

# DELWP's Native Vegetation Removal Crown land exemption

## Statement on 2019-2021 firefighting activities

Significant work was undertaken on sections of the Princes Highway before, during and after this year's fires, removing hazardous trees and vegetation, helping ensure this road is less susceptible to the impacts of bushfires into the future.

The 2019/20 bushfires had a significant impact on wildlife and biodiversity with an estimated hundreds of millions of animals destroyed and over 240 plant and animal species with more than 50 per cent of their statewide habitat burnt.

Significant areas of emergency fuel break construction, road opening, hazardous tree removal and stabilisation were undertaken during this period. Under the Victorian Planning Provisions vegetation removal carried out during firefighting activities is exempt from reporting.

State and Commonwealth regulatory obligations require that DELWP avoids impacts wherever possible when conducting fuel management operations or hazardous tree removals.

It must apply mitigations where impacts are unavoidable and offset any losses to native vegetation or biodiversity. This involves the use of counterbalancing to improve the condition, extent, or security of vegetation (e.g: tree planting, weed control and threatened species protections).

DELWP also works closely with Traditional Owners to ensure that cultural values are understood and protected.

Bushfires typically become more destructive as they escalate in size and intensity, and early containment is critical.

Fuel breaks and other fuel management activities can cause localised impacts on plants, animals, and Aboriginal heritage values. We can better manage these impacts by constructing more fuel breaks in strategic locations before we get a bushfire.

DELWP continues to apply the lessons learned during the 2019/20 and previous fire seasons as it rolls out the \$38.5 million Strategic Fuel Breaks program which will build and upgrade 1,447 kms of strategic fuel breaks fuel breaks in the highest priority areas across Victoria, next to townships and key assets throughout the state.

Starting in February 2021, \$9.92m will:

- Upgrade the Cowarr-Bruthen firebreak in Gippsland to 257km and,
- Construct or improve 200 km of existing breaks to standard in other parts of the state

An additional \$2.23m will also be spent on mulching, mowing, and slashing 108 ha in high risk areas unsuited to planned burns

The impacts on biodiversity and cultural values are carefully considered in planning and constructing fuel breaks.

For more information on DELWP's fire mitigation activities, visit [Forest Fire Management Victoria - Forest Fire Management Victoria \(ffm.vic.gov.au\)](http://ffm.vic.gov.au)

