

# Bushfire Clean-up Program

This program is voluntary and free of charge for eligible property owners.

The program covers the demolition and disposal of all buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by this season's bushfires. This includes:

- residential homes
- sheds and other out-buildings
- commercial buildings
- public buildings

This may also include the removal of fencing, trees and vehicles, but only where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings.

Grocon has been contracted to conduct the clean-up on behalf of the Victorian Government.

Grocon will contact registered property owners to discuss arrangements for the clean-up process and obtain a signed consent form.

This is a voluntary program and is provided free of charge for eligible property owners. You do not need to be insured to be eligible for this program.

## Questions and answers

### What does the Clean-Up Program cover?

The demolition and disposal of all buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by this season's bushfires (including residential homes and sheds, commercial and public buildings, and other out-buildings).

This may include the removal of fencing, trees and vehicles but only where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings on a property.

The Clean-Up Program offers property owners of buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by this season's bushfire the disposal of the bushfire waste (including asbestos and other hazardous materials) by licenced contractors.

Such waste must be cleared, managed and disposed of to a standard that reduces danger and risk to public health and safety, and the requirements of the EPA.

### Where can I find more information about bushfire hazards?

Information about hazards after a fire, and other emergency information relating to the environment can be found on the [EPA website](#) .

### Do I have to pay anything?

No. The Clean-Up Program is provided to property owners free of charge and is jointly funded by the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government.

## How much can I save by participating in the program?

From previous years, we know that households can face clean-up and demolition bills up to several thousand dollars. This free Clean-Up Program will allow people to spend that money rebuilding their homes.

## Will I need to be insured? Do I need to contact my insurer to participate in this program?

No. You can participate in this program regardless of whether you are insured.

## If I don't participate in the program, will I be able to have my clean-up costs reimbursed?

No. If you choose not to register for the program, you'll need to make your own arrangements to have your property cleared by a licensed contractor and the bushfire waste disposed of safely. You or the contractor will not be eligible to have the clean-up costs reimbursed.

## When would my clean-up start?

Grocon will be in touch to discuss the program process and site clean-up works, which are expected to commence in mid-February 2020.

## What about people seeking demolition for buildings that were destroyed before these fires?

The Clean-Up Program covers the demolition and disposal of all buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by this season's bushfires. All properties will be assessed on a case by case basis.

## Registration process

### What happens once people register?

Grocon will work with property owners to start the clean-up as soon as possible.

Grocon will contact each registered property owner by phone (or by email if no phone contact is available), send out a questionnaire to be returned, and arrange an appointment/inspection of the property.

At the appointment, Grocon will discuss the scope of the clean-up with the property owner, and arrange the signing of a consent form.

Following this, Grocon will assess each property on a case by case basis and give an indication of the likely time of the clean-up.

## What is a consent form and why do I need to sign one?

The consent form provides your agreement as the property owner for works to be carried out as part of the Clean-Up Program. After you have registered, Grocon will contact you to discuss the consent process with you.

## What if I don't want to sign the consent form?

Grocon can only undertake clean-up works where the property owner has consented to the works. If you have any concerns or questions about the consent form, Grocon will be available to discuss this with you.

## Is there a cut-off date for registration?

Registration closed on 30 June, 2020.

## What if I missed registration closure date?

Clean-up registrations closed on June 30. If you require bushfire clean-up and you weren't able to register by June 30, please email [connect@brv.vic.gov.au](mailto:connect@brv.vic.gov.au) or call [1800 560 760](tel:1800560760) and we can discuss your situations and the options available.

## Disposal of bushfire waste and other materials

### Where and how will the materials be disposed?

Debris and bushfire waste from the Clean-Up Program will be disposed of by licenced contractors into licensed tipping sites across the state. All waste disposal will be overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and WorkSafe.

Grocon will seek to maximise the amount of materials being recycled. Information and advice about bushfire waste and other hazards can be found on the [EPA website](#) .

### What about the presence of hazardous materials, such as asbestos, on destroyed sites?

The Clean-Up Program covers the safe removal of hazardous materials like asbestos. Licenced contractors engaged in clean-up activities are subject to a compliance code for removing asbestos, which includes strict measures to reduce the risk to public health and safety.

### Will fencing be included in the clean-up?

The Clean-Up Program covers the removal of debris and bushfire waste from houses and other structures destroyed by this season's bushfires. Damaged or destroyed fences are not generally included but will be included where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings on a property.

For example, a fence may be required to be removed to gain access to your property and/or for the safety of workers on your site.

## What about septic tanks, will they be included in the clean-up?

The Clean-Up Program covers the removal of debris and bushfire waste from houses and other structures destroyed by the bushfires. Destroyed (or damaged beyond repair) septic tanks are generally not included but may be filled or removed where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings.

For example, a septic tank may be required to be removed to gain access to your property and/or for the safety of workers on your site.

Where removal is required, Grocon will assess the condition and location of the septic tank and engage the appropriate trades to clear any contents prior to removal.

## I have a car body that needs to be removed, is this included in the clean-up?

The Clean-Up Program covers the removal of debris and bushfire waste from houses and other structures destroyed by the bushfires. Damaged or destroyed cars are generally not included but may be included if the vehicle is located inside the building structure (ie. internal garage/car port) or where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings.

For example, they may be required to be removed to gain access to your property and/or for the safety of workers on your site.

## Asbestos

### What are the health concerns of asbestos?

Asbestos exposure becomes a health concern when high concentrations of asbestos fibres are inhaled over a long period. Illness is very unlikely to result from a single exposure or from a short period of exposure to low levels.

### What should I consider if I think there is asbestos on the site?

Information about asbestos hazards after a fire, and other emergency information relating to the environment can be found on the [EPA website](#).

### Will the Clean-Up Program remove asbestos from my property?

If you register for the Clean-Up Program, Grocon will arrange for your site to be cleaned up, including the removal of asbestos by licenced contractors. Licenced contractors are subject to a compliance code for removing asbestos, which includes strict measures to reduce risks to public health and safety.

# Trees

I have a number of trees that need to be removed, are these included in the clean-up?

The Clean-Up Program covers the removal of debris and bushfire waste from houses and other structures destroyed by the bushfires. Dangerous or damaged trees are not generally included but will be included where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings on a property.

For example, a tree may be required to be removed if deemed to be a safety risk for workers on the site and/or to gain access to your property.

How do I tell if a tree is dangerous, and what do I do about them if they are on my property?

If you are concerned about hazardous trees on your property, it is best to get professional advice and help through your local council or from an arborist to assess whether trees are dangerous. An arborist will inspect the tree and provide a report on the condition of the tree, and advice regarding the treatment of the tree.

I had an arborist come in and mark all of the dangerous trees – will Grocon clear all of these, and will my block be prioritised because of this danger?

The Clean-Up Program covers the removal of debris and bushfire waste from houses and other structures destroyed by the bushfires. Damaged or destroyed trees will be included where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings. For example, they may be required to be removed to gain access to your property and/or for the safety of workers on your site.

What about other native vegetation on my property?

If there is other fire affected vegetation on your property that you wish to have cleared, but is not posing an immediate risk, you should contact your local council or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on [136 186](tel:136186), as you may need permission to remove it.

Who is responsible for removing dangerous trees on local roads?

Dangerous trees on local roadsides will be removed by your local council. If you are concerned about a tree, please contact your local council or VicRoads on [13 11 70](tel:131170). For safety reasons, please do not attempt to remove roadside trees yourself.

## Costs and funding

## How is this funded?

The Victorian Government and the Commonwealth Government are sharing the cost of the 2020 Clean-Up Program equally.

## How much will this save families affected by the bushfires?

From previous years, we know that households can face clean-up and demolition bills running into the tens of thousands of dollars. This free Clean-Up Program, funded by Government, will ensure people can spend that money rebuilding their homes.

## Will the Government make a contribution to the rebuild of my home or holiday home?

Government is paying for the clean-up of destroyed buildings. Property owners remain responsible for the cost of rebuilding. Government is working with local government to make it easier to get permits and approvals to rebuild. Further information on planning and rebuilding will also be available in Community Recovery Hubs.

## Shouldn't insurance companies be paying for this?

This Clean-Up Program is designed to help people save time and money – so they can spend what they need to rebuild their homes.

The insurers' peak body has assured the Government that any financial savings insurers accrue as a result of this free clean-up will be passed down to property owners and policy holders to the maximum extent possible under the insurance policy purchased.

## Timeline

### When will the program start in terms of clean-up works on the ground?

Planning is already underway and you can register now on this webpage or by phoning [1800 560 760](tel:1800560760). Once you have registered, Grocon will be in touch with property owners to start the process for the site clean-up.

But before we can start:

- Safety is our number one priority - we still have areas where safe access can't be guaranteed.
- Site assessments will be needed.
- All hazards – such as asbestos and burnt septic tanks – must be managed appropriately.

Subject to that process, at this stage our expectation is that clean-up will commence in mid-February 2020.

### What properties/towns are being cleaned up first?

Grocon will have the resources needed to take on multiple sites at any one time and will work in many towns and rural communities across the state at any one time.

## Once registered, how long will it take from start to finish – what can residents expect?

Every property is different and will be managed on a case by case basis. Grocon will contact registered property owners and work with them to ensure the clean-up process is explained, and the works are done as safely and efficiently as possible.

## When can I visit the property to find any belongings?

Residents participating in the clean-up program will be able to retrieve lost items from their properties under the supervision of Grocon. This process is called 'discovery'.

Those undertaking discovery will be required to complete some training and to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), supplied by the supervising Grocon contractor. These requirements are important and necessary to ensure the safety of residents.

If you would like to undertake discovery, you can advise Grocon during your property inspection.

## Supporting local contractors

### Why was Grocon selected?

Grocon has a proven track record of delivering services of a similar size and nature successfully including the clean-up after the Black Saturday bushfires and the Wye River Bushfires in 2015.

Grocon managed and disposed of large quantities of material back then, and they worked closely with hundreds of locals. That's the sort of experience we need right now.

### Was there a tender?

There is a panel of qualified firms contracted for this purpose. Grocon was selected as the best qualified for this emergency and have been engaged to manage this clean-up.

The panel exists for precisely this reason – so we can quickly choose a company with a proven track record who can hit the ground running.

### Will Grocon be using local community contractors?

Yes, Grocon will be seeking to use as many qualified local subcontractors as possible. Contractors or other interested parties who would like to collaborate with Grocon for the Clean-up Program can register on the [Grocon Bushfire Recovery page](#).

### How can local businesses and/or trades register for subcontracting?

Substantially qualified local businesses and/or trades who want to be engaged as subcontractors by Grocon need to visit and register on the [Grocon Bushfire Recoverypage](#).

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