

FENCING REPAIR AND UPGRADE – NATIONAL PARKS, STATE PARKS AND STATE FORESTS

The Victorian Government will pay half the cost of materials to repair, replace or upgrade bushfire-damaged fencing bordering National Parks, State Parks and State Forests. This includes an option to upgrade fencing for fire and pest resistance to a maximum of \$5,000 per kilometre. Funding does not cover labour costs.

Upgrade options available

Improved fencing is one option available to landholders. Fencing upgrade options include fire-resistant materials, such as steel or concrete components, and pest control designs, such as insulated wires for electric fencing.

The offer to cover half the cost of materials is still available to landholders if they just want to replace fencing to its pre-existing standard.

Is GST included in the total amount?

Yes, funding is provided based on a reasonable cost of materials to a maximum of \$5,000 per kilometre and is GST inclusive. This is to help landholders cover GST costs when they purchase fencing supplies or engage a contractor.

How to access the program

Landholders can contact BRV on 1800 560 760. We can connect landholders with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to initiate the application process.

DELWP will conduct field inspection and data collection, when it is safe to do so, determine eligibility and assistance level and assist the landholder in determining fence type.

Once parties formally agree with a signed agreement, a claim is processed, and monies are paid to the landholder. The information provided by the landholder will need to be confirmed with an assessor before the claim is finalised.

DELWP will accept photos from landholders as evidence for damaged and/or burnt fences where they haven't yet been able to visit for an assessment.

Once a claim has been lodged with DELWP and an assessment has been conducted, landowners

can engage a fencing contractor of their choice. Landowners may choose to conduct the works themselves. This should be discussed at the time of assessment.

Landholders have 12 months to lodge a claim from when the damage occurred.

Specialised fences or steep/rocky terrain

Some fences are on steep or rocky terrain so replacement may incur significant additional costs. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. DELWP will discuss this with the landholder.

Disputes about fence lines

DELWP will use statewide fencing guidelines to assist in determining fencing replacement arrangements with the landholder.

OTHER FENCING ADVICE

Fence damage from fire suppression operations

Where fences have been cut or damaged by fire suppression operations, the Government will fully cover the repair or replacement of the damaged section of fence to the pre-existing standard—including internal and boundary fences.

Internal fencing on private land

The fencing repair and upgrade program for fences bordering National Parks, State Parks and State Forests does not cover the repair and replacement of internal fences on private land. Landholders are responsible for internal fences on private land. We can also connect landholders with Agriculture Victoria who will be able to provide technical assistance.

Fences adjoining other government owned or managed land

The fencing repair and upgrade program for fences bordering National Parks, State Parks and State Forests does not cover the repair and replacement of fences that adjoin other government owned or managed land, including

local councils, Regional Roads Victoria, water authorities or VicTrack. The Victorian Government will repair or replace damaged riparian fences (i.e. fences along waterways) if the original fence was erected with government funds.

Fencing along roadways

Repairs to fencing along roadways is the responsibility of the landowner unless the damage is from activities to manage or suppress the fires, or as a result of damage from trees felled as part of the management of hazardous trees resulting from the 2019/20 Victorian Bushfires. For these exceptions, the Government will fully cover the repair or replacement of the damaged section of fence to the pre-existing standard.

Clearing native vegetation along fence lines

A planning permit is not required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation to the minimum extent necessary to enable the operation or maintenance of an existing fence or the construction of a boundary fence between properties in different ownership.

The clearing along both sides of the fence when combined must not exceed four metres in width. If one side of the fence is already cleared to a width of four metres or more, regardless of when this clearing occurred, then up to one metre of native vegetation can be removed on the other side. More information is available at environment.vic.gov.au

A planning permit is not required to remove any native vegetation (including trees) that presents an immediate risk of personal injury or damage to property (including internal and boundary fences). The risk is only considered immediate when management of the risk can only be achieved by the removal of the native vegetation within a shorter timeframe than it would take to apply for and be issued with a permit for its removal.

This exemption does not apply to native vegetation that has the potential to cause personal injury or property damage in the longer term. If future injury or damage from native vegetation is a concern, a planning permit can be sought to remove it.

Where practical, a qualified arborist should assess whether the native vegetation presents

an immediate risk of limb or trunk failure. Where other means exist to address the risk, the exemption should not be relied on.

Storing and disposing of fencing material

Local government has established safe storage, recycling and disposal of fencing waste.

Metal waste: East Gippsland Shire Council has arranged for metal waste, including wire fencing, to be collected from stockpile sites and recycled.

The location of stockpile sites can be obtained from the Bushfire Information section of the East Gippsland Shire Council website at www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au.

For all other areas, contact your local council or the nearest metal recycler.

Timber waste: The wooden component of the fencing is not recyclable as it most likely includes CCA (Copper-chromium arsenate), a toxic pesticide widely used to preserve timber from outdoors damage. Timber shall be disposed of into landfill. Do not bury treated timber into your property due to the health and environmental hazards.

Ash: Ash can be double-bagged, sealed and taken directly to landfill as it has higher health hazards than the treated timber.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR FENCE REPAIR

Emergency Bushfire Response in Primary Industries Grants

Grants of up to \$75,000 are available to primary producers through Rural Finance to help with the costs of rebuilding, including fencing. You can access these grants by visiting ruralfinance.com.au or brv.vic.gov.au, or by contacting Bushfire Recovery Victoria at 1800 560 760.