



Rob Stokes
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUSHFIRE REBUILD TO BE EXEMPT FROM KOALA POLICY

The NSW Government is cutting red tape to help homeowners affected by the devastating 2019-20 bushfire season get back on their feet by allowing them to clear land and rebuild without doing koala habitat surveys.

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes said the changes to the *Koala SEPP* have been shaped by feedback from councils and fire-affected local communities and were necessary to facilitate the safe and timely rebuilding and repair of homes.

“What those people went through was devastating and while protecting the habitat of our koalas is vital, we must make it easier for those who lost everything in last summer’s traumatic bushfires,” Mr Stokes said.

“What we have done is include a provision in the *Koala SEPP* to allow homeowners impacted by the bushfires to clear the land around where their home previously stood in order to rebuild more quickly.

“It’s the role of government to change things for the better when and where we can and there is a clear need to support these people right now. By allowing them to clear and develop their land without considering these requirements, it will save them much-needed money and time.”

The change is supported by a number of checks and balances to ensure development does not impact koalas, including requiring any rebuilding of homes destroyed by fire in the last five years to occur on the same site.

The amendment will enable an Asset Protection Zone to be created around the damaged or destroyed home and any clearing and development within this area will not need to consider the *Koala SEPP*, saving applicants time and money in the development application process.

“NSW has faced an unprecedented series of catastrophic events from flooding, bushfires to COVID-19. Our regional communities are doing it tough and we need to support them in any way we can.”

The Guidelines to the *Koala SEPP* were recently exhibited. The Department Of Planning, Industry and Environment is now carefully reviewing the 2,200 submissions made. The draft will be revised taking into account issues raised in submissions.

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