

## **Improving bushfire planning and design in Queensland**

In Queensland, Developers and Local Government continue to rely on advice from unqualified and uncertified “bushfire consultants” to undertake bushfire management planning in this State.

As development increasingly encroaches into more bushfire prone areas, it is important that developers use consultants who have the appropriate qualifications in fire science and certification. This ensures a smoother passage for the DA process, and ensures that new developments reflect the latest in applied fire science. Robust protection of life and property for new lot owners is paramount. “Too often we see unqualified and uncertified bushfire consultants making fundamental errors, such as placing structures in the flame zone without being aware of having done so”, says Alistair Hill of Bushfire Risk Reducers. “An outdated Planning Policy which is not consistent with the previous Australian Standard AS3959 – 1999 or its weaker revision, AS3959-2009 *Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas* certainly doesn’t help”.

Other States recognize that the provision of bushfire consultancy services can have life threatening outcomes, if unregulated and uncertified. As a consequence an appropriately rigorous tertiary qualification (Graduate Diploma in Design for Bushfire Prone Areas) followed by certification by the national body (FPA – Fire Protection Association of Australia), forms a basic entry level for professionals providing bushfire consultancy services.

Other benefits for developers in using certified consultants include the capacity to creatively design and argue alternate solutions for difficult situations, in an objective manner. Design does not have to be constrained by using often over-simplified rules of thumb, if more relevant and objective treatment can be given to a particular site or location.

Developers who would prefer to work with qualified and certified consultants in Bushfire Planning and Design, should refer to the Certification section of the FPA website:

<http://www.fpaa.com.au>