

# Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy

SUMMARY



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Victorians live in one of the most bushfire-prone regions in the world. Although fire is a natural feature in Victoria's landscapes, major bushfire events have had devastating impacts, and climate change is increasing their severity and frequency.

Victoria has the opportunity and the responsibility to improve the way we think about, plan for and respond to fire in our environment, our communities and our lives.

Our environment and how fire behaves in it continues to change dramatically. Many native plants need fire for species regeneration and habitat diversity. However, climate change is increasing the severity, duration and frequency of bushfires.<sup>1,2</sup> It is a key driver of increasing levels of risk and may lead to permanent changes to Victoria's ecosystems, including loss of biodiversity.

In this context, it is more important than ever that we work together to manage bushfire. Land and bushfire management must integrate private and public land.

Together we can reduce the catastrophic impacts of bushfires on the things we value most. The work we do over the next 10 years will help ensure Victoria's people, land, environment and resources are made as safe and resilient as possible for when bushfires inevitably occur.

Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy (the Strategy) builds on the 2015 *Safer Together: A new approach to reducing the risk of bushfire in Victoria*. As with the *Safer Together* approach, the Strategy will continue to drive Victoria towards improved outcomes for bushfire management, directing resources and investment to where they will have the greatest impact.

1 Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2015, *Strategic bushfire management – environmental features*, viewed January 2023, [https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/442964/Victorias-Climate-Science-Report-2019.pdf](https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/442964/Victorias-Climate-Science-Report-2019.pdf)

2 Parks Victoria 2021, *Nature Conservation Strategy for parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria*, viewed January 2023, <[www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/conservation-and-science/conserving-our-parks/nature-conservation-strategy](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/conservation-and-science/conserving-our-parks/nature-conservation-strategy)>



Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy brings together the work we are already doing with what we plan to do over the next 10 years. This ensures there is a shared vision for what a safer and more resilient Victoria looks like and defines the outcomes we are working towards to realise that vision.

The Strategy builds on Victoria's existing emergency management framework. Under the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (EM Act 2013), over 60 organisations (including the Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, Fire Rescue Victoria and Parks Victoria) work together towards a shared vision of safer and more resilient communities.

Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy is the vision for bushfire management in Victoria that defines where we as a state want to be in 10 years' time, and how we will work together to get there.



**Our shared vision:** Victorians work together to manage bushfire risk for safer communities and healthy ecosystems in a changing climate.

To achieve this vision, Victorians must collectively have a clear understanding of the outcomes we are working towards and the actions we will take to get there. The bushfire-specific outcomes in this Strategy align with the Victoria's Emergency Management Sector Outcomes Framework and support whole-of-government emergency management outcomes.

The Strategy is accompanied by:

- an Implementation Plan that outlines actions to be delivered under each strategic outcome and
- Victoria's Bushfire Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework (VBMERF) that will enable regular progress reporting on the outcomes and strategic directions from December 2025.

Together, the Strategy, the Implementation Plan and the VBMERF will help Victoria's people, industries, infrastructure, land and environment be as safe and resilient as possible when bushfires do occur.



The Strategy identifies **7 outcomes** that Victoria will work toward over the next 10 years:



## 1. People and community safety

**Outcome:** Communities are more resilient to the impacts of bushfires and bushfire management activities.

Communities that understand bushfire risks and apply practical solutions to reduce their exposure to bushfire hazards and minimise their impacts are more resilient.

To achieve this outcome, Victoria must:

- 1.1. Empower people and communities to manage local bushfire risk, response and recovery
- 1.2. Build the resilience of at-risk cohorts through education and collaboration
- 1.3. Use a range of mitigation strategies to reduce fire starts and impacts
- 1.4. Deliver fuel management that addresses the challenges associated with a changing climate
- 1.5. Limit the impact of bushfires through early control
- 1.6. Support timely and effective community recovery



## 2. Critical infrastructure and economic resilience

**Outcome:** Business, industry and infrastructure are more resilient to the impacts of bushfires and bushfire management activities.

Building the resilience of business, industry and infrastructure is critical to ensure these groups are prepared to face the challenges of bushfires in a changing climate and can support a thriving Victoria.

To achieve this outcome, Victoria must:

- 2.1. Understand, plan for and minimise economic impacts across all aspects of bushfire management
- 2.2. Embed business and industry expertise into bushfire management
- 2.3. Mitigate fire ignition risks from industry and critical infrastructure
- 2.4. Invest in resilient infrastructure to minimise disruption to communities



### 3. Aboriginal self-determination in cultural fire and bushfire management

**Outcome:** The sector supports and enables self-determination of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in land and bushfire management.

Meaningfully delivering on the government's commitment to advance Aboriginal self-determination includes removing barriers to support Traditional Owner access and authority to manage Country using cultural land management tools, including cultural fire.

To achieve this outcome, bushfire management agencies must partner with Victorian Traditional Owners to enable a greater role for Traditional Owners in bushfire management and meet the 4 objectives outlined in the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy*. In addition to detailing how the sector will contribute towards the objectives of the Cultural Fire Strategy, a fifth objective has been included to focus on how the sector can support Traditional Owners to have a greater role in areas of bushfire management that are of interest to them.

- 3.1. Develop operational pathways that enable Traditional Owners to lead the planning and to undertake cultural burns across all land tenures and Country types according to their cultural obligations
- 3.2. Build Traditional Owner governance and capacity in cultural fire knowledge and practice
- 3.3. Improved management of state forest reserves and private land through the application of collaborative management to heal Country and build resilience in people and landscapes
- 3.4. Facilitate the development and strengthening of institutional frameworks that support cultural fire practice
- 3.5. Enable Traditional Owners to have a greater role in bushfire management according to their self-determined interests and objectives



## 4. Ecosystem resilience and nature conservation

**Outcome:** Fire regimes support healthy and resilient ecosystems and nature conservation in a changing climate.

Supporting better environmental outcomes means continuously updating our understanding of how ecosystems respond to the impacts of fire.

To achieve this outcome, Victoria must:

- 4.1. Continuously improve data, tools, systems, and knowledge of the influence of fire regimes have on ecosystem resilience and the environment
- 4.2. Integrate research and knowledge on climate change into modelling and planning for ecosystem resilience
- 4.3. Improve monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on fire management practices against ecosystem resilience metrics and targets
- 4.4. Improve the effectiveness, consistency, and transparency of environmental values assessments
- 4.5. Strengthen leadership in fire ecology and environmental sciences
- 4.6. Build community understanding of fire regimes, ecosystem resilience, and nature conservation.



## 5. Informed decision-making, evidence-based approaches and tools

**Outcome:** Victoria uses the best available science, innovation and knowledge to support evidence-based decisions.

Adapting to and reducing the influence of climate change on bushfire risk requires a robust and continuously-improving foundation of knowledge, evidence and tools.

To achieve this outcome, Victoria must:

- 5.1. Invest in high-quality shared data, science and research
- 5.2. Prioritise resources on actions that will most effectively reduce bushfire risk and impacts
- 5.3. Build a culture of transparent evidence-based decision-making at all levels of fire management
- 5.4. Embed Traditional Owner and community insights in evidence and decision-making.



## 6. Working together, accountability and shared responsibility

**Outcome:** The sector, land managers, communities and industry work together effectively and share responsibility for managing bushfire risk across public and private land.

As the climate changes and bushfire risk increases across the landscape, shared responsibility becomes more important. All Victorians have a role to play.

To achieve this outcome, Victoria must:

- 6.1. Collaborate with the community and other stakeholders
- 6.2. Establish and maintain a comprehensive bushfire management framework
- 6.3. Apply an integrated bushfire management planning framework
- 6.4. Increase transparency to support greater accountability in bushfire management
- 6.5. Share bushfire risk decision-making with communities.



## 7. Enhanced capability and capacity

**Outcome:** Victoria is supported and equipped with the skills, equipment, capability and systems to safely and effectively manage bushfire.

Enhanced systems, processes, tools and training programs will ensure Victoria is better prepared for bushfire events.

To achieve this outcome, Victoria must:

- 7.1. Better support interoperability and decision-making through standardisation
- 7.2. Build capability through education, coaching and mentoring programs
- 7.3. Embed physical and mental health, wellbeing and safety
- 7.4. Increase diversity at all levels of fire management
- 7.5. Build sector capacity and capability in a changing climate
- 7.6. Secure the necessary equipment and infrastructure for bushfire management in a changing climate

