

The NSW Government and Australian Government 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 operation maximises local knowledge and expertise and helps the local economy to recover. These clean-up services mean impacted property owners will not have to pay for the removal and disposal of debris, including potentially hazardous materials.

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.

What impact will COVID-19 have on the clean-up program?

While coronavirus introduces a new challenge to bushfire recovery, we're determined to maintain momentum and keep delivering tangible help on the ground.

There are no current Government restrictions that prevent the clean-up program continuing, provided appropriate health and safety measures are implemented to minimise the spread of COVID-19.

We are taking very seriously the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer and will continue to comply with all the policies of government around coronavirus.

Protections such as social distancing and controls on large gatherings mean we may have to adjust some of the ways we communicate and interact with bushfire impacted communities.

As a priority, we are looking at ways in which we can continue to gather information and listen to bushfire impacted communities in the context of the coronavirus arrangements, so we can best support them on their road to recovery.

The project team is ensuring all staff are complying with the social distancing requirements, including:

- Asking additional screening questions during the initial phone call to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- Practising social distancing, including not shaking hands and ensuring Laing O'Rourke representatives stay at least 1.5 metres away from property owners when attending a property to conduct an inspection.

- Undertaking strict personal hygiene measures and regular sanitising of tools, including pens and clipboards.

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 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 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.

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.

Please call [Service NSW](#) on **13 77 88** to commence this process.

What about insured properties?

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

Owners of insured properties can seek reimbursement of costs for eligible work undertaken outside the Laing O'Rourke program via their insurance companies. This also applies to insured property owners who have already done the clean-up work without contacting or involving their insurance companies.

Please contact your insurance company to start the reimbursement process.

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 and waterways 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.

Waterways are not included in this program which focuses on removing destroyed or damaged buildings and associated safety hazards and debris that could impede people rebuilding their homes or businesses.

CLEAN-UP PROCESS

When will clean-up work start?

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

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 mid-2020. It may take longer to clean up isolated properties in remote areas.

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.

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.

Why has work already been carried out on my property without my permission?

Ensuring the safety of residents, workers and volunteers in bushfire-affected communities during emergency situations and throughout the recovery phase is of paramount importance.

That is why Building Impact Assessment teams were deployed to assess bushfire-impacted properties to identify unstable structures and test for hazardous materials such as asbestos.

Multi-agency teams, including representatives from the NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire & Rescue NSW and Public Works Advisory, are authorised under emergency legislation to enter premises and undertake necessary works to make a property safe.

If asbestos is suspected or identified, testing is conducted. If there is a risk of airborne fibres, the site is sprayed with a non-toxic, coloured glue (PVA binder spray) This provides a temporary seal to reduce the risk.

While property owners' consent is not required for urgent "make safe" works under emergency legislation, teams endeavour to speak with owners before undertaking work, where possible.

This is a separate process to the opt-in property clean-up program being undertaken by Laing O'Rourke, where the property owner's written permission is required.

Which properties will be cleaned up first?

Work is being 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?

You should not enter your property if asbestos has been identified or suspected.

More information about property hazards after bushfires can be found [here](https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/safework-property-hazards-following-bushfire.pdf) (https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/safework-property-hazards-following-bushfire.pdf)

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.

ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION

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

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. Learn more about this process [here](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/building-impact-assessment-hazard-identification-signs.pdf) (www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/building-impact-assessment-hazard-identification-signs.pdf)

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.

More information on Building Impact Assessments Hazard Identification Notices is available at www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/building-impact-assessment-hazard-identification-signs.pdf

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.

What happens if asbestos is found during the clean-up?

Safety is paramount and air monitoring will be conducted in the neighbourhood during the clean-up.

If asbestos is found on a property, Laing O'Rourke will engage a licensed asbestos specialist to ensure it is removed safely.

The material will be wet down to minimise dust and placed into lined heavy vehicles with minimal disturbance. The material will then be safely transported to a licensed facility.

Can I access the results of asbestos testing on my property?

Yes. Laing O'Rourke can provide owners with their property's asbestos test results upon request. Call 1800 007 539.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

What happens if local waste management and landfill cannot handle the volume of waste?

Given the significant volume of waste, a waste management plan has been developed for each of the regions for the bushfire clean-up program.

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.

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.

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.

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.

If you have already registered with Public Works Advisory or NSW Procurement's Bushfire-affected communities rebuild portal, Laing O'Rourke has your details and may request further information from you relating to clean-up work.

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.