

Repair of Fences Damaged by Bushfire and Fire Control Line Rehabilitation Policy



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1.0 Purpose

1.1 Background

In Victoria there is approximately 60 000 km of boundary fencing constructed by private landholders along the boundary of public (Crown land) and private land (not including Crown land river frontage).

The policy is based on shared responsibility and government encourages landholders to assess and manage their risks with regard to fire by taking up adequate insurance where available.

- Landholders are expected to manage risks to their assets from the potential impact of bushfire.
- All landholders are expected to have appropriate levels of insurance cover for boundary and internal fences, in the same way any business venture or private householder should protect and insure their assets.
- In line with the *Fences Act 1968*, the State Government of Victoria does not have any ownership or financial stake in fences along the boundary of private and public land except in cases where specific fencing agreements have been entered into with landholder.
- It is the responsibility of the owner of private land to fence their property and secure stock within their boundary.

1.2 Purpose

This document establishes a clear and consistent approach to repair of damage to fences caused by bushfires and prescribed burns. It also covers the rehabilitation of land used as fire control lines in the suppression of bushfires.

The policy outlines the responsibilities of Lead Agencies and the landholders to ensure a smooth and prompt implementation of the policy and to support landholders and communities recover from a bushfire incident.

2.0 Scope

The policy includes

- fences that adjoin National Park, State Park and State Forest damaged by bushfires
- fences damaged as a result of bushfire suppression activities
- fences damaged as a result of planned burning activities
- fire control lines constructed by fire agencies during bushfire emergencies
- fences covered by an agreement between the Victorian Government and the private landholder

The policy excludes

- internal fences damaged by bushfire
- repair or replacement of any losses, other than fencing or other fencing assets
- replanting of trees, re-establishment of pasture, or any other agricultural crop

3.0 Principles / Policy

3.1 Damage to private fences (internal and boundary) by fire agency staff or machinery during bushfire emergencies

The Victorian Government will pay 100% of the restoration costs of fences damaged on private land as a result of machinery used by fire agencies to control bushfires, or fire agency staff cutting through fences to allow access for suppression efforts.

This includes damage to fences by machinery such as bulldozers entering the property and/or constructing fire control lines, and other fire emergency vehicles obtaining access.

3.2 Repair of fences damaged by bushfire on the boundary of private land and public land

Government will meet half the cost of materials to replace or repair fencing between private land and all national parks, state parks and state forests destroyed or damaged by bushfires.

The Lead Agency is not responsible for the repair or replacement of internal fences that have been impacted by bushfire, unless damaged by machinery during fire suppression activities.

Assets damaged by bushfire are the responsibility of the land holder and may be able to be claimed through the land holder's insurance.

3.3 Rehabilitation of fire control lines constructed by fire agencies during bushfire emergencies

Government will assist private landholders with the rehabilitation of fire control lines, established by fire agencies, during the suppression of bushfires.

In the event of fire that starts on private land and is under the control of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the CFA will provide some limited assistance for the rehabilitation of fire control lines and repair to fences damaged by machinery. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) will assist the CFA with fencing and control line rehabilitation works when requested to.

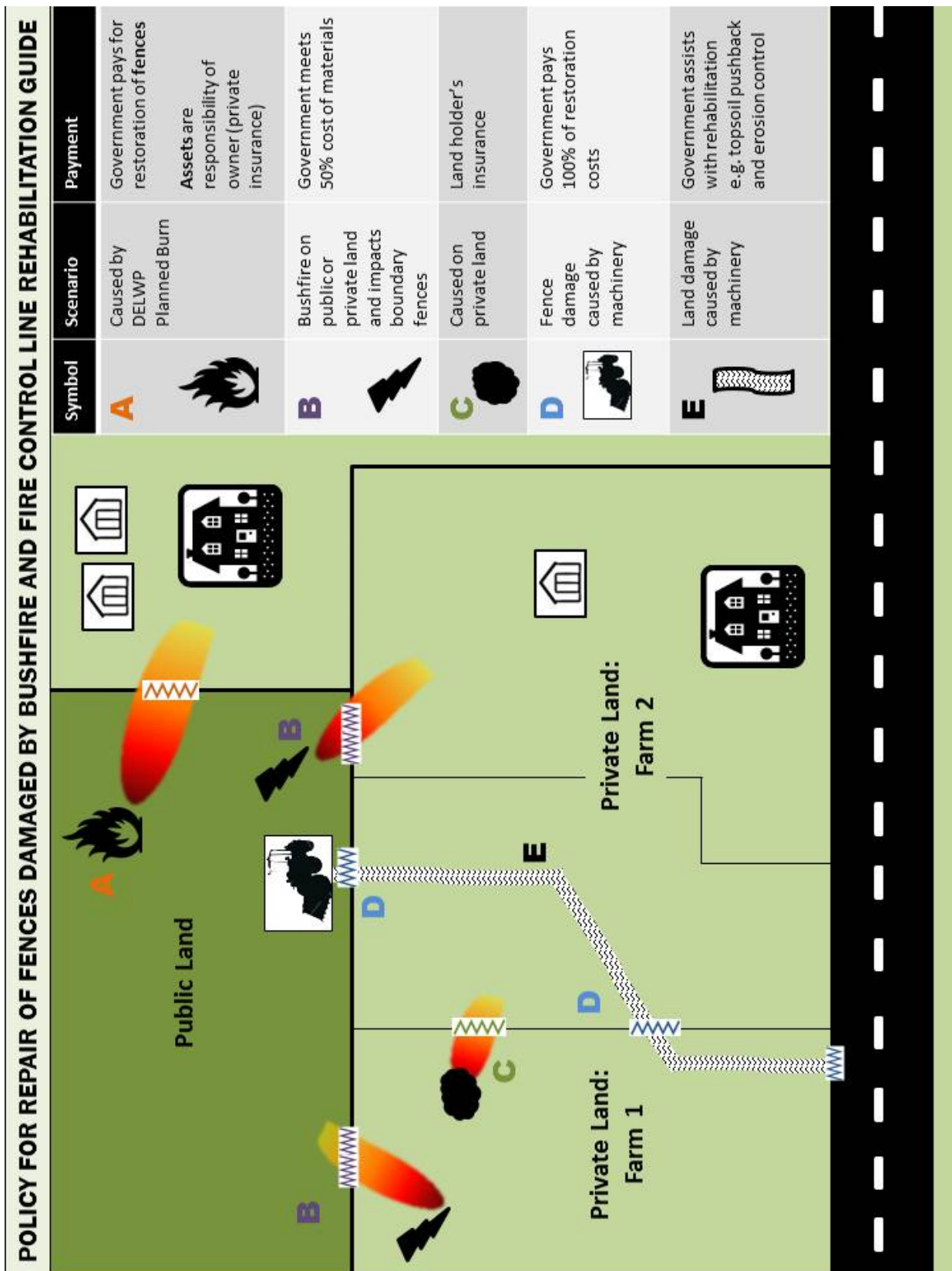
3.4 DELWP Planned Burns that escape from public land and damage private land

Government will pay the cost of restoration if fences or other fencing assets are destroyed or damaged by planned burns on public land escaping onto private land.

Note - DELWP planned burns are burns undertaken as part of the yearly planned burning program and do not include fire suppression back-burns undertaken by the fire agencies during a bushfire emergency in order to try to control a bushfire.

The land holder must contact the Lead Agency as soon as possible after the fire event. Claims for assistance MUST be lodged withing 12 months of the incident.

4.0 Examples of different scenarios where this policy may be applied



5.0 Glossary of definitions

Statement	Definition
Damage to private fences	Any direct impacts to private fences from bushfire or fire agency suppression activities.
Rehabilitation of fire control lines	Fire control line rehabilitation involves pushing back top soil and undertaking erosion control measures to protect the land from soil erosion and protect water quality. Government may also provide seed for use by the landholder to control erosion and prevent soil movement.
Restoration	The repair or replacement of damaged fences or fence parts.
Other fencing assets	Other fence parts such as end assemblies, gates and grids.
Specific fencing agreements	Where DELWP or Parks Victoria have an operational requirement for the public land / private land boundary fence (e.g. for environmental protection works), the agencies may at times enter into individual agreements with landholders regarding the sharing of costs of installation and/or ongoing maintenance of a boundary fence. The most common agreement is where DELWP pays for the installation, on the condition the landholder maintains the fence and takes up adequate levels of insurance on an ongoing basis for that fence.