

The NSW Government and the Commonwealth are jointly covering the clean-up costs of residential and eligible commercial properties destroyed in the NSW bushfires since 1 July 2019.

Laing O'Rourke Australia has been appointed as the managing contractor, responsible for managing the clean-up of destroyed and damaged buildings across NSW, working with Public Works Advisory (PWA).

The primary focus of the clean-up program is on removing destroyed or damaged buildings and associated safety hazards and debris that could impede people rebuilding their homes or businesses (small businesses and primary producers).

This could include potentially hazardous material, like asbestos, dangerous trees near homes or commercial buildings and damaged driveways that could impact on the safety of clean-up activities.

Qualified local contractors and suppliers will be engaged, where possible, to deliver clean-up services to ensure the clean-up operation maximises local knowledge and expertise and helps the local economy to recover. These clean-up services will mean impacted property owners will not have to pay for debris, including potentially hazardous materials, to be removed and disposed of.

Impacted property owners who would like their property cleared need to register at [Service NSW](#) or call **13 77 88.**

The government-supported clean-up is an **opt in** program which means residents and business owners **must register** their properties before they can be included in the clean-up program.

Property owners who registered for the clean-up with Public Works Advisory last year will have their details passed on to Laing O'Rourke and will not have to re-register with Service NSW.

CLEAN-UP ELIGIBILITY AND SCOPE

What clean-up work will be covered?

Destroyed or damaged buildings on the property that are the primary residences or places of business, and any associated debris, will be safely cleaned up and removed.

Work may include:

- Removal of known hazardous materials, including asbestos
- Removal of materials destroyed by bushfire and hazardous trees near a destroyed or damaged primary residence or place of business
- With consent of building owners, removal of concrete slab foundations.

What properties are eligible?

Government is covering the clean-up cost of NSW properties used for **residential, small business or primary production** purposes that were destroyed by bushfire after 1 July 2019.

This clean-up assistance is in addition to the small business and primary producer grants.

Definitions of a [small business](#) and [primary producer](#) used for bushfire grant applications also apply for this program.

Clean-up costs for all large and corporate businesses will be met by owners or their insurer. Insurers can choose to opt-in to the clean-up program and reimburse Government for services.

What structures on my property will be included?

Destroyed or damaged buildings (and associated utility services, contents and debris) located on eligible properties will be cleaned up. Damaged buildings must be uninhabitable or unusable or beyond economical repair. This determination will be subject to individual on site assessment.

Buildings types can include:

- Residences
- Buildings on commercial properties used for primary business operation
- Garages/sheds and outbuildings that are uninhabitable or unusable and within the vicinity of the primary residence or business operation on a property, subject to individual site assessment
- Farm homesteads
- Farm sheds and outbuildings, subject to the same criteria as garages/sheds
- Commercial properties, including shops and tourism-related businesses, owned by small businesses or primary producers.

Laing O'Rourke will contact registered property owners to discuss damage and assess eligibility.

Contractors will clear outbuildings which are near primary residences or business operations and have been damaged or destroyed by bushfire.

When looking at properties, site assessors will take a 'common-sense' approach to marking outbuildings for clean-up to ensure that no nearby bushfire debris remains when it could pose a safety risk, especially to clean-up or rebuild operations. This also includes any debris which could be in the way of any clean-up or rebuild operations.

Where insurance companies have already commenced clean-up works for eligible properties, Government will cover the reasonable cost of work already underway or completed.

How will the eligibility of my damaged building be assessed?

Damaged buildings are those that are uninhabitable, unusable or beyond economic repair.

Individual site assessments will be required to be undertaken by trained and licensed contractors to determine safety requirements and eligibility for removal of damaged buildings.

This program focuses on safety hazards and issues that could impede people rebuilding their homes or businesses.

Will septic tanks be included in the clean-up?

Septic tanks are excluded unless they present a safety issue.

What about other items and facilities on my property?

Inground swimming pools, spas and associated pool deck and pool fencing, irrigation pumps and equipment, tennis courts, basketball courts and other private sport facilities are not included. Nor is rural fencing or fences that are not in the vicinity of destroyed or damaged buildings, except where their removal is required for contractors to safely undertake clean-up works. A Laing O'Rourke representative will conduct a detailed scope assessment with you on site before any work commences.

Will all affected trees within my property boundaries be cleaned-up?

Dangerous trees that are near destroyed or damaged homes or commercial buildings that are impeding the safe clean-up or rebuilding of homes or businesses (small businesses and primary producers) will be included.

When will clean-up work start?

Laing O'Rourke has already started contacting registered property owners to begin planning.

We encourage bushfire-impacted property owners to **register for the clean-up with Service NSW** on **13 77 88** as soon as possible.

We expect most residential properties will be substantially cleared **by 30 June 2020**. It may take longer to clean up isolated properties in remote areas and regions where there is still active fire.

Safety is the number one priority and before any clearing work begins, we need to make sure that hazardous materials, such as asbestos are identified, contained and properly disposed of.

Clearing work will begin after properties have been made safe, and in certain situations this could mean ensuring all impacted properties in close proximity are made safe, to minimise the risk of clearing work accidentally spreading contamination from nearby locations.

How will the clean-up process work?

To opt-in, bushfire-impacted property owners must register online at **Service NSW** or call **13 77 88**. Property owners who registered for the clean-up with Public Works Advisory last year will have their details passed on to Laing O'Rourke and will not have re-register with Service NSW.

Once this is completed:

- Laing O'Rourke will contact registered property owners to discuss damage and assess eligibility
- Laing O'Rourke will meet the property owner on site once the area is declared safe
- The property owner will approve scope of works
- Clean-up of the property will commence
- Property owners will confirm completion of agreed scope of works.

For property owners who are unable to register through Service NSW, Laing O'Rourke will be able to assist with the registration process directly when they are on the ground in your location.

Laing O'Rourke will be communicating approximate clean-up dates to local stakeholders including councils, property owners and communities on a rolling basis.

Which properties will be cleaned up first?

Work will be undertaken simultaneously on the North Coast, South Coast, Snowy Monaro, Snowy Valleys and other impacted communities across the State.

The following factors will be considered in determining which properties will be prioritised for clearing:

- Properties where there is safe access to affected areas, including no ongoing fire events
- Properties with known hazardous materials, particularly those close to neighbours or vulnerable community facilities, e.g. schools, hospitals and town centres
- Where there is a strong community need and property owners have registered and given permission for works to be conducted on private property
- Availability of contractors to conduct the works
- Availability of landfill for disposal of debris.

Can I access my property prior to demolition?

Due to occupational health and safety concerns, you will not be able to access the property during the clean-up process to remove items yourself.

When Laing O'Rourke contacts you about accessing your property, they will discuss how you would like any personal items uncovered to be managed, as well as which structures you would like retained, and which removed. This will be documented in written property access agreements for your records.

How do I recover the cost of clean-up work already undertaken or underway?

Eligible works undertaken or underway on eligible properties by uninsured property owners will be reimbursed if a licensed contractor was used, invoices and waste disposal docketts are provided, and costs are assessed as reasonable.

The claim will be assessed against the NSW Government and Commonwealth's approved eligibility and site scope criteria.

More information on the process for this will shortly be made available on the Service NSW website.

The NSW Government is working with the insurance industry on how the reimbursement of clean-up costs for work already undertaken on insured properties will be applied.

CLEAN-UP CONTRACTOR AND SUBCONTRACTING

Why was Laing O'Rourke Australia appointed rather than multiple contractors?

Laing O'Rourke is a highly respected multinational company with world-class construction expertise, the skills and equipment needed to do the job quickly, at scale and safely.

Laing O'Rourke has great community engagement experience and understands the importance of keeping communities informed and engaging local tradespeople and suppliers.

Appointing more than one managing contractor would not speed up clean-up operations.

How do local subcontractors and suppliers register interest?

Laing O'Rourke will work with qualified local subcontractors and suppliers to take advantage of local knowledge and expertise.

Local subcontractors who have already contacted Public Works Advisory, Service NSW or NSW Procurement, are already prequalified on a relevant State Government scheme, or have registered on the NSW Government bushfire supplier portal, will have their details provided to Laing O'Rourke.

If you have not registered your details and would like to work with Laing O'Rourke on the NSW bushfire clean-up project, please register directly on Laing O'Rourke's [supplier platform](#), which captures more detailed bushfire clean-up specific information.

INSURANCE

Have insurance companies been informed of the arrangements?

The Insurance Council of Australia has committed that insurers will maximise the funds available in their customers' policies for rebuilding.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

What happens if local waste management and landfill were destroyed by fire or cannot handle the volume of waste?

Given the significant volume of waste, a waste management plan has been developed for each of the regions. The waste management plan evaluates the capacity of existing local landfills and any need to construct new local waste management facilities, or transport waste to other facilities where there is not sufficient local capacity.

Will all the waste end up in landfill?

It is expected that about 60 per cent will go to landfill and 40 per cent of all waste volumes will be diverted from landfill and recycled.

Where and how will the materials, including asbestos, be disposed?

Debris will be disposed of in licensed tipping sites across the state. All waste disposal will be overseen by the NSW Environment Protection Authority. We will maximise the amount of materials being recycled.

Licensed contractors engaged in clean-up activities are subject to a compliance code for removing asbestos, which includes strict measures to control dust that may contain asbestos.

ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION

What is the extent of asbestos contamination and what risk does it pose to communities and recovery personnel?

As is the case with the firefighting effort, the protection of life and community safety during clean-up is paramount.

Building Impact Assessment teams test properties impacted by fire for hazardous materials, such as asbestos, before clearing work begins.

To date, testing has found approximately 40 per cent of destroyed properties statewide contain some level of asbestos contamination.

Where contamination is found and the property is close to where people are still living, a PVA binder spray is used to further minimise the risk of particles spreading.

Undisturbed asbestos poses a very low risk following bush fire and extensive air monitoring has not detected any unsafe readings.

Will contaminated properties be prioritised in the clean-up?

Yes, contaminated properties will be a priority. Laing O'Rourke is engaging specialist, licensed contractors to undertake the work. Hazardous materials will also be transported away from communities by appropriately licensed contractors to appropriately licensed facilities.