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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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GETTING ON WITH THE JOB OF DISASTER CLEANUP

A lead contractor has been appointed for the Federal and Victorian Government's coordinated cleanup in the aftermath of last week's devastating fires and storms.

Hansen Yuncken is a disaster recovery specialist with the expertise to work on complex projects and will work with local sub-contractors to get communities back on their feet.

Cleanup activities for impacted households and communities will be jointly funded through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

The severe Victorian weather event of 13 February 2024 caused widespread damage right across Victoria with fires claiming 46 homes and a business in Pomonal and Dadswells Bridge, while the storms have left 44 homes uninhabitable in parts of the state including Mirboo North.

Demolition of damaged houses, asbestos and other hazard removal will be included as part of the cleanup in the affected communities while hazardous tree removal will also be part of the work completed.

The Victorian Government will also establish a centralised green waste facility for the cleanup and is continuing to work with the Commonwealth Government to finalise its location.

This program builds on the support being provided by the Federal and Victorian Governments, which includes:

- Personal hardship payments of \$640 per adult and \$320 per child up to a maximum of \$2,240 per eligible family to help cover the costs of essentials like food, clothing, medication and accommodation.
- Australian Disaster Recovery Payments for people affected by fires in the Rural City of Ararat. Payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child are available to that community.
- Emergency re-establishment grants of up to \$49,300 for people who are uninsured and their primary place of residence has been destroyed or is uninhabitable.
- Prolonged Power Outages Payments of up to \$1,920 per week for households and up to \$2,927 per week for up to three weeks for affected small businesses.
- A Community Recovery Officer deployed to Ararat Rural City, Casey City, Cardinia Shire, South Gippsland Shire and Yarra Ranges Shire to help identify the recovery needs of individuals and families.
- The Emergency Recovery Hotline has been activated to process calls from anyone affected by fires or storms. To access recovery support, affected residents can call the Hotline on 1800 560 760.

The Recovery Support Program has also been stood up and is available for people to access via the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760. This includes mental health support, case management, business support and can connect people with the additional and existing services.

Quotes attributable to Federal Minister for Emergency Management Murray Watt:

“This clean up is a priority which will ensure the local community have safe access to homes and debris is removed -- helping people get back on their feet.”

“We will continue to work closely with the Victorian Government to help communities recover, through the joint support under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.”

Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes:

“We are getting on with the cleanup, working with Councils and the community, so that properties are safe and essential infrastructure is restored.”

“Councils and other agencies have already been on the ground helping communities clear debris — this additional support will ensure that we fast-track the cleanup and ensure that people can start their recovery as fast as possible.”

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