

# Media Release

**The Hon Lisa Neville MP**

Minister for the Coordination of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning – COVID-19  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Water



Friday, 8 May 2020

## **BUSHFIRE CLEANUP POWERS AHEAD WITH OVER 100 SITES COMPLETE**

Over 120 properties in East Gippsland and North East Victoria have now been fully cleared of buildings destroyed or damaged in the devastating 2019-20 bushfire season free of charge for property owners, with all properties on track to be cleaned up by the end of August.

Works have commenced at 163 properties and 122 clean-ups are complete. 730 properties are registered for clean-up in total, with 671 site inspections completed at these properties, and local content for the clean-up project sits at above 50 per cent.

All bushfire waste is classified under law as asbestos contaminated, and as a result the early stages of the clean-up were complex. It focused on establishing strict site inspection and air monitoring processes, and crews also needed to be recruited who are qualified to handle asbestos waste.

That early work means crews can now move through properties at speed in a safe way. With more crews engaged, 40 properties are being completed each week – a 300 per cent increase since March.

With most site inspections now complete and a critical mass of works taking place on the ground, the local area work plan for the project will now be released to the public to give communities a clearer picture of when works will take place in their local area.

The local area work plan shows that clean-up is on track to be complete in a number of local areas in Victoria by the end of July, including the East Gippsland towns of Gelantipy, Buchan, Bete Belong, Omeo, Cobungra, and Cann River.

Works in local areas with high numbers of destroyed buildings – including Corryong, Mallacoota and Sarsfield – will continue until the end of August, marking the statewide completion of the clean-up program.

The Victorian Government has also announced a new streamlined planning process for applications for dwellings or businesses destroyed or damaged by fire, ensuring bushfire affected Victorians can rebuild faster and more easily on their properties.

The 2020 Clean-Up Program is funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments. To view the local area work plan for the 2020 Clean-up Program, visit [www.br.vic.gov.au](http://www.br.vic.gov.au)

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville**

*"It's been an unbelievably tough few months for families who lost their homes in these fires and we're standing with them through every step of their recovery."*

*"This is a big project across hundreds of dangerous sites. We're on track to have it completed by the end of August – but it will proceed safely – and the work plan will now provide communities with even more information about next steps."*

### **Quote attributable to Chair of Bushfire Recovery Victoria Ken Lay**

*We're very grateful for the understanding of the community, and as a permanent agency, we will continue working with locals over the coming months and years on their recovery journey."*

**Media contact:** Stephanie Jones 0448 359 507 | [stephanie.jones@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:stephanie.jones@minstaff.vic.gov.au)