Welcome to the fourth edition of the Alpine Shire Bushfire Recovery Newsletter, focusing on community, economic and personal recovery matters following the aftermath of the fires.

Community Recovery Officer:
Karin Grima is the community’s point of contact for recovery related matters and can be contacted as follows: Ph: (03) 5755 0575/Mobile: 0427 830 251
Email: karing@alpineshire.vic.gov.au

Community consultations for fire-affected communities will begin next week as part of the preliminary work of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Royal Commissioner Bernard Teague said that the consultations were an “informal opportunity” for those directly impacted by the bushfires to raise with the Royal Commission their views about the key issues.

2009 VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES ROYAL COMMISSION.
Myrtleford - Wednesday 18 March 1.00pm - 2.30pm

Community consultations for fire-affected communities will begin next week as part of the preliminary work of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

The 23 consultation sessions will be held in many of the communities which have been most heavily impacted by the recent Victorian bushfires.

Royal Commissioner Bernard Teague said that the consultations were an “informal opportunity” for those directly impacted by the bushfires to raise with the Royal Commission their views about the key issues.

Among the issues raised were:
- Fencing – Reinstatement of fencing and subsidy towards cost of materials
- Fodder – Freight of fodder and stock, subsidy for testing of stock to assist with moving across the border for agistment
- Water – Guarantee of water for drinking, stock and emergency use
- Waterway contamination – Urgent assistance to fund preventative/mitigation programs
- Volunteer support – Support for community members volunteering time and resources

John Landy, Chairman of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Advisory Panel visited the area on Thursday 12 March.

Mr Landy met with key agency representatives in Myrtleford before a short tour around the bushfire affected areas and afternoon tea with community members from Mudgegonga, Dederang and Rosewhite.

The Bushfire Appeal Fund has been established in partnership between the Victorian and Australian Governments and the Red Cross to support individuals and communities impacted by the bushfires.

An independent advisory panel of community leaders is to overseeing the Fund and its members provide recommendations to the Victorian Government on how donations, made through Australian Red Cross, are distributed.

Following meetings with community members, the following issues have been identified and raised with Mr Landy:

- Fencing – Reinstatement of fencing and subsidy towards cost of materials
- Fodder – Freight of fodder and stock, subsidy for testing of stock to assist with moving across the border for agistment
- Water – Guarantee of water for drinking, stock and emergency use
- Waterway contamination – Urgent assistance to fund preventative/mitigation programs
- Volunteer support – Support for community members volunteering time and resources

The consultation sessions are open to those Victorians who live or work in the communities directly affected by the bushfires which the Royal Commission will be visiting. These individuals can call the community consultation line on 1800 842 463 to register. (NB. The Royal Commission will seek to accommodate all affected individuals, but due to venue restrictions, attendee numbers may be limited.) For more information: www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au

VIPs VISIT THE ALPINE SHIRE:

Hugh Forrest (Fencing Coordinator) and Karin Grima (Community Recovery Officer)
• Community strengthening projects – Assistance with funding projects

More information attached: Bushfire Appeal Fund FAQ’s

Christine Nixon, Head of the Victorian Recovery and Reconstruction Authority will be visiting the area on Thursday 19 March.

A community forum with Christine Nixon will be held at 1pm at the Mudgegonga Hall on Thursday 19 March. All affected residents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

COMMONWEALTH AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENTS - SITE CLEAN UP PROGRAM:

Grocon will be managing the bushfire clean-up and demolition program in partnership with licensed local contractors. The clean-up and demolition program is voluntary and open to any person who owns a fire affected property.

More information attached: Clean Up FAQs

Residents are urged to register immediately - Online: www.vic.gov.au (Bushfire clean up link) Phone: 1800 136 762

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE:

All bushfire affected businesses and primary producers are eligible for free business advice services. The service includes (but is not limited to) one on one advice for:

• Grant applications and criteria
• Business planning
• Stock control
• Finance
• Re-establishment

Tony Pickett has been appointed under the bushfire assistance program managed by Business Victoria and VECCI to undertake this work, particularly in the North East Region.

Tony will be in attendance at Dederang Hall on Wednesday 18 March 2009 from 10.00am – 12noon to offer advice, answer questions and organise appointments. The service is offered at no cost and visits will be arranged at your convenience.

For more information please call Tony on: 0438 443 985 or (03) 5744 3985
For more information you can also call the Business Victoria hotline on 13 22 15.

FENCING COORDINATION:

Appointment of fencing coordinator:

Hugh Forrest has been appointed to the role of fencing coordinator working closely with Council to ensure a coordinated approach. Hugh is responsible for the management and prioritising of the fencing program and direction of volunteers. He is assisted with the program roll-out by representatives from Dederang, Mudgegonga and Rosewhite and the Community Recovery Officer.

A note from Hugh Forrest – Fencing Coordinator:

The fencing effort saw 56 workers in the area last weekend which equates to about 350 man hours! Volunteer groups included the Catholic College Wodonga, Rotary Club of Wodonga, 3 backpackers (from Finland, Turkey and France) and the 4WD club of Swan Hill as well the 4WD Club of Wangaratta. This on top of Uniting Church Cootamundra/ Rand area working in Running Creek/ Rosewhite in addition to workers from the Department of Corrective Services. In Total, some 500 man hours for the week!! Not a bad effort!

Please contact Hugh if you require assistance in regards to fencing - Mobile: 0438 890 547

Disposal of fencing material:

In addition to the arrangements for disposal of rubbish at the Myrtleford and Mount Beauty Transfer Stations, Council will be providing skips in key locations for the disposal of fencing materials only (recyclable metal). Orders for skips have been made and will be available for direct access by fire affected farmers. The locations will be as follows:

Rosewhite:

Also note the following changes to skip locations at Rosewhite from Monday 16 March:

McDonalds – end of Cartwrights Lane (near old stockyards)
Gilberts Lane (off Cartwrights Lane)
Mudgegonga:
Allan and Shirley Johnston – 960 Myrtleford Yackandandah Road
Ray Hicks – 34 Hicks Road
Henry Brewers – Black Flats Road
Cnr Barwidgee Lane and Myrtleford Yack Road (Road Reserve)
Cnr Smiths Lane and Tunnel Gap Road (Road Reserve)

Kiewa Valley:
Graeme Heiner - 5253 Kiewa Valley Highway, Running Creek (Hay Depot)
Frank Grealey – 120 Kancoona Road, Kancoona

Funding for fencing:
A number of funding opportunities are available to fire affected property owners for re-establishment of fencing including:

North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA) - Drought employment program – now can be put into fire recovery

- FENCING – some restrictions (not for crown/public land)
- Up to $2,000 for materials reimbursement and up to 85 hours paid labour @ $22.80 can be accessed per property
- For more information contact: (02) 6043 7600

Rural Finance - Bushfire clean-up and restoration grants, Bushfire Assistance loans for Small Business and eligible Primary Producers - www.ruralfinance.com

- $5,000 initial cleanup grant includes removal of fences etc in clean up
- $20,000 supplementary clean up grant (more involved) hay & fodder loss, stock losses, fences, machinery etc & concessional loans up to 15yrs 3.25% for first 5 years – (clean up restoration)
- For more information contact: (02) 6056 9063

Victoria Online - Victorian Bushfire Assistance www.vic.gov.au

Concerns have been raised over fencing that shares a boundary with DSE/crown land. The key message for land owners in these areas is as follows:

SAFETY IS A PRIORITY: Please stay away from shared boundary fencing as clearing of bushfire affected trees has not yet commenced.

Please note: DSE will only fund repairs to damaged fencing caused by emergency vehicles; eg, tankers, dozers and graders (Any vehicle used for fire fighting)

If you have questions regarding your shared boundary please contact DSE Ovens – (03) 57311222.

FODDER:
For information regarding fodder, please contact:

Loretta Carroll: (03) 5753 4529.
Paul Carroll: 0428 296 050
Kevin McPherson: (03) 5753 5229
Graeme Heiner: (02) 6028 9461

** Smaller bales are available from the Alpine Shire Depot in Myrtleford. Please contact Darryl Farmer on (03) 5755 0555 to arrange collection

AGISTMENT:
Please contact Stephen Street in regards to agistment: (03) 5753 4553/0428 579 338

WATER:
Please contact Darryl Farmer – Alpine Shire Ranger on 03 5755 0555 to discuss the delivery of drinking water and stock water.

Mudgegonga and surrounds:
Tricia Sweeney (03) 5753 4534 (After 5pm)

Dederang and surrounds:
John McEvoy (02) 6028 9293 mob: 0438 289 293
WATER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT:

In some areas of the North East, the fire has burnt very hot and sections of slopes and river/creek catchments have had surface vegetation burnt down to bare soil or rock. This creates the potential for more water runoff than usual and the force and speed of water flow can significantly increase.

Heavy rain or thunderstorms can cause major safety hazards and flash flooding in and around fire affected areas. Landowners are advised to be prepared for high sediment loads entering farm dams during heavy or prolonged rainfall events. Sediment control structures placed above the dam will not be effective in these events.

A contingency plan for an alternative, off-stream water supply should be developed to secure your water supply should an event occur. Landowners need also to be prepared to de-silt their dams following rainfall events. These conditions may continue to apply for several months after a fire, until vegetation re-establishes within the catchments. Light rain should have a minimal impact on sediment movement and will help bushfire affected areas to recover.

For more information see attached: Sediment Fences

Discussions have been had with NECMA and DPI in regards to water contamination and silt build up. Council will be arranging a community forum next week.

Further information regarding meeting location and times to be advised.

MUDGEGONGA HALL:

The Mudgegonga Hall will remain open as an essential drop in/meeting centre from 10am – 2pm daily for the next couple of weeks. All fire affected residents from local affected communities are welcome to drop in!

Mudgegonga Street Party!
Mudgegonga Hall - Saturday 28 March 2009
6pm till late

For more information see attached: Invitation

IMPORTANT CONTACTS:

Department of Human Services (DHS):
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Hume Region Hotline: 1300 650 152

Rural Finance: http://www.ruralfinance.com.au
(Victorian Bushfires link)
North East Region Contact: (03) 5821 2655

Centrelink: www.centrelink.gov.au
(Emergency Management link)
Contact: (for bushfire related matters) 180 2211

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund: www.redcross.org.au
Contact: 1800 180 213

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Telephone Assistance:
Optus: For assistance please phone:
Mobile: 1300 300 937
Land Line: 1300 300 469

Telstra: Telstra is offering a wide range of assistance to all its fire affected clients, please contact 13 22 03.

Garden Regeneration:
Bright Garden Club are propagating plants for to assist the fire affected residents with future regeneration of gardens.

Community Legal Aid
Free legal advice and service to the community by appointment. Phone number: 02 6056 8210.
ALPINE SHIRE COUNCIL

Fire-affected rubbish disposal:

**Myrtleford Waste Facility:** Fire-affected residents and landholders can dispose of separated fire-damaged timber, bricks / concrete and steel / fencing wire at the Myrtleford Waste Facility in Morrison’s Lane and the Mount Beauty Transfer Station in Madison’s Lane at no cost.

Residents that have lost houses in the fires are unable to dispose of this in the Myrtleford facility due to asbestos concerns. Council will have already contacted you regarding these concerns.

Residents wanting to dispose of other fire-affected materials, opening hours are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myrtleford</th>
<th>Mount Beauty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 10am to 4pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 10am to 4pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 10am to 2pm</td>
<td>Thursday 10am to 2pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday 10am to 2pm</td>
<td>Saturday 10am to 2pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday 10am to 2pm</td>
<td>Sunday 10am to 2pm</td>
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After hours disposal service can be arranged at the Myrtleford Facility by phoning the facility on 03 5751 1319. Please allow 24 hours notice.

Asbestos information:

Asbestos can only be removed by a licensed operator and can currently only be taken to the Bowser Landfill at Wangaratta. For more information regarding asbestos concerns, please contact Council’s Environmental Health Officers on 03 5755 0555.

**Asbestos – Frequently Asked Questions**

Please refer to the attached sheet from the EPA for important information in regards to asbestos.

Chemical and container recovery:

DrumMUSTER and ChemClear is offering assistance to all chemical users affected by bushfire. All chemicals and containers collected during the recovery program will be accepted free of charge. Please refer to attached drumMUSTER sheets for more information.

- Rates: payment deferral option: outstanding rates due on fire-affected properties can be paid up until 31 May without interest penalties. Those eligible to use this option will receive a letter from Council in the coming weeks.

Registering with Council:

Have you registered? Have your neighbours and friends registered? The Alpine Shire Council has been collecting information from residents affected by the bushfire. This enables us to ensure your needs are met on a Council level along with the many agencies involved in your long term recovery.

If you have not registered please call the

Community Recovery Officer – Karin Grima.

Ph: (03) 5755 0575/Mobile: 0427 830 251

Email: karing@alpineshire.vic.gov.au

Ovens and King Case Managers have resumed working from their office at the Myrtleford Community Health Service. If you have not already made contact and require support, please call the:

**Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service:**

1800 050 400

You are encouraged to make contact even if you are unsure of your eligibility - anyone who has been bushfire affected may be eligible for case management.

Newsletter feedback: Karin Grima, Recovery Officer, Alpine Shire

Email: karing@alpineshire.vic.gov.au Ph: 5755 0575.
Invitation to Community Meeting
1pm, Thursday 19 March 2009

Christine Nixon, Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority, invites residents of Alpine and Indigo Shires affected by the recent bushfires to join her at a community meeting on Thursday 19 March 2009.

A key goal of the Authority is to ensure that local people have a chance to be actively involved in the process of recovery and rebuilding in their communities and this forum is the first step toward building a close working relationship with communities.

The community meeting will provide information about the Authority, its role and how it will work with local communities. The meeting will also include some information from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund advisory panel.

Ms Nixon and her team will be visiting around 20 bushfire-affected communities to hold similar discussions over the next few weeks.

The event details are:

1 pm, Thursday 19 March 2009
Mudgegonga Hall
1395 Myrtleford - Yackandandah Road, Mudgegonga
Victoria
VicRoads Map 35 F9

The Mudgegonga Hall is on the Myrtleford - Yackandandah Road, 12 kilometres from Myrtleford.
FAQ – Information for workers at Recovery Centres and Community Service Hubs

What is the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund?
The Fund has been established in partnership between the Victorian and Australian Governments and the Red Cross to support individuals and communities impacted by the bushfires.

What will the money be spent on and who decides this?
An independent advisory panel of community leaders is to overseeing the Fund and its members provide recommendations to the Victorian Government on how donations, made through Australian Red Cross, are distributed.

A new payment has been announced:

New Rebuilding and Recovery grants:

- Homeowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the bushfires will receive a Rebuilding and Recovery Grant of $50,000. This consists of $35,000 for rebuilding and $15,000 to replace contents. This grant will be made available to people rebuilding in their community or relocating.

- Tenants whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the bushfires will receive a $15,000 payment to cover contents lost or damaged.

- People whose principal place of residence was significantly damaged by the bushfires and who will have to relocate during rebuilding will receive a payment of $15,000 for repairs and rebuilding.

- A further needs-based payment will also be made to homeowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the fires.

- People can register to receive more information regarding this payment by contacting the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on 1800 180 213.

What other payments are available?

- Compassion and Bereavement Payment: A $10,000 Compassion and Bereavement Payment is available for the next-of-kin of any Victorian claimed by the bushfires.

- Initial Home Dislocation Payment: People who have lost their home or whose house is not habitable may be able to receive an initial, Emergency Home Dislocation Payment. $5000 is available with an additional $2,000 for each additional adult and $1,500 for each child who lived in the home.

- Severe Injury Payment: People who have been severely injured, as a result of the bushfires, may receive a payment of $7,500.

- Emergency Tools of Trade Payment: People who work for a business, and have lost equipment and tools vital to their trade, may receive a payment of up to $5,000. Business activities and trades that may be eligible include roofers and fencers, hairdressers, hospitality and catering workers, waste and rubbish removalists, and labourers.

- Household Repairs Payment: A $3,000 payment is available for people whose primary place of residence has been damaged but not destroyed as a result of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires.
bushfires. It aims to cover costs of repairing fire, water or smoke damage, or other repairs to the property.

How do people apply?

For more information, visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal or call 1800 180 213. Information is also available at relief and recovery centres, and through relevant local governments and other community agencies.

Who is on the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Advisory Panel?
The Victorian bushfire Appeal Fund Advisory Panel members are Victorian leaders:

- Mr John Landy AC MBE (Chair)
- Professor Glyn Davis AC (Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne)
- The Honourable Pat McNamara (former Deputy Premier of Victoria)
- Cr Lyn Gunter (Mayor of Murrindindi Shire Council)
- The Honourable Robert Tickner (Chief Executive of Australian Red Cross and former Commonwealth Minister)
- Christine Nixon, Head of the Victorian Recovery and Reconstruction Authority
Clean-up and demolition program

When will the clean up start?
Grocon will deliver the voluntary demolition and clean-up program on behalf of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments and work is about to get underway.
The key steps of the clean up process are:
- The Coroner with Victoria Police will approve access to the property;
- Site assessment for risk, and removal of immediate risks such as burnt gas bottles, dangerous trees, demolition of unstable chimneys;
- Site owners given an opportunity for a final recovery of any possessions at the site;
- The site will be cleared by licensed contractors.

How can I find out when the Coroner and Victoria Police no longer need to restrict access to my property?
We would suggest you contact your local police. They will be able to tell you if your property can be visited.

Does everybody have to participate in the clean up?
No. The program is voluntary and free of charge for any person who wants their property cleared following recent bushfires.

A small number of people have already engaged licensed contractors and they can apply to have that cost reimbursed.

What are our alternatives if we don’t want to participate in the clean up program?
Participation in the clean up program is voluntary. If you don’t wish to take part you will need to organise for your site to be cleared through a licensed contractor.

It is important that all bushfire affected properties are cleared to a standard that removes possible risks to public health or safety. The State Government will be asking property owners who don’t register for this process to clear their property to this standard within the next six months.

How can people register to have their property cleared?
People who would like the government to clear their property free of charge can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

Who is eligible for reimbursement?
You are eligible for reimbursement if you completed or started clean-up works prior to 27 February 2008.

You will need to supply a receipt from a licensed contractor that indicates this.

If you have already had your property cleared by a licensed contractor and would like to apply for reimbursement you can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

People who choose to engage a licensed contractor to clear their property after this date will not be eligible for reimbursement.
How can people who have cleared their property apply to be reimbursed?
You are eligible for reimbursement if you completed or started clean-up works prior to 27 February 2008.

You will need to supply a receipt from a licensed contractor that indicates this.

If you have already had your property cleared by a licensed contractor and would like to apply for reimbursement you can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

What proof do people need to supply to get reimbursement?
You are eligible for reimbursement if you completed or started clean-up works prior to 27 February 2008.

You will need to supply a receipt from a licensed contractor that indicates this.

People who would like the government to clear their property free of charge can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

Can I be reimbursed for safety, clearing or tree works already conducted?
You are eligible for reimbursement if you completed or started clean-up works prior to 27 February 2008.

You will need to supply a receipt from a licensed contractor that indicates this.

If you have already had your property cleared by a licensed contractor and would like to apply for reimbursement you can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

If I decide to get someone in to clear my land or my trees, because I can’t wait for Grocon, or because I have local skills that could be utilised, can I be reimbursed?
You are eligible for reimbursement if you completed or started clean-up works prior to 27 February 2008.

You will need to supply a receipt from a licensed contractor that indicates this.

If you engage a licensed contractor after this date you will not be eligible for reimbursement under the clean up program.

How can local tradespeople be involved in the clean-up?
Licensed contractors who are interested in taking part in the government funded clean-up and demolition program can contact Grocon (firecleanup@grocon.com.au)

What is a licensed contractor?
Hazardous goods need to be cleared by A and B class removalists.
Only a Registered Demolisher (registered with the Building Practitioners Board) may carry out demolition work.

**How long will the clean-up take?**
The clean-up and demolition operation is about to get underway.

At this stage we estimate that communities will need to clean-up approximately 2029 homes, 11 community buildings, 59 commercial buildings and 2385 agricultural sheds, dairies and machinery. This means the operation could take up to six months.

This will not be a town by town clean up. Grocon will be working in many towns and rural communities across Victoria at any one time.

**How long will I have to check my site?**
You will have up to a week to check your property once Grocon has contacted you.

**I need longer than a week to visit my site. Is this possible and how do I organise it?**
It is important that access to your property is no longer restricted by the Coroner and Victoria Police, and an initial site inspection has been completed by your council building surveyor to ensure your site is safe before you can access it.

Your specific circumstances will be taken into consideration by Grocon or their appointed local contractors to allow you a reasonable time to visit your site and recover any possessions before your site is cleared.

Please raise this with Grocon when they contact you about your site.

**What towns will you clean up first?**
This will not be a town by town clean up. Grocon will be working in many towns and rural communities across the State at any one time.

**What if people don't want their property cleared?**
This is a voluntary program. Where people want us to, we are offering to clean-up their site free of charge. Some people may still choose to hire licensed contractors to clear their property.

It is important that all bushfire affected properties are cleared to a standard that removes possible risks to public health or safety. This is why sites need to be cleared by licensed A or B class contractors.

Property owners who don’t opt into the government funded program will have until 7 August 2009 to clear their property.

**Shouldn't insurance companies be paying for the clean up?**
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 Government has said that, where people have insurance they would expect their insurer to still provide the full pay-out.

**How much will this save families affected by the bushfires?**
Many households are facing clean-up and demolition bills running into the tens of thousands of dollars.
This program, funded by both levels of Government, will ensure they can spend that money rebuilding their homes.

**Where will government dispose of the debris?**
Debris will be disposed of in licensed tipping sites across the State in accordance with current health, safety and environmental controls. All waste disposal will be overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**Why isn’t the government using local contractors?**
The government contract asks Grocon to engage local, licensed contractors. Grocon expects to hire dozens of licensed contractors across the state to deliver a simultaneous clean-up operation.

Licensed contractors who are interested in taking part in the government funded clean-up and demolition program can contact Grocon ([firecleanup@grocon.com.au](mailto:firecleanup@grocon.com.au))

**What is a bushfire affected area?**
Any area affected by bushfires during the current 2008/09 bushfire season

**What will be removed?**

I’ve already hired equipment to clean up my property but I don’t want to clear away any hazardous materials like asbestos. Will the Government clean this up for me? And am I still eligible for reimbursement?

Clean up should be done in accordance with the State clean up standards and using licensed contractors.

The state will not reimburse you for equipment hired or works undertaken yourself – unless you are licensed to do so.

If you have already had your property cleared by a licensed contractor and would like to apply for reimbursement you can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

You can also opt in to the clean up program to have any hazardous material removed from your property if this has not already been removed by the licensed contractor.

**With the clean up offer, how much of my land will Grocon clean up? Is it only the immediate house and surrounds? Will it include my driveway, any fallen or dangerous trees, scrap metal on my block?**

The clean up covers the removal of rubble from houses and other structures destroyed by the bushfires. We will also clear away any dangerous trees that are in the immediate vicinity of those bushfire damaged structures.

The clean up does not include debris that was on a property before the bushfires. Any bushfire damaged trees that are not in the immediate vicinity of a damaged structure will need to be removed by the landowner.
For example, if there are fallen or dangerous trees, or scrap metal on or around the house these will be removed by the clean up program. In the case of large blocks (ie: bigger than a hectare), the clean up would extend to removing fire damaged or unsafe trees immediately around the house or fire damaged structure that is to be removed.

**Will damaged septic tanks be included in the clean up?**
If septic tanks have been damaged in the bushfires then they will be emptied or removed from the site where they pose a safety risk to people or their properties.

**Removal of trees**

**What do I do about fire damaged trees on my property?**
No permit is required to remove a tree that is an immediate threat to safety or to your property. You should get professional advice and help. Tree removal can be dangerous.

Many councils are providing arborists who will help you understand which trees will recover, which trees wont, and which trees are unsafe and should be removed. They will also explain what permits you may need.

**I have a number of trees that need to be removed, are these included in the clean up?**
Yes, if a tree needs to be removed for the safety of workers on your site, to gain access to your property for clean up or to allow your house or other structures to be rebuilt it will be included in the clean-up.

**What about dangerous trees?**
You can remove trees if they pose an immediate risk of personal injury or damage to your property. This means, for example, if you have a burnt out tree that is overhanging your house you can remove it. If you are wanting to put temporary accommodation on your site, you may need to remove some vegetation. You should seek advice from council to ensure the location is safe and you are aware of any permit requirements.

**How do I tell if a tree is dangerous?**
It is best to get professional advice through your local council or from an aborist to assess whether trees are dangerous.

**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 covers the removal of rubble from houses and other structures destroyed by the bushfires. We will also clear away any dangerous trees that are in the immediate vicinity of those bushfire damaged structures.

The clean up does not include debris that was on a property before the bushfires. Any bushfire damaged trees that are not in the immediate vicinity of a damaged structure will need to be removed by the landowner.

For example, if there are fallen or dangerous trees, or scrap metal on or around the house these will be removed by the clean up program. In the case of large blocks (ie: bigger than a hectare), the clean up would only extend to removing fire damaged or unsafe trees immediately around the house or fire damaged structure that is to be removed.
A program of clean up works is being developed and Grocon will be working in many towns and rural communities across the State at any one time.

**What about other native vegetation on my property?**
If there is other fire affected vegetation on your property that is not posing an immediate risk you should contact your Department of Sustainability and Environment Office or local council as you may need permission to remove it.

**Is the government going to provide financial assistance to help with the cost associated with removing trees?**
Trees that need to be removed for safety reasons, such as those which are close to fire damaged buildings or blocking access to a property, will be removed as part of the voluntary government funded clean-up program.

People who would like the government to clear their property free of charge can contact:
Call: 1800 136 762

Removal of trees that aren’t posing a safety risk should be discussed with your local council.

**Who is responsible for removing dangerous trees on my road reserve?**
Dangerous trees on local roadsides will be removed by your local council. If you are concerned about a tree please let your local council or VicRoads know.

For safety reasons, please do not attempt to remove roadside trees yourself.

**Will the government make felled trees available for firewood during winter?**
Decisions around the use of felled trees on public land for firewood will be made by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, VicRoads and your local council.

If you have felled trees on your own property you can use these for firewood.

Please contact your local council about collecting firewood from roadsides.
Things are never simple on the farm. It will rain eventually and when it does the run-off into dams can cause big problems for farmers. This run-off will probably contain large quantities of stock manure, dead grass, and other organic materials. In some cases where fires have been active, silt and ash can also be a major threat to water quality – even making dam water undrinkable for days in some cases.

It is important for farmers to plan for the first heavy rains following a drought or fire. It is worth looking closely at each dam and making some assessment of what is likely to wash into it when this first heavy rain comes.

In many situations, fairly simple silt traps and filters can be established which will greatly reduce the amount of material entering dams. All that is required is either a porous barrier on or near the inflow points to filter larger debris, or a more impermeable barrier that can cause temporary ponding of the water to slow the flow and get sediment drop.

There are several specialised commercial materials for filters of silt traps that are not particularly expensive and relatively easy to install.

For a permeable filter, materials such as rabbit netting or open woven shade cloth, can act as filter for larger debris.

For silt removal, the effectiveness of a silt fence is primarily derived from its ability to slow the velocity of the water and temporarily pond water behind the fence. This ponding action allows suspended particles to settle out on the uphill side of the fence.

Barriers that are more impermeable are more suited to drier regions on small drainage areas that have low gradients. They are not suitable in channels that are cut with steep sides.

Placement of the silt fencing is the most important part of construction. The fence should be installed along the contour of the slope, perpendicular to the flow, and each end of the fence segment should be curved uphill to prevent any ponded water from flowing around the edges of the silt fence. The fence should not alter the direction of the natural flow.

For a 20-30 ha catchment, 2-3 silt fences are needed above the dam spaced about 10-30 m apart.

There are a number of specialised silt trap fencing products on the market.

Geotextile fabric can be used where a more impermeable trap is needed to cause temporary ponding.

The fabric fence should be 50-60cm high with a further 15 cm buried along the ground, bending upstream at a depth of 5 cm to prevent water passing underneath the fence.

The fence is supported by steel posts every 2-3 m with wire attached at the height at the top of the silt fence. The posts and wire are placed on the downstream side of the fence.

Small square straw bales can also be used as an alternative to fabric as a silt trap. The bales are placed so that they contact the channel bottom and are curved up to and keyed into a bank with adequate stakes or wire to hold them in place. Spaces between the bales need to be filled with logs or rocks so that channelised flow does not occur. The height of the middle bales is slightly lower than the outside bales.

For larger catchments, an earthen silt trap is needed above the dam inflow with a carefully designed spillway. This silt dam needs to be around 300-500 cubic meters in volume and will need to be cleaned regularly.

For more information contact your local Department Of Primary Industries Ag Referral Officer:
Beechworth fire area: Greg Ferrier
Ph. 0260 304 609 Mob. 0438 738 634
Murrindindi fire area: Bruce Radford
Ph. 0357 840 603 Mob. 0417 516 306
or visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au
SEDIMENT FENCES

Straw Bale and Sediment Fence Construction Notes

Caring for soil in burnt paddocks is an issue requiring landholders’ immediate attention. Fire has left these soils with little organic material to bind them together, subjecting sloping ground in particular to the possibility of major erosion when rain falls. Basic rehabilitation work carried out before rain rather than after, will ease landholders’ workload in the long term. Sediment fences constructed with straw bales or fabric are effective in protecting soils from erosion and dam water from contamination.

**Sediment Fence**
1. Construct the fence parallel to the contours of the site.
2. Drive star posts into the ground, 3 metres apart.
3. Dig a 150mm deep trench along the upslope line of the fence for the bottom of the fabric to be entrenched.
5. Fix fabric to upslope side of posts with wire ties.
6. Join sections of fabric at a support post with 150mm overlap.

**Straw Bale Fence**
1. Construct the fence parallel to the contours of the site or at the toe of a slope.
2. Place bales lengthwise in a row with ends tightly abutting. Use straw to fill any gaps between bales.
3. Anchor each bale with star posts. Angle the first stake in each bale towards the previously laid bale.
Mudgegonga Hall
Saturday 28th of March, 2009
6pm till Late
BBQ
Dinner Served 6.00-8.30pm
BYO Drinks

Music Provided By the Night Owls, Ray Macartney and Country Music star Tamara Stewart - so come and dance the night away! Catch up with old friends and make some new!

Children's Entertainment Provided

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Belvoir-Wodonga

PLEASE RSVP for catering purposes—02 6056 0740 By 20th March