

Rebuild Support Service Update

MAY/JUNE 2021



Registration with the Rebuild Support Service

The Rebuild Support Service (RSS) is a free service to bushfire impacted residents that has already helped many people begin their rebuild process. If you think the service may be helpful for your rebuild, or you would just like to make contact to discuss your options, you can register by completing this form: <https://bit.ly/3ammMNY>

Rebuild information

Requirements for building a dwelling in a bushfire prone area:

New houses built in Victoria must meet all of the Victorian building regulations that are current at the time of construction. East Gippsland, as with a lot of Victoria, is deemed to be a bushfire prone area. In addition to other building requirements, dwellings built in bushfire prone areas are required to have a Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment and meet construction requirements for the applicable BAL rating.

Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating:

A BAL rating is a measure of possible fire intensity at a proposed house location. BAL ratings are assessed by a range of factors, including distance of the proposed house to threat vegetation, type of vegetation, and the slope of the land.

There are 6 BAL ratings: LOW, 12.5, 19, 29, 40 and FZ (flame zone).

Construction requirements get progressively more stringent as the BAL rating increases. A house must be designed and built in accordance with the property's assessed BAL rating, to meet or exceed all the construction requirements for this rating.

It may be possible to reduce a BAL rating by relocating a dwelling to a different footprint of a property or

creating greater separation between a dwelling and threat vegetation.

Bushfire Management Overlay:

The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) is a planning control that applies to bushfire prone areas with particularly high risk of bushfires. Most properties in East Gippsland are covered by the BMO. For house construction in the BMO, there is a requirement to obtain a planning permit.

The planning permit application needs to ensure that mandatory bushfire protection measures are appropriately addressed, including construction to the designated BAL rating, defendable space, ongoing vegetation management, and water supply and access.

Defendable space:

Defendable space refers to an area around a proposed building where vegetation and other flammable materials are managed to a low-threat level, to reduce the fire risk to the building and its occupants.

In an area designated as defendable space, the following requirements apply:

- Grass must be short cropped and maintained during declared fire danger periods.
- All leaves and vegetation debris must be removed at regular intervals during declared fire danger periods.
- No plants greater than 10 centimetres in height are allowed within 3 metres of a window.
- Shrubs must not be located under the canopy of trees.
- Individual shrubs and clumps of shrubs must not exceed 5 square metres and must be separated by at least 5m.
- Trees must not overhang or touch any part of the building.
- Tree canopies must be separated by at least 5m.

- There must be at least 2m clearance between the lowest tree branches and ground level.
- Within 10m of a building, flammable objects must not be located close to vulnerable parts of the building, such as windows, doors, decking or eaves.

Water supply:

Where dwellings are built in bushfire prone areas, there is a need to provide a dedicated water supply for firefighting purposes.

This water cannot be used for domestic purposes or used on a garden. The amount of water required for property defense depends on the size of the lot. The BAL rating of a home does not affect the water supply requirements.

A water tank for firefighting needs to meet the following requirements:

- Above ground tank constructed of concrete or metal.
- All fixed above-ground water pipes and fittings required for firefighting purposes are to be made of corrosion-resistant metal.
- Include a separate outlet for occupant use.

The following additional requirements apply only where 10,000 litres water supply is needed:

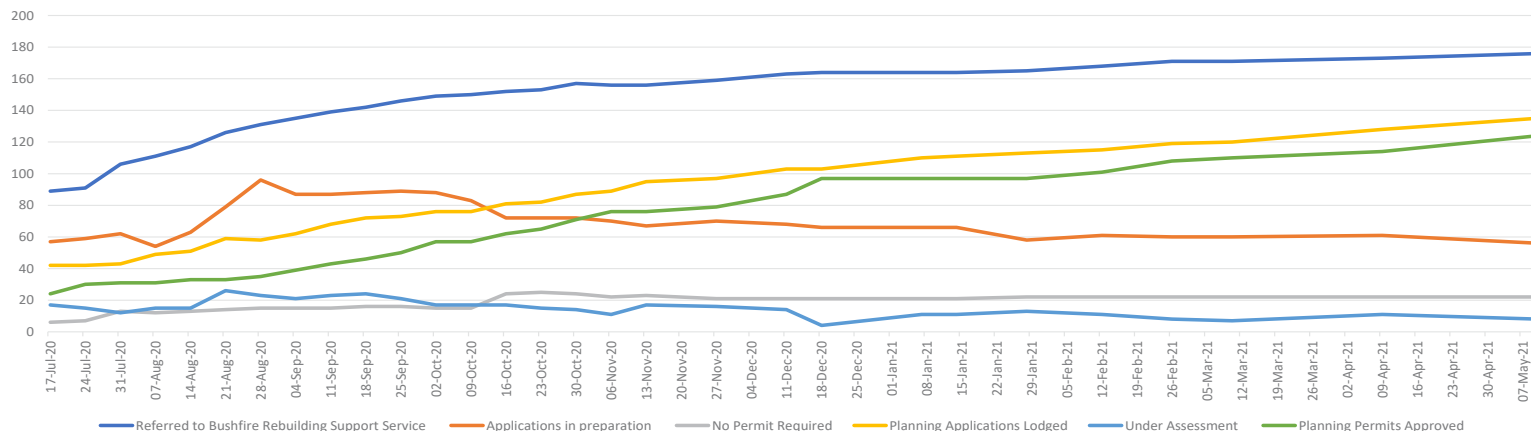
- Readily identifiable from the building or with appropriate signage to the satisfaction of the CFA.
- Located within 60m of the furthest edge of the building.
- The outlet/s of the water tank must be within 4m of the accessway and unobstructed.
- Incorporate a 65mm separate ball or gate valve and coupling.
- Pipework and fittings to be a minimum of 65mm (excluding the CFA coupling).

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East Gippsland Shire Council Rebuild Support Service May 2021 Status



East Gippsland Shire Council Rebuild Support Service				
Referred to Rebuilding Support Service			176	
Applications in Preparation			56	
No Permit Required			22	
Other Status	Advice Only – No Further Action / Private Consultant		21	89
	Not Rebuilding		14	
	Planning Permit Application Approved		45	
	Planning Permit Application Lodged		9	
Assessment and determination of Planning Permits				
Planning Applications Lodged			135	
Under Assessment			8	
Planning Permits Approved			124	

If the required water supply is 5,000 litres, the requirements for CFA fittings and access for fire trucks do not apply. The water supply is for occupant use in the event of a fire and it is acceptable to provide standard tank fittings, though residents are advised to consider fittings that would enable a water pump to be attached.

Access:

Where access for firefighting purposes needs to be provided on a property, it must meet the following requirements:

- All weather construction.
- A load limit of at least 15 tonnes.
- A minimum road/track width of 3.5m.
- Be clear of encroachments for at least 0.5m on each side and at least 4m vertically.
- Designed to comply with rules around curve radius, gradients and dips.

- Incorporate a turning area for fire fighting vehicles close to the building.
- Incorporate passing bays at least every 200m which must be at least 20m long and have a minimum trafficable width of 6m.

Bushfire shelters:

For people who stay to defend their homes or find themselves unable to leave, a private bushfire shelter can provide temporary refuge from the immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire. Such shelters should not be considered a substitute for creating a bushfire plan and leaving early.

Bushfire shelters must meet strict performance requirements set out in the National Construction Code, such as having safe access and maintaining acceptable internal conditions when occupied during a bushfire. In Victoria, private bushfire shelters must be accredited by the Building Regulations Advisory

Committee (BRAC), approved for use by the Building Appeals Board, or certified by a registered fire safety engineer.

BRAC has accredited four private bushfire shelters from three companies – Wildfire Safety Bunkers, Frankston Concrete Products and Innovative Building Systems.

A building permit is required to install a bushfire shelter on your property. Any bushfire shelter installed without a building permit could place its occupants at serious risk of injury or even death if it is used during a bushfire.

The Victorian Building Authority advises very strongly against the construction and installation of do-it-yourself bushfire shelters, such as those constructed from converted water tanks and shipping containers. It is illegal to build a bushfire shelter, claiming it is for storage or other purposes, when it is intended as a refuge during a bushfire.

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Planning and building changes since 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires

The Black Saturday Bushfires that impacted Victorian communities in 2009 killed 173 people and destroyed over 2,000 houses.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission that was set up following these fires made 67 recommendations to strengthen preparedness and response to fire events. 19 of these recommendations related to planning and building, of which the following are the changes that have most impacted how planning applications for bushfire rebuilds are assessed.

- Amended Victorian Planning Provisions to give priority to the protection of human life.
- Amended guidelines for the CFA's assessment of permit applications.
- Enduring planning permit conditions to create and maintain minimum defensible space for the life of the development.
- Include reducing the risk of ember attack as an objective of the Australian Standard for Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas.

More stringent requirements add to the cost of rebuilding after a fire, but these measures have been put in place or strengthened to help preserve life and property in future fire events.

Complex sites

While rebuilding a home is not easy and takes time, most landowners have what is considered a typical rebuild, where it is relatively straightforward to obtain planning and building permits, to enable construction of the new dwelling. However, some rebuilds will be complex and this is generally due to having a high Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating or being located in an area with a very high fire risk.

Owners of complex sites face greater challenges building a home that is safe to live in, at reasonable cost.

The RSS actively works with owners of complex sites to investigate pathways through to a rebuild, in collaboration with other agencies as required, including CFA and DELWP. In some cases, to date, a planning permit has been successfully negotiated for residents whose properties were originally considered complex.

Bushfire Recovery Case Support workers also work with owners on further options for support. It is highly recommended that owners of complex properties connect with case support.

Complex Site Taskforce

The Complex Site Taskforce (CSTF) is an independent panel of experts set up by the Victorian Government to provide specific advice and recommendations for rebuilding on properties that are considered complex. Landowners must have used the property as their primary place of residence to qualify for referral to the CSTF.

Some East Gippsland residents have now taken up the opportunity to be referred to the CSTF for specialist advice.

CSTF referrals are made by the RSS, but property owners need to give written consent for the referral to be made. If the landowner chooses not to be referred, then details regarding the property will not be provided to the CSTF.

Taskforce members do not visit the property or hold discussions with landowners; they use their expertise in bushfire behaviour, planning, risk assessment and housing design to review property details and provide advice. This advice is tailored to the individual property and may include recommendations on location

and orientation of the dwelling on the property, building design, BAL construction level and site-specific fire mitigation measures.

CSTF advice is provided back to the resident via the RSS, usually in about 5-6 weeks from when the referral was made. It is also provided to Council's planning department.

Recommendations from the CSTF, whilst not formal legal requirements, are considered expert advice by Council and the referral authorities. For high risk, complex sites, a voluntary resettlement program is available as an option for owners, to sell their property to the Victorian Government at an agreed site value. This is offered as a last resort for eligible landowners.

Government rebates

There are a range of rebates available through the state government to assist in meeting some rebuild expenses.

- Bushfire Recovery Planning and Building Assistance Rebate Program: For professional services and assessments to support planning and building permit applications.
- Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program: To replace rainwater and/or septic tanks at a primary place of residence.
- Geotechnical Assessment Rebate Program: To undertake geotechnical assessments.

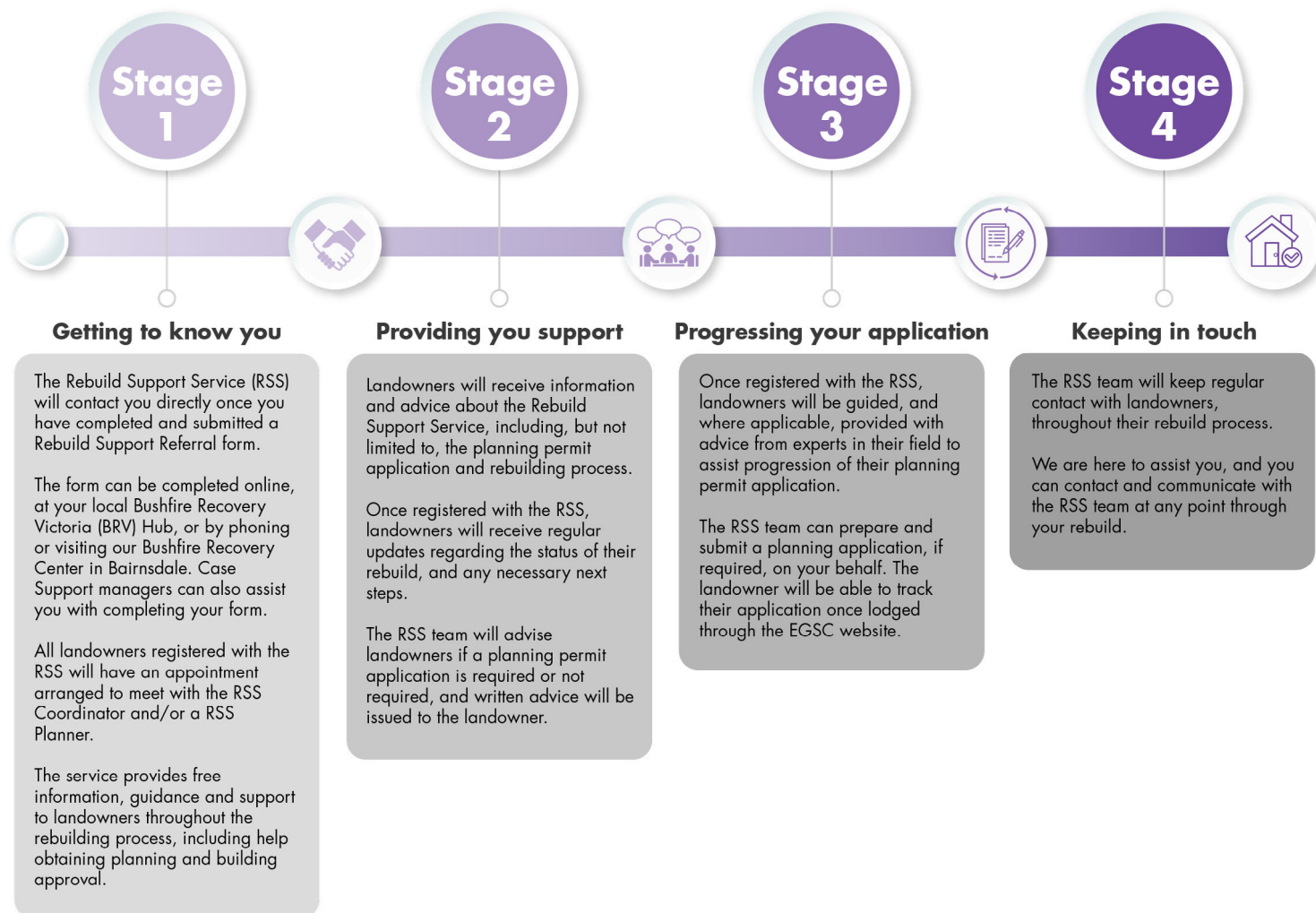
Each of these programs has specific funding limits and eligibility criteria, so you are encouraged to speak with your Recovery Case Support Worker or one of the Bushfire Recovery Victoria hub coordinators to discuss your eligibility and for assistance to apply. In all cases, the rebate is offered as a reimbursement of costs that you have incurred, so you should keep invoices and receipts as you will need these to apply.

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How we help your bushfire rebuild



Useful links

Obtain a copy of your certificate of title and other land documents at www.landata.vic.gov.au

Find information about wastewater and septic tanks - www.epa.vic.gov.au

BRV

<https://www.vic.gov.au/your-property>

<https://www.vic.gov.au/rebuilding-support>

CFA

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/>
<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/>

DELWP

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/bushfire>

VBA

<https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/bushfire/rebuilding>



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