

Lighting fires

Generally, it is illegal to light a fire in the open in Queensland without a permit.

Exemptions are fires that are less than two metres in any direction (but not during a fire danger period), fires lit in a prepared fireplace for cooking, or certain fires used by primary producers.

If you do light a fire you are responsible for keeping it under control.

On granting a permit, the fire warden ensures that conditions are appropriate, that all neighbours are notified and that emergency response procedures are in place.



Protecting properties around Cairns

If you live near any reserves or bushland areas, please don't dump garden waste or other waste in these areas as it promotes weeds and makes it harder to manage fire close to property boundaries.

If your property borders a reserve or bushland area:

maintain firebreaks

keep your property boundary clear of long grass

build fences of fire resistant materials if possible.



Ring triple zero (000) to report wildfire emergencies

Contacts

Visit the Queensland Rural Fire Service website www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au for more information about:

- how best to prevent fires and keep yourself and your property safe in a fire
- current fire danger periods and fire bans
- how to contact local fire wardens and obtain fire permits.

For information about fire management in national parks:

- Visit www.derm.qld.gov.au for park alerts, fact sheets and fire management information
- Phone the Department of Environment and Resource Management on **13 QGOV (13 74 68)**.

Cairns Hillslopes Committee

The Cairns Hillslopes Committee includes numerous government, council and community members who plan and coordinate fire management in the Cairns Regional Council area.



Queensland
Government



WET TROPICS
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Fire knows no boundaries



Protect
your house now
Remove
rubbish and fuels

Fire management around Cairns

- Is planned and coordinated by the Cairns Hillslopes Committee each year.
- Protects life, property and the environment from wildfires.
- Aims to prevent or suppress wildfires using water, firebreaks and back-burning.
- Includes prescribed burns to minimise fuel loads and prevent large wildfires, using aircraft to help burn remote areas.
- Promotes ecological diversity through patchwork burns at different times of the year.
- Helps control weeds such as lantana, guinea grass and molasses grass.



Ecological burning

Many ecosystems in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and surrounds have evolved under the influence of fire. Disruption of historical fire patterns may have adverse ecological impacts and may threaten the survival of a number of open woodland systems within the region.

Fire plays a role in promoting the germination of many grasses and herbs as well as some shrubs and trees. The relative abundance of many animal species in open forests is partly determined by their adaptation to fire regimes.

Open eucalypt woodlands support a specialised and highly diverse range of animals and plants that have evolved to live with fire. If these open forests are left unburnt for too long they can be colonised by moist, dense rainforest that will not easily burn. The biodiversity of the open woodlands may be irreversibly lost.

Fire managers usually try to burn open forests during the dry season when the weather is calm and cool. This creates a patchwork of burnt and unburnt areas that provides a variety of habitats for animals and plants.

In rare circumstances a hot fire may be prescribed to open up the forest and restore the woodland structure.



Traditional Aboriginal burning

Fire has both a practical and spiritual role in Aboriginal culture, being used as a tool for hunting, clearing the landscape and promoting the growth of particular plants.

Aboriginal burning involves seasonal burning of varying frequency, intensity and patch size. It creates a mosaic of ecological niches for various plants and animals within an ecosystem.

Firestick farming has played a vital role in biodiversity conservation, shaping a variety of open woodland ecosystems and protecting some fire sensitive vegetation communities from hotter bushfires.

Over the past 50 to 100 years the decrease in regular Aboriginal burning is thought to have contributed to the expansion of rainforest into open woodlands within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and surrounds.



Agricultural burning on hillslopes

In the past sugar cane was burnt prior to harvesting and fires regularly escaped into adjacent rainforest on the coastal hillslopes. These rainforests have often been replaced by highly flammable exotic grasses and other weeds.

The adoption of green harvesting practices by the cane industry has drastically reduced the number of fires escaping from cane lands.

Fire authorities and land managers are now trying to exclude or suppress fire on the hillslopes to protect rainforest. Seasonal back-burning from constructed firebreaks and planting of vegetated or green firebreaks are gradually encouraging the restoration of the original forests and reducing wildfire risks.

