

33. Local government may require occupier of land to plough or clear fire-break

(1) Subject to subsection (2) a local government at any time, and from time to time, may, and if so required by the Minister shall, as a measure for preventing the outbreak of a bush fire, or for preventing the spread or extension of a bush fire which may occur, give notice in writing to an owner or occupier of land situate within the district of the local government or shall give notice to all owners or occupiers of land in its district by publishing a notice in the *Government Gazette* and in a newspaper circulating in the area requiring him or them as the case may be within a time specified in the notice to do or to commence to do at a time so specified all or any of the following things —

- (a) to plough, cultivate, scarify, burn or otherwise clear upon the land fire-breaks in such manner, at such places, of such dimensions, and to such number, and whether in parallel or otherwise, as the local government may and is hereby empowered to determine and as are specified in the notice, and thereafter to maintain the fire-breaks clear of inflammable matter;
- (b) to act as and when specified in the notice with respect to anything which is upon the land, and which in the opinion of the local government or its duly authorised officer, is or is likely to be conducive to the outbreak of a bush fire or the spread or extension of a bush fire,

and the notice may require the owner or occupier to do so —

- (c) as a separate operation, or in co-ordination with any other person, carrying out a similar operation on adjoining or neighbouring land; and
- (d) in any event, to the satisfaction of either the local government or its duly authorised officer, according to which of them is specified in the notice.

(2) A notice in writing under subsection (1) may be given to an owner or occupier of land by posting it to him at his last postal address known to the local government and may be given to an owner of land by posting it to him at the address shown in the rate record kept by the local government pursuant to the *Local Government Act 1995*, as his address for the service of rate notices.

(2a) The provisions of subsection (2) are in addition to and not in derogation of those of sections 75 and 76 of the *Interpretation Act 1984*.

(3) The owner or occupier of land to whom a notice has been given under subsection (1) and who fails or neglects in any respect duly to comply with the requisitions of the notice is guilty of an offence.

Penalty: \$5 000.

(4) Where an owner or occupier of land who has received notice under subsection (1) fails or neglects to comply with the requisitions of the notice within the time specified in the notice —

- (a) the local government may direct its bush fire control officer, or any other officer of the local government, to enter upon the land of the owner or occupier and to carry out the requisitions of the notice which have not been complied with; and
 - (b) the bush fire control officer or other officer may, in pursuance of the direction, enter upon the land of the owner or occupier with such servants, workmen, or contractors, and with such vehicles, machinery, and appliances as he deems fit, and may do such acts, matters and things as may be necessary to carry out the requisitions of the notice.
- (5) The amount of any costs and expenses incurred by the bush fire control officer or other officer in doing the acts, matters, or things provided for in subsection (4) —
 - (a) shall be ascertained and fixed by the local government and a certificate signed by the mayor or president of the local government shall be *prima facie* evidence of the amount; and
 - (b) may be recovered by the local government in any court of competent jurisdiction as a debt due from the owner or occupier of land to the local government.
- (5a) A local government may make local laws in accordance with subdivision 2 of Division 2 of Part 3 of the *Local Government Act 1995* —
 - (a) requiring owners and occupiers of land in its district to clear fire-breaks in such manner, at such places, at such times, of such dimensions and to such number, and whether in parallel or otherwise, as are specified in the local laws and to maintain the fire-breaks clear of inflammable matter;
 - (b) providing that things required by the local laws to be done shall be done to the satisfaction of the local government or its duly authorised officer.
- (5b) Where an owner or occupier of land fails or neglects in any respect to comply with the requirements of local laws made under subsection (5a) the provisions of subsections (3), (4) and (5) apply *mutatis mutandis* as if those requirements were the requisitions of a notice given under subsection (1).
- (5c) Nothing in subsection (5a) affects the power of a local government to give notice under subsection (1) nor its duty to do so if so required by the Minister.
- (5d) Where the provisions of local laws made under subsection (5a) are inconsistent with those of a notice given under subsection (1) or under section 34 or 35, the provisions of that notice shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, prevail.
- (6) A local government may, at the request of the owner or occupier of land within its district, carry out on the land, at the expense of the owner or occupier, any works for the removal or abatement of a fire danger, and the amount of the expense, if not paid on demand, may be recovered from the owner or occupier by the local government

in a court of competent jurisdiction as a debt due from the owner or occupier to the local government.

- (7) Nothing in this section authorises a local government —
- (a) to set fire to the bush, or to require an owner or occupier of land to set fire to the bush, contrary to the provisions of section 17; or
 - (b) to make local laws authorising or requiring bush to be set on fire contrary to the provisions of section 17.
- (8) Any amount recoverable by a local government under this section as a debt due from the owner or occupier of land is, until paid in full —
- (a) a debt due from each subsequent owner in succession; and
 - (b) a charge against the land with the same consequences as if it were a charge under the *Local Government Act 1995* for unpaid rates; and
 - (c) recoverable by the local government in the same manner as rates imposed in respect of the land are recoverable under that Act.
- (9) In this section —

owner or occupier of land includes a prescribed department of the Public Service that occupies land or a prescribed State agency or instrumentality that owns or occupies land.

[Section 33 amended: No. 11 of 1963 s. 15; No. 113 of 1965 s. 8(1); No. 65 of 1977 s. 32 and 48; No. 51 of 1979 s. 3 and 5; No. 8 of 1987 s. 8; No. 14 of 1996 s. 4; No. 38 of 2002 s. 28 and 39; No. 70 of 2003 s. 7; No. 19 of 2010 s. 52(4).]