

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
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AIRLIFT OPERATION TO BRING FOREST BACK TO LIFE AFTER BUSHFIRE

The Victorian Government is undertaking the largest forest restoration effort in the state's history with a \$7.7 million operation that airlifted tonnes of eucalypt seeds into areas of forest devastated by last summer's fires.

Funding from Bushfire Recovery Victoria's \$110 million *State Recovery Plan* is helping recover thousands of hectares of burnt Mountain and Alpine Ash forest and enabling seed to be collected from healthy bushland to ensure the re-seeding work can be ongoing.

Between May and July more than 4.5 tonnes of eucalypt seed, 3 tonnes of which came from VicForests' contingency reserves, was spread by helicopter across nearly 11,500 hectares of fire ravaged country, an area the equivalent of about 5,650 MCGs.

Thousands of the seeds are currently growing into stunning giants of the Australian bush, including the iconic Mountain Ash – the tallest flowering plant in the world – and, Alpine Ash which also reaches a significant size.

The re-seeding focuses on areas of nationally distinctive forests in Gippsland and North East Victoria that also suffered the impacts of fire in 2003, 2007 and 2014, and were severely burned again in the 2019/20 season.

The 2019/20 summer fires severely impacted Alpine Ash forests in both State forests and national parks, creating concern that without action some plant species could be compromised. The BRV funding will also support research to better understand the impact of high severity bushfires to guide future forest restoration efforts.

The project is being delivered by the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning in partnership with VicForests, Parks Victoria, and contractors from regional Victoria.

More than 56 people have been working on the reforestation project. All activity has complied with DHHS requirements to prioritise the safety of the Victorian community as well as staff.

Quotes attributed to Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"This airlift operation has seen helicopters drop tonnes of eucalypt seeds across areas devastated by the latest fires. It is the largest forest restoration operation in Victoria's history."

"These seeds, which are unfurling on our forest floors right now, will create giants of the bush that will outlive us all, and develop ecosystems to protect Victoria's unique animals and plant life."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"This reseeded project is a fantastic partnership – it makes the most of VicForests' skills and knowledge of the forests to support the regeneration of bushfire-impacted areas."

"Through this project, the Government is ensuring the survival of these forests for future generations and helping the ongoing effort to recover from last summer's fires."