



Media Release



KEVIN RUDD
Prime Minister of Australia
JOHN BRUMBY
Premier of Victoria

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SITE CLEAN-UP PROGRAM TO PAVE THE WAY FOR REBUILDING

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments will fund and deliver the site clean-up and demolition program crucial to rebuilding communities devastated by the bushfires, the Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd and the Premier of Victoria John Brumby announced today.

Mr Rudd said the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments had agreed to jointly fund the clean-up and demolition program, with work set to begin this week.

“The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have promised to rebuild fire-affected communities brick by brick – and this clean-up and demolition program is the key first step in our commitment,” Mr Rudd said.

“Delivering a government-funded program that is sensitive, safe and timely will help families and communities to focus on rebuilding and putting their lives back together.”

The program will be voluntary. For people who elect to take up the offer, the service will be free of charge. For the small number of people who have already engaged licensed contractors, they will be reimbursed.

Many households are facing clean-up and demolition bills running into the tens of thousands of dollars. This program, funded by both levels of Government, will ensure they can spend that money on rebuilding their homes.

Mr Brumby said the clean-up and demolition program would take at least six months and involve multiple crews working simultaneously across fire-affected communities.

“We will work with local communities in the delivery of the program. The size and scope of the rebuilding task cannot be under-estimated, but nor can the resolve of communities and all levels of Government,” Mr Brumby said.

“We are determined to push ahead with the task of rebuilding communities as quickly as we possibly can, without delay. This decision represents a major step forward for fire-affected communities.

“The risk of hazards, such as asbestos, is so high, that Governments are taking these extraordinary steps to pave the way for rebuilding.

“We have seen the strength of human endeavour over the past fortnight, with communities determined to rebuild. The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments are with those communities every step of the way.”

Federal Minister for Families Jenny Macklin said the clean-up and demolition works are an important first step in helping communities get on with the task of rebuilding their lives.

“The clean-up is a major step in the rebuilding process. We are determined to use all our available resources to help those who have lost so much in the fires,” Ms Macklin said.

“This program will ensure the necessary demolition works are carried out sensitively and with the appropriate respect and care.”

The Victorian Government is close to finalising negotiations with a project manager for the program, which is expected to draw on the skills of local, appropriately qualified and licensed, tradespeople in affected communities.

The demolition program is expected to run for approximately six months, pending the necessary work of Office of the Victorian Coroner and Victoria Police.

The key steps of the process are:

- The Coroner with Victoria Police approve access to the site;
- Site assessment for risk, and removal of risks such as burnt gas bottles, dangerous trees, unstable chimneys;
- Site owners given an opportunity for a final recovery of any possessions at the site;
- The site will be cleared by licensed contractors.

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments will release the cost of the program; the name of the contractor; and details of program registration once negotiations are concluded.

The contractor will release the schedule of works shortly thereafter.

The costs for clean-up and demolition will be shared equally by the Australian and Victorian Governments.