



Environment Protection Authority

Aboriginal lands clean-up program

Bushfire Recovery Program



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Published by:

NSW Environment Protection Authority
4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street, Parramatta NSW 2150
Locked bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124
Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)
Phone: 131 555 (NSW only – environment information and publications requests)
Fax: +61 2 9995 5999
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 131 555
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 131 555
Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

Report pollution and environmental incidents
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@epa.nsw.gov.au
See also www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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Consistent with the principles under OCHRE, the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs, the priorities and methods of assessment and clean-up will be determined by Aboriginal communities.

About the NSW Environment Protection Authority

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is an independent statutory authority and the principal environmental regulator in NSW.

It leads the state's response to managing a diverse range of activities that can impact on the health of the NSW environment and its people, using a mix of tools, including education; partnerships; licensing and approvals; and audit, enforcement and financial mechanisms. The EPA is empowered under the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991 (POEA Act).

About the Bushfire Recovery Program Package

In late 2019 and early 2020, bushfires devastated NSW, causing significant damage to communities, infrastructure and the environment. In response, the NSW and Commonwealth Governments established a clean-up program for bushfire-generated waste in January 2020.

In addition to this program, the NSW Government has allocated up to \$95 million for the EPA to deliver a package of five Bushfire Recovery Programs.

The Bushfire Recovery Programs Package addresses ongoing bushfire waste challenges faced by public land managers in NSW. The five Bushfire Recovery Programs are outlined below. For program closing dates, please visit the [EPA website](#).

Bushfire-Generated Green Waste Clean-Up and Processing

This program is a \$45 million initiative to manage up to 500,000 tonnes of green waste generated by the 2019–20 bushfires – waste that would otherwise present significant environmental, safety and bushfire risks.

Aboriginal Lands

The Aboriginal Lands Program, covered by this document, is a \$20 million support package to help Aboriginal landowners and communities assess, plan and organise the clean-up of waste, and to repair or rebuild infrastructure, following the 2019–20 bushfires.

Note: To reduce double handling, the Aboriginal Lands Program includes relevant aspects of the other four programs. Local Aboriginal Land Councils should apply for funding only through this program.

FenceCycle

The FenceCycle Program provides \$10 million to support councils in collecting and recycling the metal components of burnt rural fencing from bushfire-affected landholders.

Bushfire Recovery Program for Council Landfills

This program provides \$15 million to support councils in their bushfire recovery. It is intended to ensure councils are no worse off as a result of receiving bushfire-generated waste at their landfills, a commitment made by the NSW Government as part of the statewide clean-up program.

Bushfire Dumping

This is a \$5 million program that seeks to reduce the environmental and financial impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires by helping public land managers

- clean up and dispose of bushfire-related waste that has been illegally dumped on public land
- implement prevention and deterrence measures that will reduce dumping in the future.

If you are eligible, the EPA encourages you to apply for grants under each of the programs in the Bushfire Recovery Package. Each program has been designed to address specific waste challenges, providing an opportunity to receive assistance to target several bushfire waste issues.

Aboriginal Lands Clean-up Program

Purpose

This program aims to support Local Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal land managers to assess, plan and organise the clean-up on their lands. It aligns with the EPA's role as a leader, partner and protector for our community and the environment.

Objectives

Key to this process will be working with and taking guidance from Aboriginal landowners and communities. Consistent with the principles under OCHRE, the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs, the priorities and methods of assessment and clean-up will be determined by Aboriginal communities. This process will require some time, to enable relationships to be built with communities and for communities to consider what they need.

The specific objectives of the program are to

- ensure Aboriginal land managers and their communities are not left with significant deficits as a result of fire damage to their land and infrastructure
- increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities to collect and recycle waste from their bushfire affected lands
- provide regional employment opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous companies.

Eligibility

Eligible bodies are Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other Aboriginal land managers (Aboriginal Organisations or Corporations) conducting clean-up projects from the 2019-20 summer bushfires, which are not eligible for the initial government-funded bushfire clean-up program.

Works covered in the program include

- clean-up of bushfire-affected infrastructure such as cultural centres, cultural sites, sheds, fences, office buildings and signage
- removal and remediation of bushfire impacted contaminated lands
- removal of hazardous trees or green waste restricting access to sites
- clean-up and repair of access trails
- clean-up of illegally dumped bushfire and legacy waste
- installation of illegal dumping deterrence measures to restrict access to Aboriginal lands (fences, bollards, rock barriers or signage).

How to apply

To register for the program, complete the [online application form here](#). The EPA will then contact you to discuss the damage and assess your eligibility.

What happens next?

Once the area is declared safe, the EPA will meet with you onsite and conduct an inspection. The Aboriginal lands representative will approve the scope of works and the clean-up of the lands will start.

After the clean-up, the Aboriginal lands representative will confirm that the agreed scope of works has been completed.

Assessing program works

The scope of works for each application will be reviewed by a program working group, established by the EPA. The group will assess each program of works and will recommend prioritisation of the works to be undertaken. No applicant can be guaranteed funding to complete the works.

Unsuccessful applicants will be advised in writing and given the opportunity to seek feedback by contacting the EPA. Decisions by the EPA are final. There is no appeal process.

Any concerns about the program or individual applications should be submitted in writing to bushfirerecovery.programs@epa.nsw.gov.au. If you do not agree with the way the EPA has handled the issue, you may wish to contact the Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) via ombo.nsw.gov.au.

What you need to do

Use this checklist to ensure you complete your registration for the program.

- Read these guidelines carefully
- Check eligibility requirements
- Opt-in to the program by completing the [online application form here](#).
- Visit the EPA's website for the program's [closing dates](#)

Key dates

Visit the EPA's website for the program's closing [dates](#).

Where to get help

Bushfire Recovery Programs Team

Please contact the Bushfire Recovery Programs Team if you have questions or need help at any point during the program.

Phone: 131 555

Email: bushfirerecovery.programs@epa.nsw.gov.au

Additional program resources

Additional resources for the program are available on the [program website, including a fact sheet.](#)