



**BUSHFIRE RECOVERY
VICTORIA**

REBUILDING

SUPPORT PROGRAM

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An overview of the Rebuilding Support Program

Hundreds of properties were damaged or destroyed in the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires. Bushfire Recovery Victoria is working across the Victorian Government and with councils to deliver the Rebuilding Support Program, which is a series of services, supports and grants that aim to help these households rebuild successfully – and safely.

Owners of destroyed or damaged properties can access assistance under the Rebuilding Support Program, including:

- Vital health, wellbeing and financial counselling support through the free Bushfire Recovery Case Support Program, which to date has worked with over 1700 families and individuals across bushfire-affected areas.
- New, temporary high-quality modular homes designed to be occupied for up to three years on people's land while they undertake their permanent rebuild. The Victorian Government's Short-Term Modular Housing program is delivered by Bushfire Recovery Victoria.
- A 'one-stop-shop' Rebuild Support Service (RSS) for property owners, funded by the Victorian Government and delivered through Councils.

Accessing the Case Support Program

Property owners can call 1800 560 760 or email connect@brv.vic.gov.au. Case support workers can also link eligible individuals to further financial support options, including:

- \$40,000 in payments from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal
- Up to \$42,000 in emergency re-establishment grants for uninsured or underinsured households
- Other public grants, such as grants of up to \$75,000 if their home formed part of a farm business
- Charitable grants, including up to \$20,000 from the Red Cross.

Accessing the Short-Term Modular Housing

Eligibility for short-term modular housing is assessed between an individual and their bushfire recovery case support worker.

This includes verifying whether your original home was your primary place of residence and has been deemed uninhabitable by council, your current living arrangements, your intention to rebuild, and other matters.

Financial hardship arrangements will be in place if needed, meaning hiring fees for short-term modular housing can be reduced to ensure they do not exceed 25 per cent of a household's total income. The Government will also cover reasonable costs for delivery, installation and removal of the housing unit.

Accessing the Rebuilding Support Service

The Rebuild Support Service can be accessed by contacting:

- In East Gippsland Shire, visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Bushfire_information, or call 5153 9500 and selecting 1
- In Towong Shire, visit www.towong.vic.gov.au (select 'Upper Murray Fires 2020') or call 1800 518 222

Through this service, delivered by council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria, property owners can get support to navigate planning and building permit processes, including:

- A copy of the completed preliminary bushfire hazard assessment – funded by the Victorian Government on behalf of property owners, saving them up to \$3000
- Access to planners, environmental health officers and building surveyors to assist with technical advice to support the permit application process
- More than \$20,000 in rebates for other essential assessments and infrastructure required as part of the rebuilding process, such as soil tests, geotechnical risk assessments, land capability (wastewater) assessments, and installation of septic tanks and new rainwater tanks.

Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessments

All new houses in Victoria must be built to current planning, building, safety and environmental standards.

These safety standards exist for one reason: to protect human life. They were recommendations from the Black Saturday Royal Commission, a disaster that claimed 173 lives.

Depending on how exposed a property is to a potential bushfire (according to its Bushfire Attack Level, or BAL) a resident rebuilding their property may have to:

- Create and maintain additional 'defendable space' around their structure
- Incorporate safety features such as gutter guards and window shutters
- Use specific construction materials

The surrounding landscape beyond the 'fence line' of properties can also pose bushfire risks and must be considered.

The Victorian Government funded preliminary bushfire hazard assessments of all properties where a dwelling was destroyed. Expert bushfire planning professionals completed these assessments in consultation with the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

The preliminary assessment has identified a preliminary BAL along with any other bushfire protection measures. The BAL is a nationwide approach to determine the severity of a building's potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact.

Complex Sites

While the vast majority of households will have a traditional and typical rebuild in front of them, the preliminary assessments indicate a small number of principal places of residence are rated at the highest Bushfire Attack Level rating (BAL 40 or BAL FZ), or are located in an extreme bushfire risk area.

These 'complex site' property owners will face more challenges building a home that is safe to live in.

As part of the Rebuilding Support Program, Bushfire Recovery Victoria is also working across government and with councils to deliver specialised, tailored support and extra options to owners of complex sites. This includes:

- The newly formed independent **Complex Site Taskforce**, bringing together external experts to find solutions for home locations on individual sites.
 - We want people to rebuild successfully and safely and the Complex Site Taskforce will recommend ways to resolve difficult building issues. The Complex Site Taskforce will assist with concept planning and building design, supporting property owners to retreat from the previous house site and rebuild in a lower risk location if practical.
- For those property owners where an alternative house site is not possible, a voluntary **Resettlement Program** is available to owners of high-risk, complex sites providing the option to sell their property at the 2019 site value (approved by the Government Land Monitor) to the Victorian Government.
 - This option is offered as a last resort and will be administered in line with previous Victorian Government resettlement schemes.
- The Bushfire Recovery Case Support Program will also work closely with owners of complex sites on further options for support.

Key questions

Who is involved in delivering this support?

The key partners delivering elements of the Rebuild Support Service include:

- Bushfire Recovery Victoria – the permanent agency coordinating bushfire recovery, delivering clean-up, Short-Term Modular Housing, bushfire hazard assessments, the network of community recovery Hubs, and specialised support for complex sites.
- East Gippsland Shire Council and Towong Shire Council – delivering the Rebuild Support Service through council offices and recovery hubs, on behalf of the Victorian Government.

- Community health providers – delivering the Case Support Program on behalf of the Victorian Government (DHHS).
- Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) – delivering funding for new water tanks and land capability (wastewater) assessments

How does a community member access this support on offer?

There are multiple points of entry to access this support. A member of the community can start by:

- Speaking to their case support worker provided through the Case Support Program
 - Call 1800 560 760 or email connect@brv.vic.gov.au
- Accessing the 'one-stop-shop' Rebuild Support Service delivered by BRV and council
 - In East Gippsland Shire, visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Bushfire_information, or call 5153 9500 and selecting 1
 - In Towong Shire, visit www.towong.vic.gov.au (select 'Upper Murray Fires 2020') or call 1800 518 222

How have 'complex sites' been determined?

Through the preliminary bushfire hazard assessments undertaken for all dwellings destroyed in the bushfires. Expert bushfire planning professionals completed these assessments in consultation with the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

How do people find out if they own a 'complex site'?

Rebuild Support Service and case support workers will work directly with these property owners to provide information and support, engage the Complex Site Taskforce or explore other options.

What is the Complex Site Taskforce and what will they do?

The Complex Site Taskforce brings together experts in finance, fire behaviour, public land management, land use planning, architecture, building and fire safety to assist property owners and council in identifying options for rebuilding on complex sites that would meet contemporary building and bushfire safety standards.

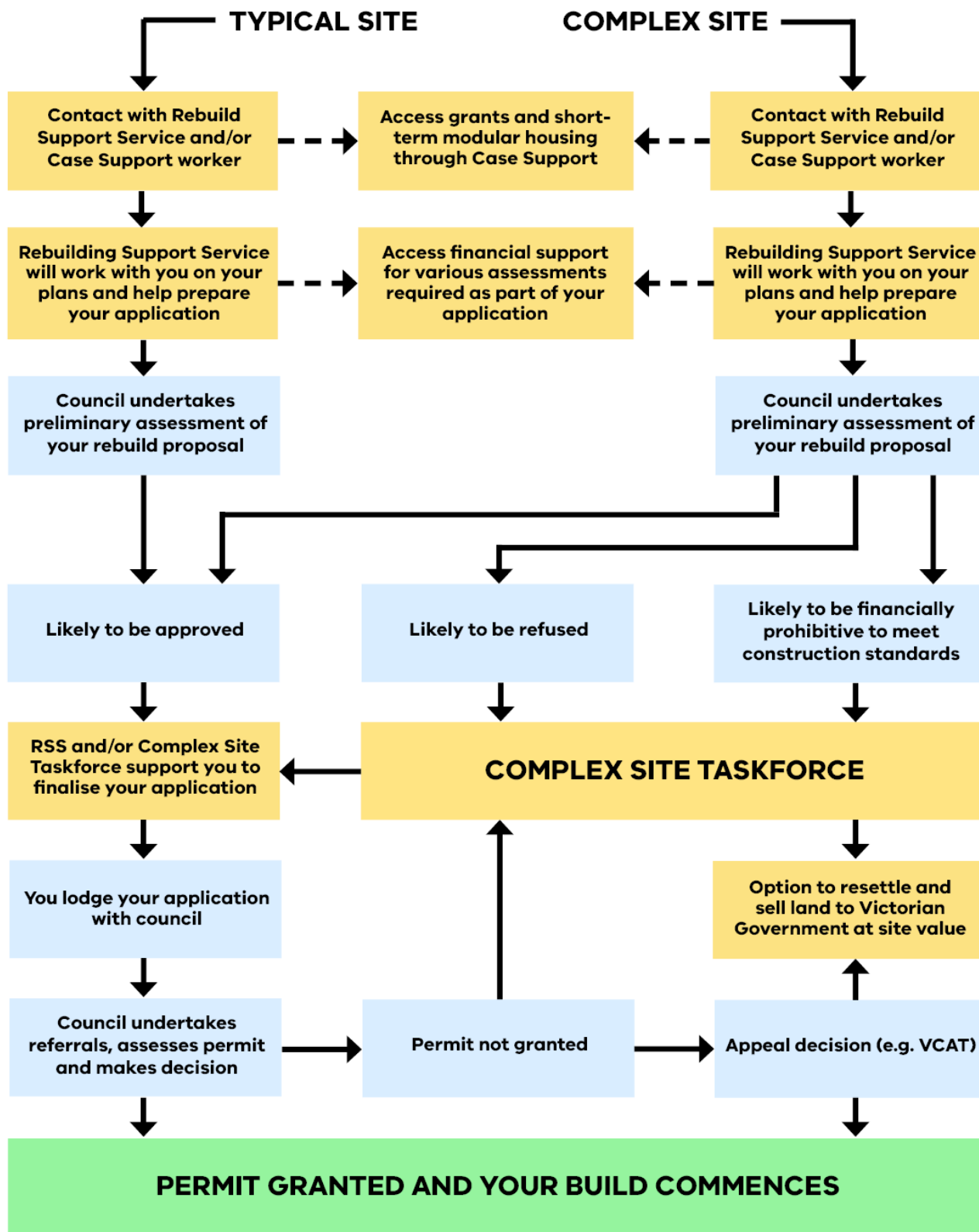
What is the difference between the Rebuild Support Service and the Complex Site Taskforce?

Where the Rebuild Support Service assists property owners with practical matters such as the preparation of planning permit applications and advice to navigate the system, the Complex Site Taskforce works with property owners at the 'drawing board' stage, identifying the specific design, siting and construction solutions that would make a new dwelling viable.

Who can access the Retreat and Resettlement Program?

Owners of complex sites have the option of selling their property to the Victorian Government at site value. Through the Complex Site Taskforce, we want people to rebuild successfully and safely – so this is a last resort option offered in line with previous bushfires in Victoria.

What will an average 'journey' through the system look like?



KEY: Steps you will be required to undertake

Optional support by Government that's available to assist you