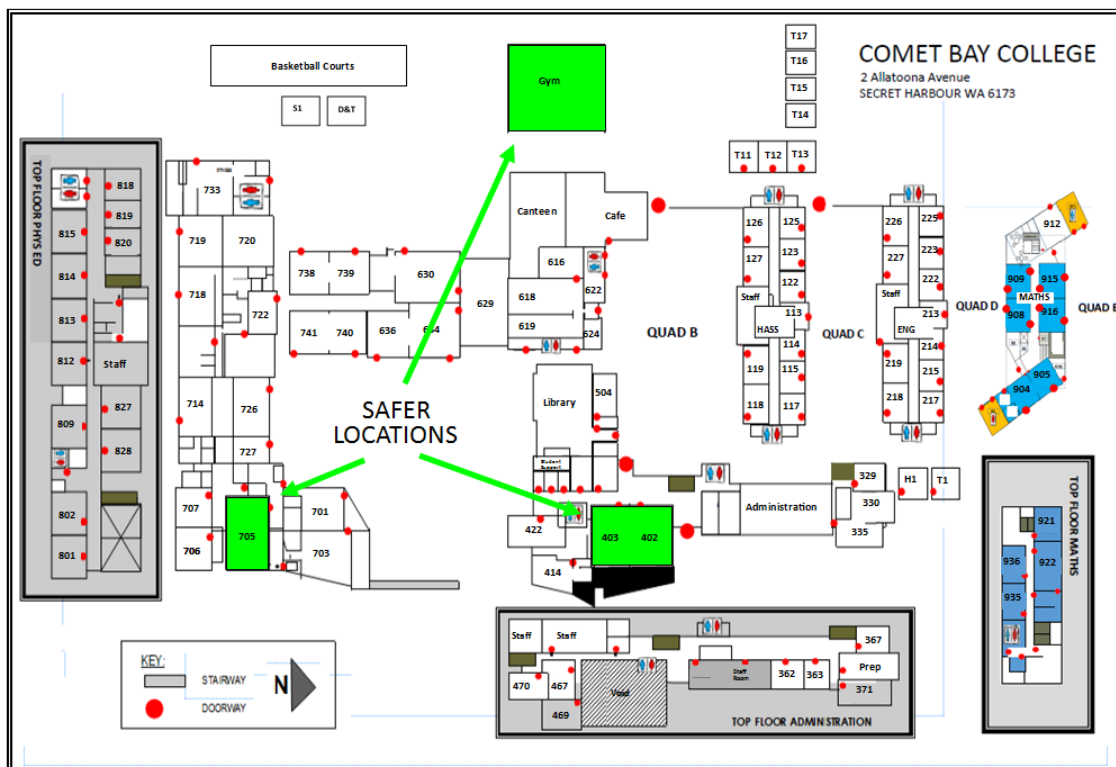
In the event of a bushfire in the wetlands



A bushfire in the wetlands, and the generally prevailing sea breeze, will make the regular evacuation route particularly hazardous.

In this event, the direction of travel changes and students / staff are evacuated to the east end of the maths block and through the walkway between the demountable classrooms, and the east end of the English block.

Safer Locations



Appendix D: Communication Plan

