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# BUSHFIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT

161 STURT STREET, ECHUCA  
SEPTEMBER 2025

PREPARED FOR COURT SERVICES VICTORIA

This report has been prepared by the office of Spiire  
16 Bridge Street PO Box 1064 **Bendigo** Victoria 3550

### **Acknowledgements and Recognition**

Building Design – 1:1 Architects

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spiire has been engaged by Court Services Victoria (CSV), to prepare this Bushfire Hazard Assessment Report in support of an application to develop land at 161 Sturt Street, Echuca for the new Echuca Law Courts.

The purpose of this report is to detail bushfire related threats to the proposed development in response to the policy directives for land within a designated Bushfire Prone Area. This report provides an assessment of the bushfire risk to people, property and community infrastructure, and when necessary, includes the implementation of appropriate bushfire protection measures to address the identified bushfire risk and ensures new development can implement bushfire protection methods without unacceptable biodiversity impacts.

The subject land is located within a designated Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) and is partially covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay of the Campaspe Planning Scheme. As such, this report considers the future use of the site for public purposes and how the proposed development can demonstrate compliance with the objectives of Clause 13.02-1S and its response to the requirements of Clause 44.06 Bushfire Management Overlay and the relevant sections of Clause 53.02 Bushfire Planning of the Campaspe Planning Scheme.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The proposal seeks approval for the development of a portion of the subject property for the new Echuca Law Courts.

The subject land is within a designated Bushfire Prone Area but is only partially covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay. While part of the development site extends into the BMO, this is only a portion of the secure fence line and driveway, while the proposed building itself is located outside the limits of the overlay.

Given the Law Court building is not affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay it does not require planning approval under the Bushfire Management Overlay. Therefore, the requirements of Clause 53.02 of the Campaspe Planning Scheme do not apply to the proposed development.

However, as the land is within a designated Bushfire Prone Area, Clause 13.02 of the Campaspe Planning Scheme deems use and development for a 'place of assembly' or 'any development that will result in people congregating in large numbers' should consider bushfire risk. As such this report will consider the following:

- ▶ **A locality and site description** that is used to identify the existing conditions of the site and surrounds.
- ▶ **A bushfire hazard - landscape assessment** including a plan that describes the bushfire hazard of the general locality up to 20km from the site.
- ▶ **A bushfire hazard - local and neighbourhood assessment** including a plan that describes the bushfire hazard within an area of 400 metres to 1km from the site.
- ▶ **A bushfire hazard - site assessment** including a plan that describes the bushfire hazard within 100 metres of the proposed development and a description of the hazard in accordance with Sections 2.2.3 to 2.2.5. of AS3959:2018 *Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas*.

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## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 SITE LOCALITY PLAN

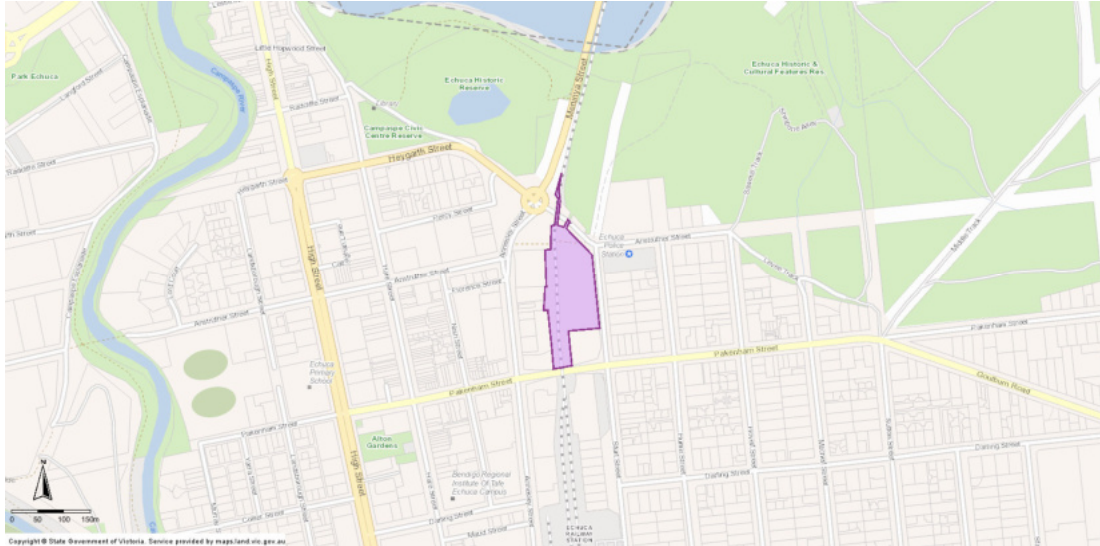


Figure 1: Locality Map

### 2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The irregular shaped property is approximately 2ha in area that encompassed the former Echuca Rail Yards. However, the site of the proposed new Echuca Law Courts takes up only a small section of the much larger parcel, refer to figure 2 below.

The property is located on the east edge of the Echuca commercial centre, and has significant frontage to Sturt Street, abutting the east boundary.

The existing rail line extends along the west side of the property, with the rail corridor extending through the north and south boundaries.

The site is generally cleared of vegetation with a small number of canopy trees along the west boundary and a small stand of mature trees at the north end of the property. None of these trees are impacted by the proposed development.

**Address:** 161 Sturt Street, Echuca

**Title Description:** Crown Allotment 1, Section 23B,  
Parish of Echuca North

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Figure 2: Site Plan

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Figure 3: Subject site, view from Sturt Street



Figure 4: Sturt Street, at site frontage. Subject site at right side of image.

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## 2.3 SURROUNDING LAND USE



Figure 5: Site Context (source: Nearmap)

The site is located on the east side of the Echuca commercial precinct, with Sturt Street the delineation between commercial to the west and residential to the east.

North - Immediately to the north of the subject site is an existing warehouse on the former Rail Yard land currently used for an agricultural supply business. Further north is the Echuca Heritage and Cultural Reserve and Murray River environs. This reserve contains a significant stand of unmanaged vegetation.

East – To the east, on the opposite side of Sturt Street is existing, conventional residential development.

South – Immediately south is a public car park, that extends through to Pakenham Street. On the opposite side of the road is the rail siding, grain silos and Echuca Railway Station.

West - To the west, on the opposite side of the rail line, is commercial development.

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## 2.4 RELEVANT PLANNING SCHEME DETAILS

<b>Municipality:</b>	Campaspe Shire Council
<b>Zone:</b>	Transport Zone 1
<b>Overlays:</b>	Design & Development Overlay – Schedule 04 Bushfire Management Overlay (partial) Environmental Significance Overlay (partial) Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (partial)



Figure 6: Zone Plan – Transport Zone

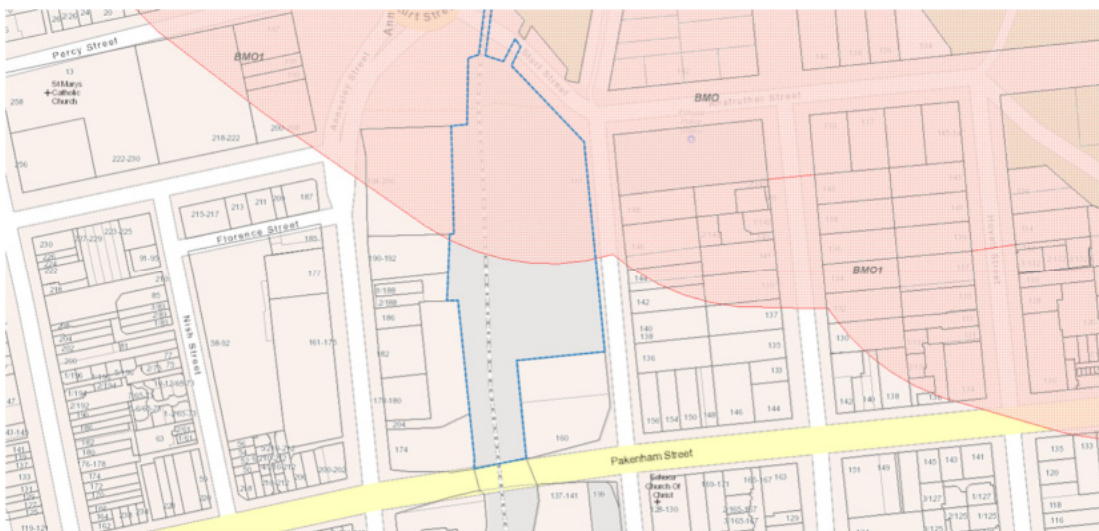


Figure 7: Bushfire Management Overlay Plan

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## 4. RESPONSE TO BUSHFIRE PLANNING PROVISIONS

In regard to the proposed development of the subject land, consideration is given to the relevant objectives and strategies under Clause 13.02-1S of the Campaspe Planning Scheme.

Clause 13.02-1S contains the following objective:

- ▶ *To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.*

### 4.1 BUSHFIRE HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

Bushfire hazard identification and risk assessment under Clause 13.02 involves using the best available science to identify the hazard posed by vegetation, topographic and climatic conditions. The basis for the hazard assessment should be:

- ▶ *Landscape conditions - meaning conditions in the landscape within 20 kilometres (and potentially up to 75 kilometres) of a site;*
- ▶ *Local conditions - meaning conditions in the area within approximately 1 kilometre of a site;*
- ▶ *Neighbourhood conditions - meaning conditions in the area within 400 metres of a site; and*
- ▶ *The site for the development.*

Bushfire hazard within the surrounding landscape is detailed in Section 5 of this Report. This assessment has considered hazards at a broad landscape level, up to 5-20km from the site and at a local and neighbourhood level from within 100 metres to 1km of the site.

Although the bushfire hazard assessment has identified areas of bushfire and grassfire threat in vicinity to the site, it is considered given the site proximity and connection to existing urban infrastructure and ability to provide suitable separation between new buildings and areas of unmanaged vegetation within the surrounding landscape, the bushfire threat can be appropriately managed in a reduced risk state.

Section 6 of this report details the site assessment undertaken in accordance with AS3959-2018 and considers the localised threat within 100 metres of the site. Given the findings of this assessment a BAL Assessment Plan is considered unnecessary.

### 4.2 USE AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL IN A BUSHFIRE PRONE AREA

Clause 13.02 stipulates bushfire risk should be considered when assessing planning applications for particular use and development in a bushfire prone area, as designated in accordance with regulations made under the *Building Act 1993*. The particular use and development include:

- ▶ Subdivisions of more than 10 lots.
- ▶ Accommodation.
- ▶ Childcare centre.
- ▶ Education centre.
- ▶ Emergency services facility.
- ▶ Hospital.

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- ▶ Indoor recreation facility.
- ▶ Major sports and recreation facility.
- ▶ Place of assembly.
- ▶ Any application for development that will result in people congregating in large numbers.

When assessing a planning permit application for the above uses and development:

- ▶ Consider the risk of bushfire to people, property and community infrastructure.
- ▶ Require the implementation of appropriate bushfire protection measures to address the identified bushfire risk.
- ▶ Ensure new development can implement bushfire protection measures without unacceptable biodiversity impacts.

The Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) designation is a building regulation tool that identifies locations where moderate bushfire hazard can be expected. Based on the advice of the relevant fire authority, locations identified as having a higher bushfire hazard may be included within the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO).

The property is located entirely within the designated Bushfire Prone Area (BPA), and partially within the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO), please refer to Figure 6 below.



**Figure 9: Bushfire Prone Area map**

The designation of the land within the BPA applies statutory requirements to be met with the design and construction of all new accommodation to ensure they meet minimum constructions standards for bushfire protection in accordance with *AS3959-2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas* or other relevant standards. However, although the construction requirements specified in AS 3959:2018 is designed to improve a buildings resistance to bushfire attack, it does not provide a guarantee the building will survive a bushfire attack on every occasion.

The *Building Regulations 2018*, stipulate the following in regard to minimum construction standards to be met in relation to the sites designation within the Bushfire Prone Area (BPA).

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**Sec 157 Relevant building surveyor must accept bushfire attack level of 12.5**

- (1) *Despite anything to the contrary in the BCA, the relevant building surveyor must accept that the bushfire attack level is 12.5 when determining the construction requirements that apply to a building if –*
  - (a) *The building is to be constructed in a designated bushfire prone area; and*
  - (b) *The bushfire attack level for the site –*
    - (i) *Is determined as LOW by the relevant building surveyor; or*
    - (ii) *Must be accepted by the relevant building surveyor as LOW under regulation.*

In accordance with the above regulation areas that are assessed as BAL-LOW must still apply the BAL12.5 as a minimum building construction standard as part of the design and Building Permit approval process.

**4.3 BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT OVERLAY**

The Bushfire Management Overlay only covers a portion of the land. While part of the development site extends into the BMO, this is only a portion of the secure fence line and driveway, while the proposed building itself is located outside the limits of the overlay. Please refer to figure 6 below.

The ‘Technical Guide – Planning Permit Applications in the Bushfire Management Overlay’ states:

*“If the Bushfire Management Overlay only applies to part of a lot, development that is sited outside the Bushfire Management Overlay does not require planning permission.”*



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**Figure 10: Site context in relation to BMO**

## 5. BUSHFIRE LANDSCAPE HAZARD ASSESSMENT

Although this site is only partially within the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO), it is considered appropriate the broad bushfire landscape hazard assessment is consistent with the relevant guidelines provided in the *Technical Guide - Planning Permit Applications Bushfire Management Overlay* (DELWP, 2017).

### 5.1 HAZARD DESCRIPTION

Bushfire behaviour is influenced by three key factors; climate, topography and fuel availability.

The site is located within an area of relatively low potential bushfire risk, given its location within an existing urban area. However, it is noted an area of public reserve, containing significant vegetation classified as forest, is located approximately 200 metres north.

The area of bushland reserve extends approximately 1- 2km north and northwest to the township of Moama. This area of forest vegetation, given its size, has the potential to allow fire to spread and gain intensity under extreme conditions.

The area of threat to the north is dominated by forest vegetation, and the landscape topography is generally flat, with undulating areas closer to the river. The topography of the land can influence the rate of spread and intensity of a fire. Fires generally move slower where degree of slope decreases.

Refer to the Landscape Hazard Assessment Map at Appendix 2.

### 5.2 POTENTIAL BUSHFIRE SCENARIOS

Generally, prevailing wind conditions during the high threat bushfire season consist of north westerlies followed by a cool change and strong south-westerly winds. As such, these wind conditions may influence bushfire behaviour that is most likely to impact the site through ember attack from the surrounding landscape.

The area immediately surrounding the subject site does not contain any classifiable vegetation. As such, direct flame contact from bushfire in this location is improbable.

### 5.3 FIRE HISTORY

A search of fire history mapping indicates no fires have been recorded on the subject land. However, fire has historically occurred in the surrounding area. Historically, the fires within the surrounding area have mostly been relatively small and located within the larger areas of public forest and within the Murray River environs.

The Fire Management History maps accompany this Report, illustrate the areas previously impacted by fire in the recent past and areas of management in relation to the subject land.

### 5.4 COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

The subject land is located within the CFA's Northern Country Fire District, within the existing Echuca urban area, which has been assessed by the fire authorities as having a 'High' bushfire risk. As such, the residents and visitors to the area are advised to be prepared for fire and have a plan in place for when the fire danger rating is severe, extreme or code red.

Echuca has a designated Neighbourhood Safer Places within the immediate area, located approximately 1km south of the site at the Echuca South Recreation Reserve Oval.

Being within an existing urban area, the township of Echuca has an established CFA brigade, as do a number of the smaller settlements within 10km of the town.

## 5.5 LANDSCAPE TYPOLOGY

Landscape types are identified in the *Technical Guide - Planning Permit Applications Bushfire Management Overlay* (DELWP, 2017) to inform decision making based on the risk from the landscape beyond the site. The identified typologies, as detailed in the table below, enable landscape bushfire information to be described according to a simple framework to assist planning decision making.

**Table 1: Overview of Landscape Types – Technical Guide (DELWP 2017)**

Landscape Type 1	Landscape Type 2	Landscape Type 3	Landscape Type 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is little vegetation beyond 150 metres of the site (except grasslands and low-threat vegetation).</li> <li>▶ Extreme bushfire behaviour is not possible.</li> <li>▶ The type and extent of vegetation is unlikely to result in neighbourhood scale destruction of property.</li> <li>▶ Immediate access is available to a place that provides shelter from bushfire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The type and extent of vegetation located more than 150 metres from the site may result in neighbourhood-scale destruction as it interacts with the bushfire hazard on and close to a site.</li> <li>▶ Bushfire can only approach from one aspect and the site is located in a suburban, township or urban area managed in a minimum fuel condition.</li> <li>▶ Access is readily available to a place that provides shelter from bushfire. This will often be the surrounding developed area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The type and extent of vegetation located more than 150 metres from the site may result in neighbourhood-scale destruction as it interacts with the bushfire hazard on and close to a site.</li> <li>▶ Bushfire can approach from more than one aspect.</li> <li>▶ The site is located in an area that is not managed in a minimum fuel condition.</li> <li>▶ Access to an appropriate place that provides shelter from bushfire is not certain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The broader landscape presents an extreme risk.</li> <li>▶ Fires have hours or days to grow and develop before impacting.</li> <li>▶ Evacuation options are limited or not available.</li> </ul>

Based on the above assessment criteria, it is considered the broad landscape characteristics of the area is categorised as Type 1 Landscape due to:

- ▶ Although there is classifiable vegetation beyond 150m of the subject site to the north, the site is located within an existing urban environment and is unlikely to be exposed to direct flame impact.
- ▶ Apart from potential ember attack, extreme bushfire behaviour directly impacting the site is unlikely.
- ▶ Immediate access to shelter is readily available within the surrounding area.

## 6. BUSHFIRE SITE HAZARD ASSESSMENT

A hazard assessment in the BMO extends to 150m around a building, development site or subdivision boundary. However, in the BPA, AS 3959-2018 requires a site assessment of the vegetation and topography up to 100m around a building, for the purposes of determining the applicable BAL construction standard for that building. As such the use of a 100m assessment zone, consistent with the requirements of the BPA, is considered appropriate to the landscape risk in this instance.

As such, the site hazard assessment comprises of an area of 100 metres around the subject site with the topography and vegetation classified in accordance with AS3959-2018 methodology.

Refer to the Neighbourhood Hazard Assessment Map at Appendix 5 and the Site Hazard Assessment Plan at Appendix 4.

### 6.1 SITE ASSESSMENT

The Table below illustrates the classification of the topography and vegetation in accordance with Table 2.4 of AS3959-2018.

	Direction (Aspect)			
	North	East	South	West
Vegetation	Excludable	Excludable	Excludable	Excludable
Effective Slope	Flat	Flat	Flat	Flat
Distance to Vegetation	0 metres	0 metres	0 metres	0 metres
Distance from building to classified vegetation				
BAL-LOW	>100 metres	>100 metres	>100 metres	>100 metres

### 6.2 DISCUSSION

Given the separation available to classifiable vegetation the site is classified as BAL-LOW. However, in relation to areas assessed as BAL-LOW, Section 4 of AS3959-2018 states the following:

*“This standard does not provide construction requirements for buildings assessed in bushfire prone areas in accordance with Section 2 as being BAL-LOW.*

*The bushfire Attack Level BAL-LOW is based on insufficient risk to warrant specific bushfire construction requirements. It is predicated on low threat vegetation and non-vegetated areas (see Clause 2.2.3.2).”*

Although the site may be classified as BAL-LOW the *Building Regulations 2018* stipulate the construction requirements for a building within the designated BPA must be accepted as a minimum BAL12.5.

## 7. SETTLEMENT PLANNING

Settlement Planning under Clause 13.02-1S of the Campaspe Planning Scheme relates to the consideration of suitable locations for urban development at a strategic level taking into consideration the following.

***Directing population growth and development to low risk locations, being those locations assessed as having a radiant heat flux of less than 12.5 kilowatts/square metre under AS 3959-2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Standards Australia, 2009).***

This objective generally relates to strategic planning for new settlements and given this site is located within an existing urban area of Echuca it is not applicable.

However, although localised areas of threat are in proximity to the site, there is sufficient distance from the hazard that a minimum BAL12.5 construction standard can be achieved in accordance with AS3959-2018 or other relevant standard.

***Ensuring the availability of, and safe access to, areas assessed as a BAL-LOW rating under AS 3959-2018 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Standards Australia, 2018) where human life can be better protected from the effects of bushfire.***

Areas developed and managed in a low threat manner located more than 100 metres from classifiable vegetation are considered to be rated as BAL-LOW.

Being located within an established urban area, future visitors and occupants of the site will be able to easily move to locations within the surrounding area that are classified as BAL-LOW.

***Ensuring the bushfire risk to existing and future residents, property and community infrastructure will not increase as a result of future land use and development.***

The proposed development of the land is able to appropriately separate new development from the localised threat in the surrounding landscape, whilst the future landscape elements introduced to the site will be entirely low threat i.e. managed landscaping, paving etc.

***Achieving no net increase in risk to existing and future residents, property and community infrastructure, through the implementation of bushfire protection measures and where possible reducing bushfire risk overall.***

The subject site is zoned for urban use and development. It is anticipated that future development of the subject site will not increase the risk to existing or future infrastructure. This includes the separation of future structures to the surrounding classifiable vegetation and construction measures to meet minimum building standards for bushfire protection.

***Assessing and addressing the bushfire hazard posed to the settlement and the likely bushfire behaviour it will produce at a landscape, settlement, local, neighbourhood and site scale, including the potential for neighbourhood-scale destruction.***

The bushfire hazard within the surrounding landscape at the local and neighbourhood scale is described at Sections 5 and 6 of this Report.

There is potential for ember attack generated from fire in the surrounding landscape. However, it is considered the potential for direct flame impacts and neighbourhood wide destruction in this location is low, given the established urban development surrounding the site and separation distances from the high threat locations.

***Assessing alternative low risk locations for settlement growth on a regional, municipal, settlement, local and neighbourhood basis.***

This objective generally relates to strategic planning for new settlements and given this site is located within an existing urban area of Echuca it is not applicable.

As an existing, established urban area, no other low risk locations have been assessed as part of this proposal.

***Not approving any strategic planning document, local planning policy, or planning scheme amendment that will result in the introduction or intensification of development in an area that has, or will on completion have, more than a BAL-12.5 rating under AS3959-2018 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas (Standards Australia, 2018).***

Given this proposal is the development of an existing urban property with no strategic or planning scheme amendment required, this is not applicable.

Although localised areas of threat are in proximity to the site, there is sufficient distance from any future building and the classifiable vegetation that the site can achieve appropriate BAL rating construction standards in accordance with AS3959-2018 or other relevant standards.

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## 8. CONCLUSION

The findings of the bushfire hazard assessment can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ The proposed development of the land can meet the requirements of clause 13.02 of the Campaspe Planning Scheme.
- ▶ The topography and extent of vegetation within the immediate surrounding area presents a low bushfire risk to the site.
- ▶ Bushfire mitigation measures can be implemented within the boundaries of the subject land through appropriate construction methods in accordance with the relevant standards.
- ▶ The proposed building can be designed and constructed to meet an appropriate BAL rating under the relevant standards.
- ▶ The development of this land will not introduce any new areas of potential hazard.

The site, whilst within a location that could potentially be impacted by ember attack from the surrounding landscape, does not present an unacceptable level of risk for development. However, the factors that contribute to fire hazard are variable and difficult to predict over time. As such it is important the implementation of appropriate design and management measures continue to evolve as necessary to take into consideration the hazards within the surrounding landscape.

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SITE PLAN

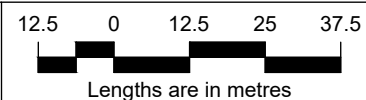


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Site Plan  
 New Echuca Law Courts  
 161 Sturt Street, Echuca

Co-ordinate Datum  
 MGA55

Scale A3  
 1 : 1250



Date	03/09/2025	Sheet	1 of 1
Drawing No.	323542-V1-SITE	Version	1
CAD Ref.	G:\32\323542\000\PLANNING\ACAD		
Drawn By	SP	Checked By	MM
REV	AMENDMENT	APPROVED	DATE

Aerial Imagery supplied by Nearmap  
 Flown Date: 21 / 07 / 2025

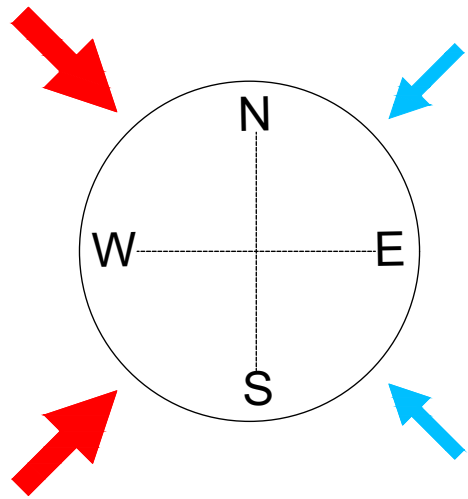
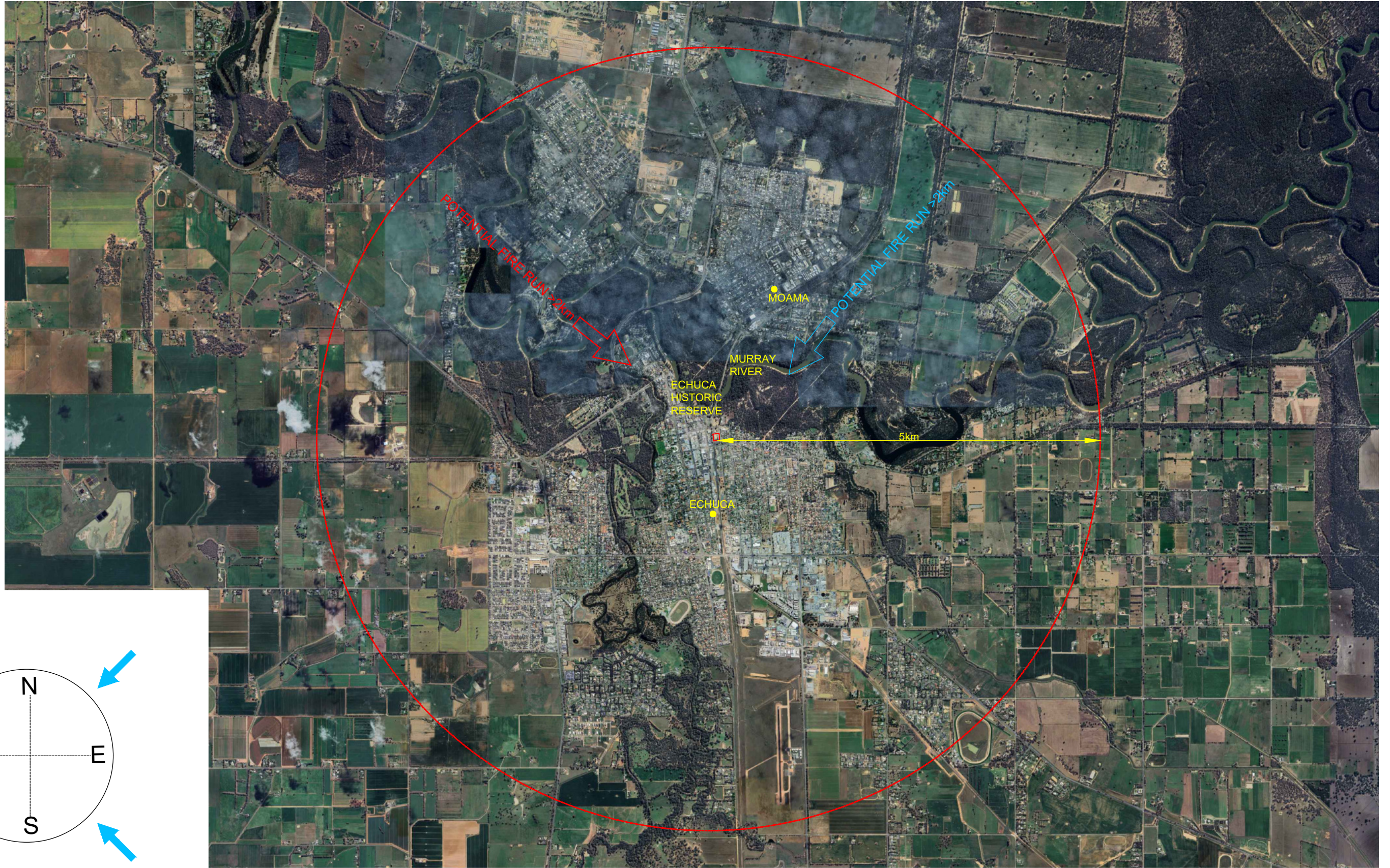


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## APPENDIX 2

### LANDSCAPE HAZARD ASSESSMENT PLANS



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Aerial Imagery supplied by Google Earth Pro

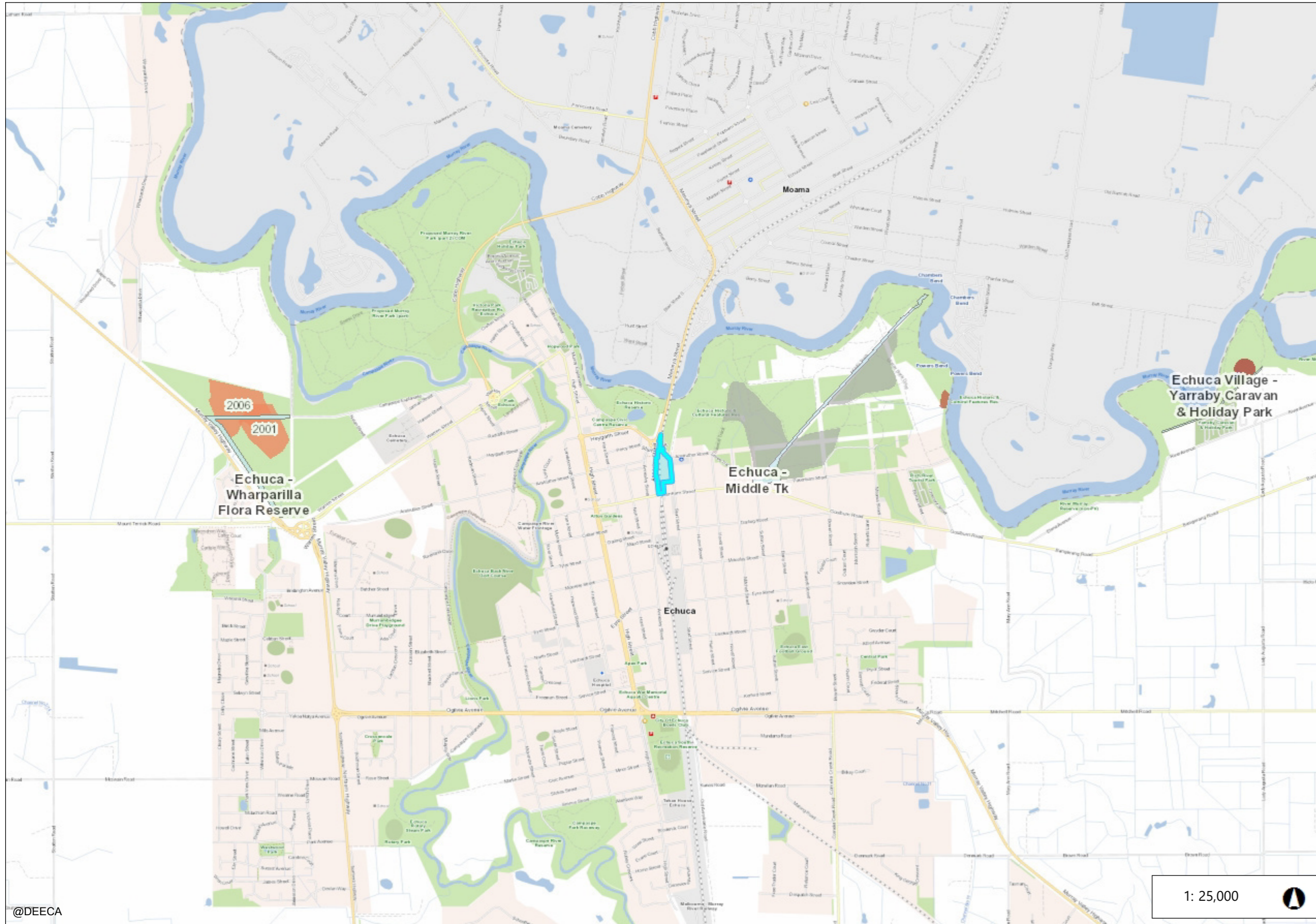
Landscape Hazard Assessment Plan New Echuca Law Court 161 Sturt Street, Echuca		Date	03/09/2025	Sheet	1 of 1	
		Drawing No.	323542-V1-LANDSCAPE	Version	1	
		CAD Ref.	G:\321323542\000\PLANNING\ACAD			
		Drawn By	SP	Checked By	CC	
Co-ordinate Datum	Scale A3					
MGA55	1 : 50000	Lengths are in metres				
REV	AMENDMENT	APPROVED	DATE			



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## APPENDIX 3 FIRE HISTORY MAP



Legend

- Forest Management Zone**
- General Management Zone
  - Special Management Zone
  - Special Protection Zone

Joint Fuel Management Plan (JFMP) - approved Public layer

**Wildfire History**

- 1970 - 1979
- 1980 - 1989
- 1990 - 1999
- 2000 - 2009
- 2010 - 2014
- 2015 - 2017
- 2018 - 2019
- 2020 - 2021
- 2022 - 2023

**Planned Burn History**

- 1970 - 1989
- 1990 - 1999
- 2000 - 2004
- 2005 - 2009
- 2010 - 2014
- 2015 - 2019
- 2020 - 2021
- 2022 - 2023

1: 25,000



Map Created on

24-Sep-2025

@DEECA

1,270 0 635 1,270 Meters

GDA2020\_Vicgrid  
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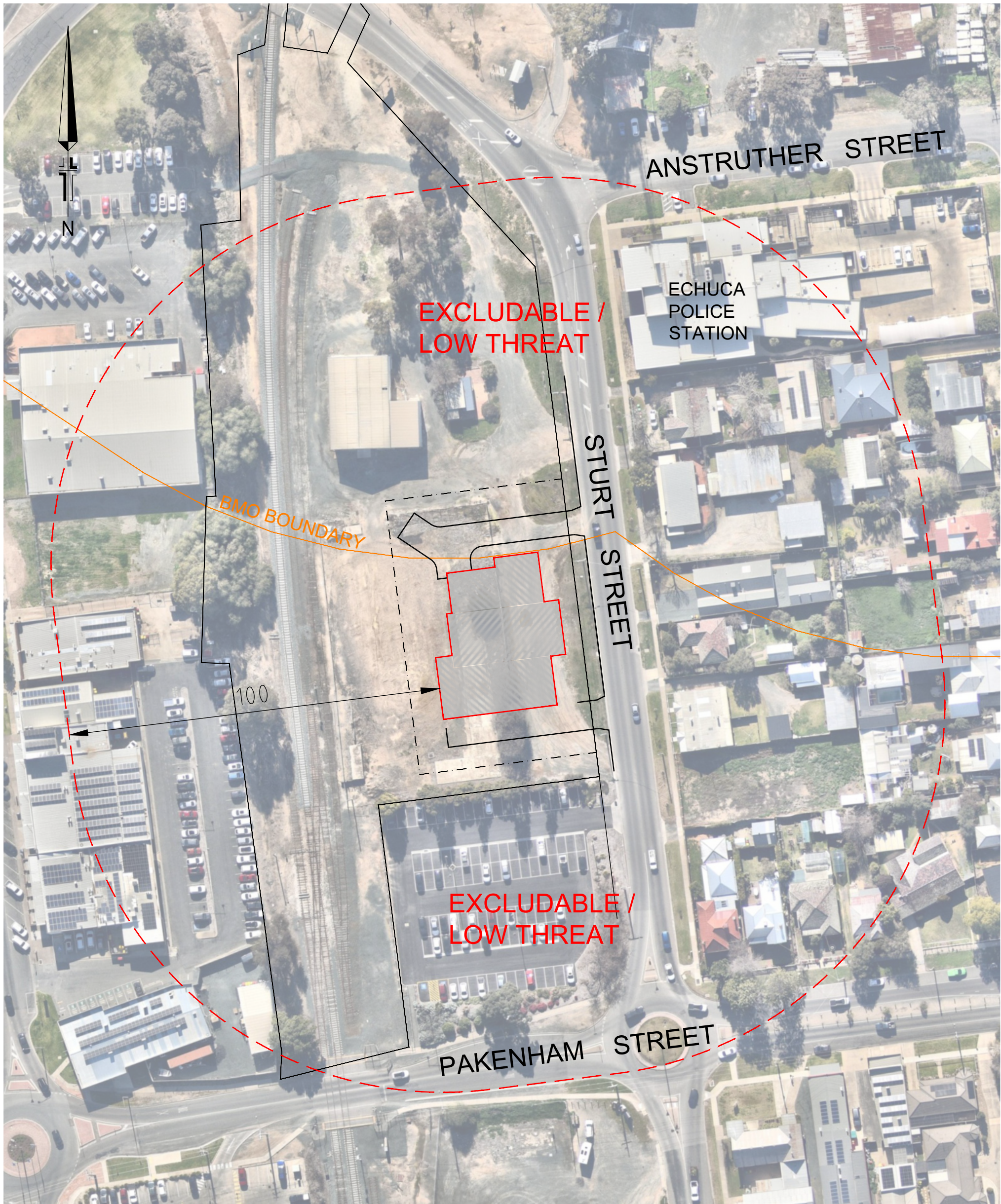
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## APPENDIX 4 SITE HAZARD ASSESSMENT PLAN

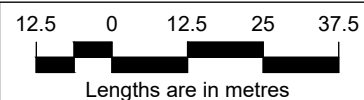


**ADVERTISED  
PLAN**

Site Hazard Assessment Plan  
New Echuca Law Courts  
161 Sturt Street, Echuca

Co-ordinate Datum  
MGA55

Scale A3  
1 : 1250



Date	03/09/2025	Sheet	1 of 1
Drawing No.	323542-V1-SITE 1	Version	1
CAD Ref.	G:\32\323542\000\PLANNING\ACAD		
Drawn By	SP	Checked By	MM
REV	AMENDMENT	APPROVED	DATE

Aerial Imagery supplied by Nearmap  
Flown Date: 21 / 07 / 2025

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## APPENDIX 5

### NEIGHBOURHOOD & LOCAL HAZARD ASSESSMENT PLANS

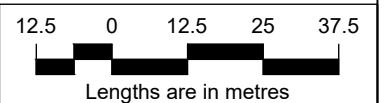


# ADVERTISED PLAN

Site Plan  
New Echuca Law Courts  
161 Sturt Street, Echuca

Co-ordinate Datum  
MGA55

Scale A3  
1 : 1250



Date	03/09/2025	Sheet	1	of	1
Drawing No.	323542-V1-SITE 2			Version	1
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Drawn By	SP	Checked By	MM		
REV	AMENDMENT	APPROVED	DATE		

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