

Barwon South West Strategic Fuel Breaks

What's Happening?

By June 2022, Forest Fire Management Victoria, in partnership with local councils and the Country Fire Authority will construct a network of new fuel breaks across the Barwon South West region.

The precise location of the breaks is yet to be finalised but will be based on local knowledge and aligns with bushfire modelling to ensure they are in the most effective location to protect communities and assets.

Stakeholder and local knowledge will also shape the final design.

Some breaks may cross private property once agreement has been reached with the landowners. Breaks on private property will only be completed if landowners voluntarily opt-in.

This is the second phase of the region's fuel break project, with construction of 27 kilometres (108ha) of new breaks around Lorne, Aireys Inlet and Anglesea now complete.



Fuel break – Anglesea

What is a Strategic Fuel Break?

Strategic fuel breaks are an area of fuel reduced land close to towns designed to make firefighting easier and improve safety for local communities.



If a fire happened, they would help firefighters protect private property, major transport routes, critical community infrastructure and speed up recovery.

They also give authorities more opportunities to do important planned burning that further reduces risk. They also provide back burning opportunities in the event of a fire.

Vegetation in the approximately 40-metre wide breaks is modified to be open grassland, with larger trees retained where possible.

They are a change to a small part of the landscape to deliver real benefits for the wider community.

Phase One – Otways

The Otways Strategic Fuel Break project is a great example of working with multiple agencies and community to reduce bushfire risk.

108Ha of new fuel breaks have now been constructed on public and private land around assets and townships along the Great Ocean Road in the Surf Coast.

This project is part of ongoing, strategic partnerships in the Otways to identify and reduce bushfire risk.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement with community, traditional owners, environmental groups and local business has made the project a success.



For more information you can watch a short video on [Strategic Fuels Breaks](#) or scan the QR code:

Strategic Fuel Breaks



Construction along Great Ocean Road



Strategic Fuel Break – Great Ocean Road, Anglesea

Phase Two – Expansion to the Barwon South West Region

This year we are expanding across the whole Barwon South West Region. Planning for the strategic fuel breaks includes bushfire modelling as well as input from other agencies and the local community.

FFMVic is engaging with other agencies and authorities across the Barwon South West regions on planning for the project now.

We want to hear of your knowledge so we can use it when we are making decisions.

An important stakeholder are Traditional Owner's and we want to work with all Traditional Owner Organisations across the Barwon South West. Cultural heritage assessments are part of the planning underway.

Flora and Fauna

Constructing fuel breaks has localised impacts on habitat and biodiversity. Thorough flora and fauna checks and management plans for each break are also required in addition to all relevant statutory approvals and consents before any construction will commence.

State and Commonwealth regulatory obligations apply and will require that DELWP avoids impacts wherever possible, applies mitigations where impacts are unavoidable, and offsets any losses to native vegetation or biodiversity.

DELWP will develop detailed plans and standards for all works and will work with independent research partners to develop a targeted monitoring and evaluation framework to inform planning and delivery of fuel break and mechanical works. DELWP will apply a counterbalancing approach to improve the condition, extent or security of vegetation (eg: tree planting, weed control and threatened species protections). DELWP will also work closely with Traditional Owners to ensure that cultural values are understood and protected.

The strength of Victoria's approach to managing bushfires and bushfire risk was highlighted in the **VAGO's audit into Reducing Bushfire Risk, and the Inspector general for Emergency Management's Inquiry into the 2019-2020 Fire Season.**

They recommended that Victoria strengthen and expand this approach to respond to changing fire conditions in the context of a changing climate.

The Victorian Government has made a \$35 million investment for FFMVic to lead this response, which will also provide economic support to regions impacted by the 2019/2020 bushfires and COVID-19.

Across Victoria, 1,447km of strategic fuel breaks will be built or upgraded in the highest priority locations, close to communities, key assets, water catchments and sensitive environments.

This will be supplemented with 108ha of mechanical treatment in areas unsuited to planned burns.