

Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program FAQs

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Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program

1. What is the Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program?

- The Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program (the program) will support households impacted by the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires to have safe access to usable water, safe disposal of wastewater, and to reduce the financial burden of rebuilding.
- Support under the program will be available for work completed since the commencement of the bushfires on 21 November 2019 until 31 May 2023, to allow time for households who are rebuilding to access the rebate.
- The support will be provided as a rebate payment to eligible applicants. The rebate allows for eligible households to reclaim expenses accrued, on proof of receipt, to repair, replace or install a primary use rainwater tank and/or septic system.
- Rebates for primary use rainwater tanks and septic systems are available to households who are unable to connect to reticulated (water mains or sewerage) systems and require an alternative primary source of usable water and safe disposal of wastewater.
- Further support is available for households who require a water tank for firefighting purposes or need to install the appropriate outlets to an existing water tank as part of the requirement under the Bushfire Management Overlay (Appendix A).
- Rebates are also available for reconnection costs in situations where in other cases, a rainwater or septic tank system may be undamaged and will just need reconnections or minor work to become operational again; or for households who are able to connect to reticulated (water mains or sewerage) systems but need to cover work to reconnect to the system or reconnection fees charged by their local water corporation.
- This program does not intend to take the ongoing responsibility of domestic wastewater management from Local Government.

2. Who can apply for support under the program?

- The owner of a home that has damage to the home, primary rainwater and/or primary septic system, which was directly caused by bushfire, as verified through the bushfire recovery clean-up process – or – a home whose primary non reticulated water supply source has been impacted by the bushfire and an alternative supply is required.
- Applicants are eligible who are either:
 - Not on a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system and:
 - require a rainwater tank and/or septic system for primary use; and/or
 - To conform with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay, require a water tank for firefighting purposes or need to install the appropriate outlets to your current water tank; and/or
 - Require minor reconnections or repairs to your current tank systems.
 - Or:
 - Are on a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system and:
 - To conform with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay, require a water tank for firefighting purposes or need to install the appropriate outlets to your current water tank; and/or

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- Required to cover the cost of works or fees to reconnect to your local water corporations reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system.
- Intending to rebuild your home on the same property or in the same local government region municipality (East Gippsland Shire or Towong Shire) and require rainwater and/or septic tank installations, repairs, or reconnections.

3. What can I get a rebate for under the program?

- The program will provide support for:
 - Up to half the cost of the following:
 - the purchase and installation of a new primary use rainwater tank system for homes that have had their source of non-reticulated (water mains) primary use water supply impacted by the bushfires, up to a maximum of \$3,000.
 - the purchase and installation of a new water tank for firefighting purposes, or the installations of appropriate outlets to your current water tank, for homes impacted by the bushfires, up to a maximum of \$3,000.
 - the purchase and installation of a new primary use septic tank system for homes impacted by the bushfires, up to a maximum of \$15,000.
 - The full cost of the following:
 - the initial refill of the rainwater tank specifically installed as part of this program, up to a maximum cap of \$500.
 - Any combination of assessments required to get council approval to install or alter a septic system including condition reports undertaken by a qualified plumber and Land Capability Assessments, up to a maximum of \$1,500.
 - any minor repairs or reconnections required if the tank systems are undamaged and comply with current standards – or –any work or reconnection fees required to reconnect to a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system, up to a maximum of \$2,500.
- The program will also cover relevant associated costs including: the purchase of rainwater or septic tank system, associated plumbing and materials connected to system, installation costs and delivery charges – up to the maximum outlined above.

4. What will not be considered for funding?

- The program will not fund the following:
 - Routine or ongoing maintenance activities.
 - Operating costs, for example electricity costs to pump the septic tank systems, maintenance costs.
 - Any additional materials connected to the systems (e.g., toilets, bathroom fittings etc.).
 - Upgrades or improvements to septic systems that have not been damaged or are on properties that have not been impacted by the bushfires.
 - Applications received after 31 May 2023.

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5. What will I be responsible for after receiving support through the program?

- Residents will be responsible for any ongoing maintenance and operational costs of the system they are installing on their property. This includes additional rainwater tank refills, treatment and servicing of septic systems, and energy costs associated with pumping or running of the systems.
- For septic systems, where a property is served by a treatment system other than a gravity-flow primary treatment and land application system, it is mandatory that the property owner has an accredited and trained service technician routinely service and maintain the treatment unit and land application system in accordance with the Septic Use Permit conditions.

6. Who will deliver the program?

- Melbourne Water is responsible for administering this program on behalf of the Victorian Government.

7. When do applications close?

- Applications must be submitted by 31 May 2023: 11:59pm.

8. What updates have been made to the support and eligibility of the program?

- The program has been updated to expand the eligibility requirements to further support community recovery from the bushfires.
- It was identified during the first year of the program that there were still gaps or unmet community needs that could be addressed through the program to support households to have safe access to usable water and safe disposal of wastewater.
- The expanded support and eligibility include:
 - Removal of the principal place of residence eligibility requirement – this allows for all impacted households to be supported in the communities of Towong and East Gippsland Shires.
 - Expansion of the program to encourage not only replacement of rainwater tanks or septic systems, but to encourage new installations – this allows for households to shift away from using alternative water sources (such as pumping water from a creek) towards a primary use water tank if they did not have them prior to the bushfires.
 - Inclusion of rebates to cover minor works and reconnection costs for households connecting to reticulated systems to reduce the financial burden of the rebuild process. In some cases, people have moved from remote areas into towns or as part of their rebuilding will need to reconnect to the reticulated systems of their local water corporation.
 - Further support to provide rebates for the installation of rainwater tanks for firefighting purposes – this supports households to install a water tank for firefighting purposes or install the appropriate outlets to their current water tank, to conform with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay.
- The changes to the program still meet its core objective – provide financial support so that households impacted by the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires have safe access to usable water, safe disposal of wastewater and to reduce the financial burden of rebuilding

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Eligibility

1. Who is eligible to apply?

- To be eligible for the rebate you must satisfy the following:
 - The owner of a home that has damage to the home, primary rainwater and/or primary septic system, which was directly caused by bushfire, as verified through the bushfire recovery clean-up process or a home whose primary non reticulated water supply source has been impacted by the bushfire and an alternative supply is required.
 - Either:
 - Not on a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system and:
 - require a rainwater tank and/or septic system for primary use; and/or
 - To conform with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay, require a water tank for firefighting purposes or need to install the appropriate outlets to your current water tank; and/or
 - Require minor reconnections or repairs to your current tank systems.
 - Or
 - On a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system and:
 - To conform with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay, require a water tank for firefighting purposes or need to install the appropriate outlets to your current water tank; and/or
 - Required to cover the cost of works or fees to reconnect to your local water corporations reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system.
 - Intending to rebuild your home on the same property or in the same municipality (East Gippsland Shire or Towong Shire) and require rainwater and/or septic tank installations, repairs, or reconnections.
 - You have sought funds through any available insurance arrangements prior to seeking assistance from this program.
 - In addition, to be eligible for support you must:
 - Ensure all rainwater and/or septic tanks are designed, manufactured, and certified to the relevant Australian Standards and installation complies with current building standards.
 - Seek and comply with relevant approvals including: a permit to install/alter a septic tank; Land Capability Assessment; and Planning Permit from their local council.
 - Ensure you use an appropriately licensed and accredited plumber when required.

2. Who is not eligible to apply?

- You are not eligible to apply if:
 - The damage was not directly from 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires.
 - The cost and installation of the rainwater and/or septic tanks were fully covered through available insurance arrangements.
 - You have received support through other Commonwealth, State, or other government programs, or through philanthropic sources (i.e., Red Cross), that has been used

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towards replacement of destroyed or significantly damaged rainwater and/or septic tanks.

- You have already received support for the installation of both a primary rainwater and/or primary septic tank replacement through this program.
- For homes that are on a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system only applications for water tanks for firefighting purposes and reconnection costs will be accepted.
- Similarly, applications for septic tank funding will not be accepted for homes that can connect to a reticulated sewerage system, as agreed with your water corporation.

3. What areas did the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires impact?

- The 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires directly impacted the Local Government Areas of Towong and East Gippsland.

4. If I have already completed works, am I still eligible for the program?

- Support under the program will be available for any work completed since the commencement of the bushfires on 21 November 2019.
- Eligible households can apply for a standard rebate under the program. Verification of satisfactory installation and receipts for works must be submitted together with the application.

5. Can I apply for a rebate if I am on a reticulated water system?

- Households serviced via a reticulated water supply provided by your local urban water corporation can only apply for a water tank for firefighting purposes to confirm with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay, or to cover the cost of works or fees to reconnect to your local water corporations reticulated system

6. Do I need to use a local supplier and/or service provider?

- It is strongly encouraged that you source local suppliers and service providers to support wider community recovery.
- However, to allow for flexibility and in case there may be a limited number of specialised local service providers it will not be a mandatory requirement of the program.

7. Do I need to use an accredited plumber to install my rainwater or septic tank?

- Yes, where appropriate. When installing a rainwater or septic tank, getting a condition report on your septic system, or conducting any minor repairs or reconnections as part of this program make sure you use an accredited plumber.
- Further information on this process is available on the **Accredited Plumber Fact Sheet**

8. How do I find a licenced potable water carter to fill up my rainwater tank?

- Contact your Local Council for a list of approved licenced potable water carters that you can use to fill up your new rainwater tank system.

9. Do I need to be insured to apply for this program?

- No, you do not need to be insured to be eligible for this program.

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10. If I have already claimed for insurance can I apply for this program?

- The Victorian Government may decline to make any payment where a landholder is claiming or has claimed such costs under their own insurance arrangements or other Government schemes or programs for the relevant damage or loss.

11. Can I apply for a rebate if I have recently purchased the property/was not the landowner at the time of the damage?

- No. You will not be eligible to apply for a rebate if you were not the landowner at the time of the damage. For example, if you have recently purchased a property in an eligible region but were not the owner at the time of the damage caused directly by the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires.

12. How do I apply for a primary use rainwater tank if my alternative source of water has been impacted by the bushfires?

- If your alternative water source has been impacted by the fires, for example you pumped water from a creek and the water quality has since been impacted from post fire sediment, and you cannot connect to a reticulated (water mains) system, you are eligible for a rebate for a primary use rainwater tank
- You will need to provide a clean-up completion certificate from BRV (or evidence that demonstrates your property has been through a bushfire damage clean-up process)
- If this is not available, verification that your property or property's primary water source has been directly impacted by the bushfires will be required to be supplied from a recovery support worker or case worker via letter or email.
- The use of the recovery support or case workers assists the assessment process as they will have local knowledge and experience of the impacts to communities within your local region and will be able to have a more informed discussion with you about your personal circumstances.
- The recovery support or case workers will be able to personally discuss with you the impact of the bushfires on your water source, confirm that your address is in an eligible municipality, and verify that the property overlaps with the bushfire impact zone and impacted waterway and catchment areas.
- Other supporting evidence you may have, such as photographs of the impacts on your water source, or water quality measurements would also assist the assessment process, however these are not essential.
- The recovery support worker or case worker will be able to work with you through this process and provide a letter or email of support to assist Melbourne Water in their assessment process.
- If you have any extenuating circumstances that have caused unforeseen costs or have impacted your eligibility, you can also contact Melbourne Water directly to discuss your application.

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Application Process

1. How do I apply?

- Support under the program will be available for any work completed since the commencement of the bushfires on 21 November 2019. Eligible households can apply for a standard rebate under the program. They will supply verification of satisfactory installation and receipts for works with the application.
- Once you have all the information needed and are ready to apply head to the application page: www.melbournewater.com.au/Bushfire-rebates – or - complete an application form and email or post to Melbourne Water, together with the supporting documentation

2. What supporting documents will need to be provided?

Please submit the following documents with your application:

- If you own the property, you will need to provide:
 - identification to confirm applicant details; and
 - evidence that shows the property address and confirms ownership (e.g., rate notices, certificate of title)
- If you are acting on behalf of the owner of the property, you will need to provide:
 - identification to confirm your details; and
 - Evidence that you have permission to act on behalf of the owner (e.g., a signed letter with the owner's full name and details); and
 - evidence that shows the property address and confirms ownership details (e.g., rate notices, certificate of title)
- Clean up completion certificate from BRV (or evidence that demonstrates your property has been through a bushfire damage clean-up process)
 - If this is not available, verification that your property or property's primary water source has been directly impacted by the bushfires will be required to be supplied from a recovery support worker or case worker via letter or email.
- Receipts and tax invoice/s (copies are acceptable) for the purchase and installation of the rainwater and/or septic tank – Or –
- Receipts and tax invoice/s (copies are acceptable) for the purchase and installation of a water tank for firefighting purposes – Or –
- Receipts and tax invoice/s (copies are acceptable) for minor repairs or reconnections of your existing system – or – for reticulated (water mains or sewerage) reconnection costs.
- When required, a copy of compliance certificate from your licensed plumber on completion of relevant work (i.e., installation or connection works)
- Details of the account that the funding support will be deposited – this will be requested once an application has been assessed as successful.
- A declaration that the replacement of the rainwater and/or septic tanks has not been covered by available insurance arrangements prior to seeking assistance.

For Rainwater Tanks:

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- Details of the model and size of the tank where available.
- Invoice and receipts (copies are acceptable) for the initial refill of the water tank.
- Acknowledgement that you have considered the property's water requirements

For Septic Systems:

- Details of the model and size of the system where available.
- If required, a condition report on your existing septic system has been completed by a qualified plumber.
- A copy of the Land Capability Assessment undertaken as part of the permit process and a copy of the invoice for work undertaken during the LCA process.
- A copy of the Septic Tank Certificate of Use on completion of work

3. How much funding is available for each rebate component?

- The **maximum** support available to successful applicants per household will be:
 - 15,000 for septic systems.
 - \$3,000 for rainwater tanks.
 - \$3,000 for water tanks for firefighting purposes or installation of appropriate outlets to current water tanks.
 - \$1,500 for essential assessments including condition reports and Land Capability Assessments.
 - \$500 for the initial refill of the rainwater tank.
 - \$2,500 for the cost for any minor repairs or reconnections required if the tank systems are undamaged – or – for any work or reconnection fees required to reconnect to a reticulated (water mains or sewerage) system.
- You will need to meet half the cost of the purchase and installation of the rainwater tank or septic system.
- If your total costs are greater than the maximum support outlined above, you will need to meet the additional costs.
- Support will be provided in a rebate payment. Please ensure you apply for all components that are most relevant to your current situation.

4. How long do successful applicants have to claim the rebate?

- Funding for the program will be available over three years from mid-August 2020-21 until 30 June 2022-23.
- Applicants will have up until 31 May 2023 to apply for a rebate under the program.

5. How do I submit an application?

- You can apply online at Melbourne Water's webpage www.melbournewater.com.au/Bushfire-rebates – or - complete an application form and email or post to Melbourne Water, together with the supporting documentation. Relevant email and postal addresses can also be found on their website.
- Make sure you have copies of the supporting information needed to be submitted with your application as outlined in section 2 above.

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- Before applying, please read and understand the program guidelines, the application form and any other information that may be relevant to your situation.
- If you have any extenuating circumstances that have caused unforeseen costs or have impacted your eligibility, please contact Melbourne Water to discuss your application.

6. Who can I contact for further information or help in completing my application?

- For application support contact Melbourne Water, via Bushfire-rebates@melbournewater.com.au, or on 131 722.
- For further information in respect to the program and other support programs available to fire affected communities please visit Bushfire Recovery Victoria at www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-victoria

7. When will I hear whether I have been successful?

- Your application will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and provision of supporting documentation.
- Support will be awarded to applications that satisfy the eligibility criteria, subject to available funds.
- When you submit your application, you will receive an acknowledgement that the application has been received.
- To assist with the assessment of your application, you may be contacted during the assessment process to clarify any details or documentation.
- Once the application has been assessed, you will receive notification of the outcome of your application.

Rainwater Tanks

1. What rainwater tank should I install?

- Any rainwater tank installed will need to comply with current Australian standards and local council regulations and permit approvals – see below
- You will also need to ensure your rainwater tank will meet all your household's water requirements.

2. What standards do they need to comply with?

- Australian and Australian/New Zealand Standards that apply to tanks and their associated fixtures and fittings are:
 - AS 2070 Plastics materials for food contact use
 - AS/NZS 2179 Specifications for rainwater goods, accessories, and fasteners
 - AS 2180 Metal rainwater goods – selection and installation
 - AS/NZS 3500 National plumbing and drainage code
 - AS/NZS 4020 Testing of products for use in contact with drinking water
 - AS/NZS 4130 Polyethylene (PE) pipes for pressure applications.
 - AS/NZS 4766 Polyethylene storage tanks for water and chemicals

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- Make sure you check with your accredited plumber that your rainwater tank complies with the above standards.
3. What do I need to consider when I install a rainwater tank?
- When installing a rainwater tank, consideration must be given to the property's water requirements including water required for the household, firefighting purposes, stock and human drinking water, garden watering, weed spraying or for washing machinery. There are useful guides and water audit calculators available on Victorian Government websites include:
 - <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/liveable-cities-and-towns/using-alternative-water-sources>
 - <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/soil-and-water/water/farm-water-solutions/what-are-my-options/water-supply-options-for-rural-lifestyle-properties>
 - <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/soil-and-water/water/farm-water-solutions/farm-water-calculator>
4. What water do I need for firefighting purposes?
- More than 80 per cent of the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires affected properties are on land subject to the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). The overlay requires a range of bushfire protection measures for new development including a static water supply provided for firefighting and property protection.
 - Please read the **Water for Firefighting Purposes Factsheet** carefully to understand your obligations for supplying water for firefighting purposes.

Septic Systems

1. What septic system do I need to install?
- The type of septic system required for your property will be verified through the septic tank permit application process and Land Capability Assessment requirements.
2. What standards does the septic system need to comply with?
- The proposed domestic wastewater management systems must address the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria Publication 891.3 Code of Practice, Onsite Wastewater Management (2013) and the Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1547:2012 On-site Domestic Wastewater Management.
 - A list of onsite wastewater treatment systems with valid certificates is available at the EPA website: <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/water/about-wastewater/onsite-wastewater-systems>
3. What steps do I need to follow to put in a new or replacement septic system?
- To check if your septic system has been damaged get a licenced plumber to assess your system and provide you with a condition report.
 - If the condition report advises that you need to significantly alter or replace your septic system, then:
 - Contact your local council to discuss the requirements and application process for a permit to install/alter a Septic Tank system. As part of the this process you may need:
 - Application form.

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- A planning permit; and
- A Land Capability Assessment
- If you are in a special water supply catchment area your permit may also need to be referred to the responsible land management authority.
- Once your local council has provided you a Septic Tank Permit to install/alter you can install a system that meets relevant Australian Standards.
- When Council is satisfied the installations are in accordance with the Code, they will issue the owner a Septic Tank Certificate of Use.
- Further information on this process is available on the **Septic Waste System Assessment Fact Sheet**

4. What are Land Capability Assessments?

- Land Capability Assessments (LCAs) will be required for all properties with no reticulated wastewater services with significantly damaged septic systems.
- If you are unsure if an LCA is required, get a licenced plumber to check your septic system and provide you with a condition report. The condition report will advise you of any damage that has occurred and if an LCA will be required.
- The LCA identifies building and development constraints including soil types, drainage lines, land slope, proximity to waterbodies as well as other relevant landscape concerns. The assessment will provide landholders and their architects, designers, engineers, insurers and builders with advice and options to guide the design and siting of a house.

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