

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



Sunday, 12 September 2021

UPSIDE TO STORMS AS SEED COLLECTION EFFORTS BOOSTED

Mountain Ash trees that fell in the devastating June storms are providing a rare opportunity for seed collection.

The fallen trees have enabled land managers and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning seed collectors to build their stores of Dandenong Ranges Mountain Ash seed, with many fallen trees full of seed following a mass flowering event last year.

The tiny seed capsules are usually found 30 metres up in the tree canopy where they can only be accessed by qualified seed collectors, but with so many trees brought down by the storms land managers have the rare opportunity to gather seed at ground level.

The Alpine and Mountain Ash forests were severely affected by the 2019/20 bushfires as well as previous fires. The seed collection is part of an Andrews Labor Government initiative to collect and store seed to help our forests recover from extreme fire and weather events.

Many of our forests are adapted to regenerate after fires, but our alpine forests are fire sensitive and may not recover if another fire occurs before the trees can reach maturity and produce their own seed.

In stage one of the Forest Restoration Project the department, with partners VicForests, Parks Victoria and contractors from regional Victoria, aerially seeded about 11,500 hectares of the bushfire affected forest.

Stage two of the project will see VicForests and other contractors continue to deliver this important work, focusing on rebuilding seed stores and putting arrangements in place to more rapidly respond to future events.

Mountain Ash seedcrops take a year to mature after flowering and seeding cycles can be unpredictable. Seed collection needs to take place to ensure availability of stored seeds for this incredible tree, with the collection relying on suitable conditions for bud, flower and seed maturity over several years.

The Victorian Government has invested over \$60 million in biodiversity recovery following the 2019/20 bushfires including \$7.7 million for the second stage of the restoration project to help gather, replenish and store new seed to replace seed used last year. This will create a seed bank to buffer against future events.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"Ensuring our sensitive alpine forests are re-seeded following fires is critical and this opportunity for seed collection is one that couldn't be missed."

"This is an opportunity for the Mountain Ash seed stores to be boosted so we can continue the work to ensure we maintain these beautiful forests for future generations."

"It is great to see land managers making the most of this opportunity by collecting the seed from the Mountain Ash trees."