

CULTURAL BURN OPERATING GUIDELINE

23 July 2025

Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline is to provide the process for enabling **cultural burns** in the Adelaide Park Lands under the care, control and management of the City of Adelaide (CoA) (refer to Cultural Burn Approval Process Appendix 1).

It ensures that all proposed **cultural burns** are carefully planned, assessed and authorised in accordance with regulatory requirements, cultural protocols and environmental considerations.

It applies to all **cultural burns** initiated or supported by the CoA, as follows:

- The Adelaide Park Lands under the care, control and management of the CoA.
- CoA led initiatives, including initiatives under the Aboriginal Ranger Program.
- Collaborations with State Government Agencies or external landholders.

Third-party applicants must submit detailed **cultural burn** proposals that demonstrate alignment with the Cultural Burn Operating Guidelines.

STATEMENT

The CoA recognises cultural burning as a land management practice that honours the knowledge, traditions and stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The following objectives guide the planning and implementation of **cultural burns**:

- Enhancing and protecting cultural values by maintaining landscapes shaped through Indigenous fire knowledge and practice.
- Promoting ecological resilience by reducing fuel loads, encouraging biodiversity and supporting the regeneration of native species, including threatened and endangered flora and fauna.
- Supporting the continuation of Indigenous cultural practices and responsibilities through active land stewardship and knowledge transmission.

The CoA will undertake to support **cultural burns** that are:

- Carried out safely
- Culturally appropriate, aligned with Kaurna law and knowledge systems
- Aligned with environmental regulations
- Aligned with CoA strategic objectives.

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kaurna people as the Traditional Owners of the Country where the city of Adelaide is situated, and pays its respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chief Executive Officer

- Approve, or delegate approval, to formally adopt the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline and to make amendments from time to time.

Director City Shaping

- Oversee the implementation of the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline.
- Responsible for providing updates to the Chief Executive Officer or Executive as appropriate.

Associate Director, Park Lands, Policy and Sustainability

- Responsible for delivery of the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline.
- Responsible for the five-year review of the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline.

Manager, Park Lands and Sustainability

- Responsible for external relationships relating to cultural burn activity, including with the Kurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation.
- Preparing communications on **cultural burns**.
- Responsible for approving the **Cultural Burn Plan**.

Manager, City Safety

- Responsible for approving the **Cultural Burn Permit**.

Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator

- Assessing third-party applications for **cultural burns** against the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline.
- Responsible for coordinating the process of site selection and assessment across the Reconciliation Team, Park Lands Planning Team and Biodiversity Team.
- Responsible for ensuring a risk assessment is in place prior to any **cultural burns** being undertaken.
- Responsible for engaging an Aboriginal organisation to lead **cultural burns** in accordance with CoA procurement processes.
- Responsible for preparing and implementing communications and engagement plans for **cultural burns**.
- Responsible for the day-to-day management activities associated with **cultural burns**.
- Responsible for ensuring the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of **cultural burns**.
- Responsible for providing advice on the Cultural Burn Operating Guideline to ensure it remains culturally appropriate, ecologically effective and operationally safe.

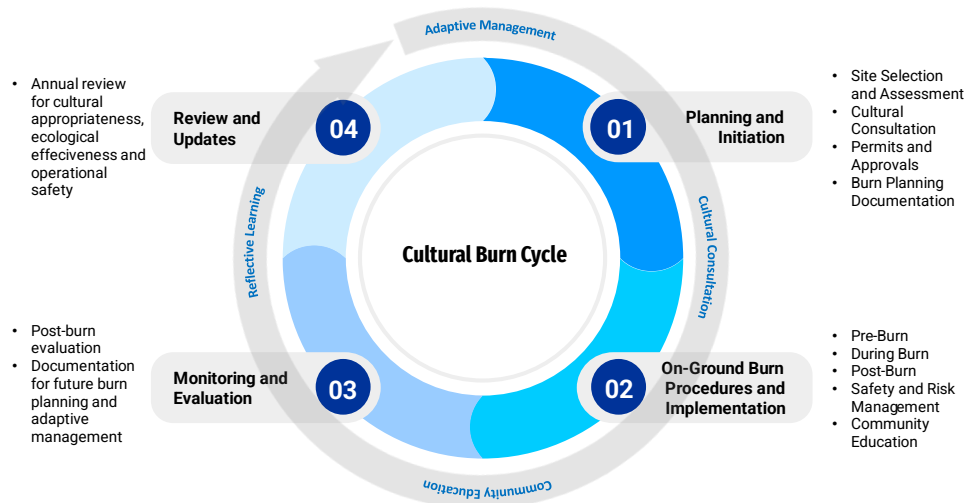
PROCESS

To ensure the safe, respectful and effective implementation of **cultural burns**, a formal request and approvals process is required from third-party applicants.

The CoA will manage requests for **cultural burns** and the approval process recognising four stages that comprise **cultural burns**:

1. Planning and initiation
2. On-ground burn procedures and implementation
3. Monitoring and evaluation
4. Review and updates.

The four stages are show diagrammatically below.



PLANNING AND INITIATION

CoA will undertake to:-

- Seek advice from the Kaurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation in the planning and initiation stage of the process.
- Identify sites in collaboration with relevant CoA teams and external parties, referencing the CoA Kaurna Fire Management Plan 2023 (ACC2023/176066) (as applicable).
- Review the risk assessment with consideration of safety, cultural factors, fuel load, vegetation type, and both cultural and ecological monitoring.
- Prepare a stakeholder engagement plan including, but not limited to, identifying internal and external stakeholders, methods for engagement, cultural protocols, and spiritual and ceremonial context.

- Obtain relevant permits and approvals (Cultural Burn Permit example provided in Appendix 2 and Cultural Burn Approval example provided in Appendix 3) including, but not limited to, a seasonal burning permit. **Cultural burns** must comply with:
 - *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* (SA)
 - Australian Fire Danger Rating system
 - Local Council by-laws
 - City of Adelaide internal approvals
 - Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) notification and permit system (as applicable).
- Prepare a detailed **Cultural Burn Plan** (Template for Cultural Burn Plan provided in Appendix 4).

ON-GROUND BURN PROCEDURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

CoA will undertake to:-

- Conduct pre-cultural burn activities including, but not limited to, site preparations, safety checks and communications.
- Enable the holding of a cultural ceremony or acknowledgment, led by Kaurna Elders, prior to **cultural burns**.
- Ensure Aboriginal-led cultural burning methods are used including continuous monitoring of weather and fire behaviour and include contingency plans for unexpected changes (e.g., weather, smoke drift).
- Restrict access, where necessary, during **cultural burns** and ensure fire control equipment and personnel trained in fire safety, first aid and equipment use will be present on site.
- **Cultural burns** will follow CFS / MFS safety guidelines and CoA risk protocols.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CoA will undertake to:-

- Provide access to the **cultural burn** location for post-cultural burn activities such as ceremony or reflection, and **cultural and ecological monitoring**.
- **Cultural burns** may be accompanied by community education activities where appropriate.
- Document the results of **cultural burns** including, but not limited to, cultural reflections, vegetation and soil recovery assessments, and weed suppression effectiveness.

- Complete an annual review of **cultural burns** and report outcomes through the CoA's Reconciliation Committee and the Kadaltilla / Adelaide Park Lands Authority.

REVIEW AND UPDATES

CoA will undertake to:-

- Review the Operating Guideline every five years.

OTHER USEFUL DOCUMENTS

Related documents

- Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy – Towards 2036
- CoA Kurna Fire Management Plan 2023 (ACC2023/176066)
- CoA Integrated Climate Strategy 2030
- CoA Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2028
- Community Land Management Plan for the Adelaide Park Lands
- Template Cultural Burn Plan (ACC2025/100267)
- Victoria Park / Pakapakanthi Remnant Vegetation Management Plan (ACC2017/169810)

Relevant legislation

- *Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005* (SA)
- *Biodiversity Act 2025* (SA)
- *National Parks & Wildlife Act 1972* (SA)
- *Native Vegetation Act 1991* (SA)
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (CA)
- *Local Government Act 1999* (SA)
- *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* (SA)
- Local Government Land By-law 2024 (Clause 4.9; 4.17; 4.19 and 4.24)

GLOSSARY

Throughout this document, the below terms have been used and are defined as:

Cultural burns: A traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples land management practice that uses fire to enhance the health of Country and culture.

Cultural and ecological monitoring: practice of observing and measuring changes in cultural and ecological systems over time.

Cultural Burn Permit: a permit provided by the CoA under its obligations to manage seasonal burning (example provided in Appendix 2).

Cultural Burn Approval: a letter provided by the CoA providing formal approval to undertake a **cultural burn** (example provided in Appendix 3).

Cultural Burn Plan: A detailed plan that sets out the conditions for the cultural burn including, but not limited to:

- Objectives and site maps
- Roles and responsibilities
- A risk assessment
- Safety measures and emergency contacts
- Cultural protocols and pre-burn ceremonies
- Weather, timing and ecological conditions.

ADMINISTRATIVE

As part of Council's commitment to deliver the City of Adelaide Strategic Plan, services to the community and the provision of transparent information, all policy documents are reviewed as per legislative requirements or when there is no such provision a risk assessment approach is taken to guide the review timeframe.

This Operating Guideline will be reviewed every **5** years unless legislative or operational change occurs beforehand. The next review is required in **2030**.

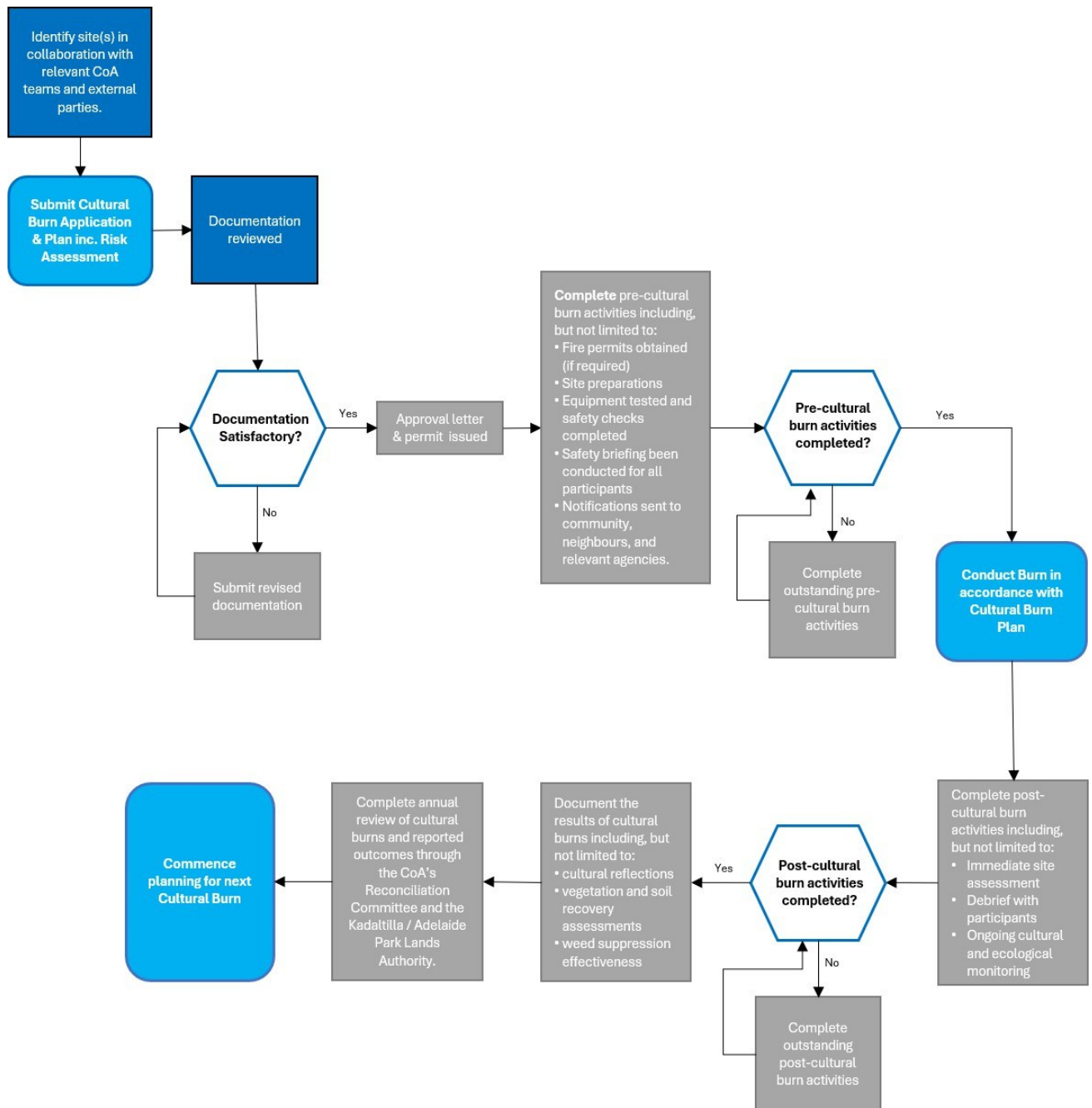
Review history:

Trim Reference	Authorising Body	Date/ Decision ID	Description of Edits
ACC2025/67577	Chief Executive Officer	28 July 2025	Draft for Executive Review

Contact:

For further information contact the Park Lands, Policy & Sustainability Program
 City of Adelaide
 25 Pirie Street, Adelaide SA 5000
 GPO Box 2252 ADELAIDE SA 5001
 +61 8 8203 7203

APPENDIX 1: Cultural Burn Approval Process



APPENDIX 2: BURNING PERMIT (Cultural Burn Permit)

BURNING PERMIT (Cultural Burn)
Environment Protection (Air Quality) Policy 2016

Permit Holder: [Insert Permit Holder name]

Event Name: [Insert Event name]

Location/s at which burning is to be conducted: [Insert burning location]

Description of burning activity: [Insert description of burning activity]

Pursuant to clause 6(1) of the *Environment Protection (Air Quality Policy) 2016*, you are hereby **PERMITTED** to carry out any of the following burning activities as indicated herein:

- Burning vegetation for any other purpose: Cultural burn

SUBJECT at all times to the following conditions:

1. Burning can only take place during the timeframe agreed upon between the City of Adelaide and the authorised person or organisation responsible for undertaking a cultural burn.
2. All fires authorised by this permit must be completely extinguished within the times stipulated in condition 1 above.
3. Fire blankets and air water fire extinguishers must be available and accessible for the Permit Holder (and its employees).
4. All reasonable steps must be taken to reduce smoke from fires authorised by this permit to mitigate any nuisance or health impacts upon occupiers of nearby dwellings and/or road safety risks.
5. A minimum four (4) metre clearance of all flammable material is required around and above the burning pile(s).
6. Burning must be undertaken taking into account any recommended measures and in compliance with any mandatory measures of the following codes of practice prepared by the Country Fire Service (or any codes that supersedes them):
 - *Broad Acre Burning April Code of Practice 2015*; and
 - *Vegetation Pile Burning Code of Practice April 2015*.
7. This permit does NOT authorise the burning of *prohibited substances* as listed in Schedule 1 of the *Environment Protection (Air Quality Policy) 2016*, including:
 - waste listed in Part B of Schedule 1 of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (SA);
 - copper chromium arsenate or other timber preservation chemicals;
 - plastics;

- tyre waste; and/or
- a substance or material containing, or contaminated with, any substance listed above.

Note – Causing or permitting the burning of a *prohibited substance* is an offence that may attract a maximum penalty of \$30,000 (see clause 7(1) of the *Environment Protection (Air Quality Policy) 2016*).

12. Special Conditions:

- **A Cultural Burn Plan must be provided with every seasonal burning permit application.**
- **For each burning activity proposed under this permit, notification must be provided via email to health@cityofadelaide.com.au a minimum of 5 business days prior to each burning activity referencing the permit number, burn location and time of burn.**
- **Proof of public indemnity insurance policy (20 million dollars) must be provided with the seasonal permit application listing the City of Adelaide as an interested party on the policy.**

TAKE NOTE

- This permit applies subject to any ban, prohibition, restriction or other requirement under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* (SA), the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* (SA) or a prescribed Act as defined by the *Environment Protection (Air Quality) Policy 2016*.
- This permit is only valid for the Permit Holder and is not transferrable.
- This permit is current until the date specified below unless revoked by the Council.
- Compliance with this permit does **not**:
 - relieve the permit holder from liability for any loss, damage or harm caused by a fire lit under the authority of this permit; or
 - prevent proceedings for enforcement of the general environmental duty under section 25 of the *Environment Protection 1993* (SA), or for any offence under the Act, in relation to the burning activity.

Any failure to comply with a condition of this permit is an offence that may attract a maximum penalty of \$30,000 (refer Clause 5(1) of the *Environment Protection (Air Quality) Policy 2016*).

Permit Valid: (eg 2025 non-fire danger season) **between** N/A

Issuing Officer:

Date:

As per notification to
Health@cityofadelaide.com.au

Signed:

Appendix 3 – Example Approval Letter

Enquiries:
Reference:

Date XX/XX/XX

First Name Last Name
Address line 1
SUBURB
STATE POSTCODE

Dear First Name Last Name

I am pleased to confirm support for the 202X Cultural Burn activities as assessed against the City of Adelaide's Cultural Burn Operating Guideline.

You and any person authorised by your organisation are hereby permitted to conduct the following activities, pursuant to the Local Government Land By-law 2024:

Clause 4.9 Camping and Tents

- Camp or remain overnight whether in the open, a building, a vehicle or otherwise.
- Erect any tent or temporary structure in relation to the above.

Clause 4.17 Fires

Subject to the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* (SA):

- Light a fire.

Clause 4.19 Flora and Fauna

Subject to the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* (SA) and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA):

- Damage, pick, disturb, interfere with or remove any plant or flower thereon.
- Burn any timber or dead wood.

Clause 4.24 Organised Ceremonies and Events

- Hold, conduct or participate in an event of more than 20 people.

This permission relates specifically to the 202X Cultural Burn activity occurring in the Adelaide Park Lands.

Yours sincerely

First Name Last Name
Position

Appendix 4 – Template for Cultural Burn Plan

APPLICANT TO PROVIDE

CULTURAL BURN PLAN

PLAN DETAILS

Site Name / Location:

Plan Prepared By:

Date Prepared:

Planned Burn Date(s):

OBJECTIVES

Cultural Objectives:

Ecological Objectives:

SITE INFORMATION

Site Description:

Cultural Significance:

Ecological Significance:

Access Points:

SITE MAPS (ATTACH AS APPENDICES)

Overall Site Map – showing burn area boundaries, control lines, access points, water points – Appendix 1

Cultural Features Map – locations of culturally significant areas, restricted zones or no-burn zones – Appendix 2

Safety & Operations Map – evacuation routes, staging areas, assembly points – Appendix 3

CONTACT DETAILS

Role	Name	Organisation / Community Group	Contact
Cultural Burn Lead			
Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator		CoA	
Manager, Park Lands & Sustainability		CoA	

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kaurna people as the Traditional Owners of the Country where the city of Adelaide is situated, and pays its respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

CUTURAL BURN PLAN

CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

- Pre-Burn Consultation:
- Pre-Burn Ceremonies:
- Cultural Observations During Burn:
- Post-Burn Cultural Practices:

SAFETY MEASURES

- Risk Assessment Summary:
- PPE Requirements:
- Safety Briefing Schedule:
- Water & Firefighting Equipment:
- First Aid & Medical Support Plan:
- Emergency Assembly Points:

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Contact	Name	Phone

WEATHER, TIMING, AND ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS)

- Seasonal Indicators:
- Weather Parameters for Burn:
- Preferred Time of Day for Ignition:
- Pre-Burn Ecological Conditions:
- Post-Burn Monitoring Indicators:

PRE-BURN CHECKS

- ☐ Cultural protocols confirmed and permissions granted
- ☐ Weather forecast checked and within safe parameters
- ☐ Fire permits obtained (if required)
- ☐ Equipment tested and operational

- ☐ Safety briefing conducted for all participants
- ☐ Notifications sent to community, neighbours and relevant agencies

**POST-BURN
ACTIVITIES**

Immediate Site Assessment:

Debrief with Participants:

Ongoing Monitoring Plan:

Reporting:

SIGN-OFF

Name:

Role:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 1 - Overall Site Map

APPLICANT TO PROVIDE

APPENDIX 2 - Cultural Features Map

APPLICANT TO PROVIDE

APPENDIX 3 - Safety & Operations Map

APPLICANT TO PROVIDE

APPENDIX 4 – Example Risk Assessment

Hazard	Potential Consequences	Initial Risk Rating*	Control Measures	Residual Risk Rating*	Responsible Person
Uncontrolled fire spread	Damage to cultural/ecological assets, injury, property loss	Low	Establish control lines, conduct test burns, monitor weather, have suppression equipment ready	Low	Cultural Burn Lead
Smoke impact on community	Health issues for vulnerable people, complaints	Low	Notify community & agencies, burn under favourable wind conditions, monitor AQI	Low	Community Engagement Lead
Injury to participants	Burns, smoke inhalation, trips/falls	Low	PPE for all participants, safety briefing, first aid on site	Low	Safety Officer
Damage to cultural sites	Loss of heritage values	Low	Map & protect no-burn zones, cultural monitors on site	Low	Cultural Liaison
Weather change mid-burn	Fire escape risk, reduced visibility	Low	Continuous weather monitoring, stop burn if outside parameters	Low	Cultural Burn Lead
Vehicle/equipment incident	Injury, property damage	Low	Trained operators only, spotters for vehicle movements	Low	Safety Officer
Wildlife injury/displacement	Loss of species, habitat disturbance	Low	Pre-burn ecological survey, phased ignition to allow escape	Low	Ecological Monitor