



## What is a Neighbourhood Safer Place or Place of Last Resort?

Having met stringent safety guidelines Sandy Point Community Centre is Council's only designated Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP), more commonly known as a Place of Last Resort (PLR).

In the lead-up to the bushfire season Council is encouraging residents to become familiar with what an NSP is and how to use it.

Council's Coordinator Grants/Emergency Management, Penni Ellicott, said an NSP should not be confused with Community Fire Refuges, Relief Centres, Recovery Centres, Assembly Areas, or informal places of shelter, such as halls, neighbourhood house and sporting reserves.

"NSPs are places of last resort during the passage of a bushfire and are intended to be used by people whose primary bushfire plans have failed," Mrs Ellicott explained. "NSPs are not designed to replace a personal bushfire survival plan and as the CFA advises, everyone should have a written Bushfire Survival Plan and plan to leave early."

NSPs are council-designated buildings or spaces within the community that may afford some protection from radiant heat, the biggest killer during bushfire.

NSPs are assessed by a qualified CFA Officer in conjunction with Council. If an NSP is a building it needs to be 150 metres away from any sources of radiant heat.

"As an NSP, people should not use the Sandy Point Community Centre to relocate to when leaving early," Mrs Ellicott advised. "This can put an unnecessary strain on resources. On days when there is advice to leave early people in high fire risk areas should relocate well away to an area of lower risk either the night before or early in the morning. This could mean staying with family or friends in a low-risk area, or taking a day trip to their nearest built-up centre like Foster or Leongatha."

The CFA warns that the degree of safety afforded by NSPs depends on a number of factors, including the intensity of the bushfire.

The following risks associated with NSPs are:

- Travelling to an NSP is inherently dangerous with traffic congestion, poor visibility, fire activity, heavy smoke and accidents or fallen trees that may block the route there.
- You are likely to experience extreme conditions such as; heat, high winds, fire noise, embers, radiant heat, smoke and ash sheltering at an NSP.
- There is no guarantee that emergency services will be present.
- There will be no provision for pets.
- There will generally be limited parking. Large numbers of vehicles may further compromise what little protection the area affords.
- There will be limited capacity. No amenities (food, drinks, toilets) will be provided.
- NSP will not exist in all communities. In some instances there may not be a NSP identified in your local area or close to your home.

“The clear message is that each family needs to have their own plan about what they are going to do. How are they going to prepare and maintain their property to reduce the impact from a bushfire? Have they prepared a leave early kit so they can leave their property quickly to their own identified safe place when it’s time to go? They must have a plan – we just can’t stress this enough,” Mrs Ellicott concluded. “The Sandy Point Community Centre is a last resort.”

For more information on Neighbourhood Safer Places or to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan, visit [www.saferplaces.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.saferplaces.cfa.vic.gov.au).

Details of the Sandy Point Community Centre – Neighbourhood Safer Place are available on Council’s website [www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au](http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au)

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