

PUBLIC NOTICE

BUSHFIRE BUY-BACK SCHEME LANDOWNER INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION SESSIONS

The Government of Victoria is implementing a Bushfire Buy-back Scheme as part of its commitment to implement all the recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report.

In its Final Report, the Royal Commission noted that landowners in extraordinarily high-risk locations have little option but to re-build if they cannot sell and move on. *“But if they rebuild the risk to life and property returns; if they sell their land to someone else who then rebuilds the risk is merely transferred to someone else. Were they able to sell their land to the State, ..., they could resettle elsewhere, and the problem of the risk would be redressed.”* The Commission recommended that “the State develop and implement a retreat and resettlement strategy for existing developments in areas of unacceptably high bushfire risk, including a scheme for non-compulsory acquisition by the State of land in those areas.

The Bushfire Buy-back Scheme (the Scheme) has been developed to implement this recommendation.

Eligible properties will be determined by the following criteria:

1. Owner occupiers whose principal place of residence
2. was destroyed by the Victorian bushfires of early 2009, and
3. who have not commenced rebuilding, and
4. A site is not available on the property that will enable a replacement dwelling to be located at a distance greater than 100m from forest vegetation, and that vegetation adjoins a large area of forest such as a National Park, State Park, State Forest or private plantation.

The Government is seeking feedback from potentially eligible landowners on the proposed approach, application process and timing of the Scheme, and will hold Information and Consultation Sessions in regional locations in November and early December.

These landowners will receive a letter from the Bushfire Buy-back Project Manager with details of the Information and Consultation Sessions. Letters will be sent to the property address. If you do not receive a letter, you can either send an email to bushfirebuyback@justice.vic.gov.au or call (03) 8685 1314 for details on how to register.

If you are not a landowner whose principal place of residence was destroyed but would like to attend an Information and Consultation Session, you can register as above however you may be placed on a waiting list.

Participation in the Buyback Scheme is voluntary. Properties will be identified as eligible and owners of those properties can decide for themselves whether they are interested in selling. If a property is eligible for the Scheme, and the landowner and Government agree on the sale, the Government will offer to acquire the land.

Private information about property owners gathered during these Information and Consultation Sessions will be used to inform the Scheme and will not be made public.

Information on the proposed Bushfire Buy-back Scheme is available on the Department of Justice website: www.justice.vic.gov.au/buyback. If you are unable to access the website, you can email bushfirebuyback@justice.vic.gov.au or call (03) 8685 1314 for further information.