

Progress

The Government-funded NSW bushfire clean-up program continues to progress at pace with more than 2,800 bushfire affected properties cleared across the State as at 30 June, giving communities the chance to start again.

In order to achieve this, managing contractor Laing O'Rourke has more than 120 crews working across 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in more than 250 localities, supporting in excess of 1,000 jobs.

Together these teams have logged tens of thousands of hours of clean-up work and safely moved more than 250,000 tonnes of waste.

The primary purpose of the Government clean-up is to make properties safe and to clean up destroyed homes and businesses. It is an **opt-in** program which means residents and business owners **must register** through Service NSW to be included.

No one left behind

We know that for some people, the recovery journey can start later than for others, but we encourage everyone to come forward and ask for assistance by opting-in for the free clean-up as soon as you feel up to it.

Following their appointment in late January 2020, Laing O'Rourke quickly began procuring contractors to get boots and excavators on the ground as swiftly and safely as possible.

With the devastating fires still active, the clean-up team began to clear properties. At that point, the estimated project scope was 2,800 properties.

The NSW Government ambitiously set the target of clearing the **vast majority** of these **by June 30**.

This has been achieved.

As the clean-up continued to roll out and then accelerated, our commitment turned to ensuring no one is left behind, uncovering all eligible properties and securing their registration, so owners across the state can start to re-build their lives and heal.

Owners have heard the call for registrations and the **uptake has grown significantly over five months**. To ensure no stone was left unturned, teams have focused on extensive community engagement and advertising efforts in each LGA. Today, **eligible property registrations have grown to more than 3,500**.

We are proud that this targeted engagement has resulted in a **25 per cent increase in eligible registered properties since March**. This means the program will extend into July and beyond, allowing for the clearance of the 700 estimated remaining eligible properties.

Every bushfire affected property cleared gives a family the chance to plan their new home, a farmer the chance to get back to working on the land and brings a business owner closer to opening their doors.

It is important to note that these clearances have been achieved despite various challenges like finding new ways of working to observe social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, or delays as a result of rainy and inclement weather, flooding in some areas of NSW impeding access to many bushfire affected areas, or availability of specialist machinery.

Currently, there are specialist teams working to find the most efficient way to clean-up some of the final and most challenging bushfire affected properties.

A number of these are located in extremely remote parts of the state, beyond damaged bridges, or over difficult river crossings. There's no doubt that clearing these final properties will be a challenge, but we're committed to getting it done.

What happens after June 30?

We are pleased to have achieved our initial goal of clearing the **vast majority of properties**, however works will continue to progress beyond June 30.

Laing O'Rourke and Public Works Advisory will continue working with Councils, the Rural Fire Service and local branches of Service NSW to data match and proactively contact anyone identified as having experienced bushfire damage to ensure they are aware of the program and registration process.

So far, this data matching has uncovered more than 100 additional registrations across the State, a number we expect to rise as these calls continue to be completed.

There is no final date to register

We continue to take registrations and the program will be operational for as long as we receive new registrations. There is no end date to opt-in.

Laing O'Rourke will continue to work through July to ensure remaining eligible registered properties are safely cleared.

Registrations and Eligibility

As the NSW Government's bushfire clean-up program is open for anyone to register, the total number of registrations is not the same as the total number of properties that will be found eligible and cleared.

There are a number of reasons for this. For example, a property owner may have registered their property multiple times or may have registered but then undertaken the clean-up themselves via their insurance company or a property owner may have registered to see if they are eligible for assistance.

Currently, approximately 3,500 properties are eligible for clean-up. This number may change as more registrations are lodged.

The NSW Government will clean-up all eligible properties – having debris physically cleared is a milestone that cannot be underestimated. We will support the people of NSW on their recovery journey and we will not leave anyone behind.

What about those doing the clean up through their insurer?

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

Those property owners that have completed the clean-up through their insurer may be eligible for reimbursement of clean-up costs. Eligibility is dependent on individual insurance policies. Contact your insurance company to start the reimbursement process.

Volumes of Waste

The primary focus of the clean-up is to remove destroyed or damaged buildings and associated safety hazards and debris that could impede people rebuilding their homes or businesses.

The clean-up program has already safely removed over 250,000 tonnes of waste from

homes and businesses across bushfire affected NSW, coordinated for recycling or taken to licensed landfill facilities. Of this, half was asbestos contaminated.

Local subcontractor engagement

Qualified local contractors and suppliers have been engaged, where possible, to deliver clean-up services to ensure the operation maximises local knowledge and expertise and assists local economic recovery.

To date, more than 90 subcontractors have been engaged on the clean-up. The vast majority are small (78 per cent) or medium (21 per cent) sized businesses and 99 per cent of them are working in the LGA where they are based or the one next door, helping to keep money in areas impacted by the bushfires.

FAQs, Fact Sheet, Scope and Asbestos Program Links

Bushfire Recovery FAQs are available on the Service NSW site [HERE](#).

Bushfire Recovery Clean-Up Fact Sheet is available on Service NSW site [HERE](#).

Bushfire Clean-Up Scope Overview is available on the Service NSW site [HERE](#).

Asbestos Awareness During Bushfire Clean-Up is available on Service NSW site [HERE](#).

Registration contact details

Anyone can register by calling **13 77 88** or visiting <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/register-opt-nsw-bushfire-clean>.

Every person who has registered should have heard from Laing O'Rourke about their clean-up by now.

If you think you might be registered but you're not sure or you haven't heard from the team, please get in touch.

You can check your registration by calling 1800 007 539 or emailing nswbushfirecleanup@laingorourke.com.au.

Anyone who has already registered is encouraged to ensure their friends, family and neighbours have also registered so they too can utilise this free service.