

Rainwater and septic tank replacement program

Guidelines and application process

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Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program

1. What is the Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program?

The Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program (the program) will support households that have lost or significantly damaged rainwater and/or septic tanks on their primary place of residence as a result of the Eastern Victorian Fires that have occurred since 21 November 2019.

Support under the program will be available for any work completed since the commencement of the bushfires on 21 November 2019. The support will be provided as a rebate payment to eligible applicants. The rebate allows for eligible households to reclaim expenses accrued, on proof of receipt, for the replacement of their primary use rainwater and/or septic tank.

In some circumstances although the resident's property was not damaged during the bushfire, their rainwater and/or septic tank was damaged or destroyed beyond economic repair. Households in this circumstance are still eligible to apply for the program.

In other cases, a rainwater or septic tank system may be undamaged and will just need reconnections or minor work to become operational again. Households will be eligible to apply for support to cover the full cost of reconnection.

The Victorian Government is providing this support to help ensure households on non-reticulated systems affected by the fires have access to usable water and safe disposal of wastewater. This program does not intend to take the ongoing responsibility of domestic wastewater management from Local Government.

The intended program outcomes are to replace rainwater and septic tanks on impacted properties and to build longer term resilience and sustainability for households through the provision of rainwater tanks and septic systems that meet current Australian standards.

The program is funded through the \$86 million Community Recovery Package, which is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the Victorian Governments under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

The program will be open to applicants from mid-August 2020 until 31 May 2023.

It will be up to the applicant to install systems that suit their wants and needs, if their chosen system meets current standards and regulations. The applicant will be required to source their own local suppliers and rainwater/septic tank systems and demonstrate that they meet the eligibility requirements during the application process. It is strongly encouraged that applicants' source local suppliers and service providers to support wider community recovery.

The program will not be procuring service providers or systems on behalf of the applicant.

Applicants need to be aware that, if eligible for the program, they will be responsible for any ongoing maintenance and operational costs of the system they are installing on their property. This includes additional rainwater tank refills, treatment and servicing of septic systems, and energy costs associated with pumping or running of the systems.

Please read these guidelines and application form carefully to understand the full eligibility requirements and what you need to provide as part of your application.

2. Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply for funding, you must be:

- The owner of a home that:
 - is your principal place of residence; and
 - The damage to the home, primary rainwater and/or primary septic system was directly caused bushfire, as verified through the bushfire recovery clean-up process
- Not on a reticulated system and require a rainwater tank and/or septic system for primary use.
- Intending to rebuild your home on the same property or in the same local government



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region and require rainwater and/or septic tank installations, repairs or reconnections;

- You have sought funds through any available insurance arrangements prior to seeking assistance from this program.

In addition, to be eligible for support you must:

- Ensure all rainwater and/or septic tanks are designed, manufactured and certified to the relevant Australian Standards and installation complies with current building standards as outlined in **section 11.2**;
- Seek and comply with relevant approvals including: a permit to install/alter a septic tank; Land Capability Assessment; and Planning Permit from their local council;
- Ensure you use an appropriately licensed and accredited plumber as outlined in **section 11.3**;
- Provide the relevant mandatory supporting documentation as outlined in **section 8**.

3. Who cannot apply?

You are not eligible to apply if:

- The damage was not directly from 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires;
- The cost and installation of the rainwater and/or septic tanks were fully covered through available insurance arrangements;
- You have received support through other Commonwealth, State or other government programs, or through philanthropic sources (i.e. Red Cross) that that has been used towards replacement of destroyed or significantly damaged rainwater and/or septic tanks;
- You have already received a rebate for the same component of the program. For example, if you have already received a rebate for the installation of a rainwater tank, you will not be eligible to apply for a second rebate for the rainwater tank component;
- Applications for rainwater tank funding will not be accepted for homes that are on a reticulated water supply system;

- Similarly, applications for septic tank funding will not be accepted for homes that can connect to a reticulated sewerage system, as agreed with your water corporation.

4. What will be funded?

The program will provide support for:

- Up to half the cost of:
 - the purchase and installation of a new *primary use* rainwater tank system to residents rebuilding homes, up to a maximum of \$3,000.
 - the purchase and installation of a new *primary use* septic tank system to residents rebuilding homes, up to a maximum of \$15,000.
- The full cost of:
 - the initial refill of the rainwater tank specifically installed as part of this program, up to a maximum cap of \$500.
 - Any combination of assessments required to get council approval to install or alter a septic system including condition reports undertaken by a qualified plumber and Land Capability Assessments, up to a maximum of \$1,500.
 - any minor repairs or reconnections required if the tank systems are undamaged and comply with current standards, up to a maximum of \$2,500.
- The program will also cover relevant associated costs including: the purchase of rainwater or septic tank system, associated plumbing and materials connected to system, installation costs and delivery charges – up to the maximum outlined above.
- Applicants will only be eligible for one rebate for each of the components listed above. For example, you cannot apply twice for the rainwater tank rebate. However, if you have already received support for a rainwater tank, you will still be eligible to apply for a rebate for the septic tank system.



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5. What will not be funded?

The program will not fund the following activities:

- The purchase of land;
- Routine or ongoing maintenance activities;
- Reoccurring operating costs, for example electricity costs to pump the septic tank systems, permit fees for use of septic systems etc;
- Any additional materials connected to the systems (e.g. toilets, bathroom fittings etc.);
- Upgrades or improvements to septic systems that have not been damaged or are on properties that have not been impacted by the bushfires.

6. What are the funding details?

The total funding available is \$7,500,000 over the period of 12 August 2020 to 30 June 2023.

The maximum support available to successful applicants per household will be:

- \$15,000 for septic systems;
- \$3,000 for rainwater tanks;
- \$1,500 for essential assessments including condition reports and Land Capability Assessments;
- \$500 for the initial refill of the rainwater tank;
- \$2,500 for the cost for any minor repairs or reconnections required if the tank systems are undamaged.

If your total costs are greater than the maximum support outlined above, you will need to meet the additional costs.

Support will be provided in a rebate payment. Please ensure you apply for all components that are most relevant to your current situation.

7. What are the assessment criteria?

Your application will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and provision of supporting documentation (**section 8**).

Support will be awarded to applications that satisfy the eligibility criteria, subject to available funds.

8. What supporting documents will need to be provided?

Please submit the following documents with your application:

- Evidence that you own the property
- Two types of identification that show the property address to confirm that it is your principle place of residence (e.g. rate notices, electricity bills, phone bills, drivers' licence or similar)
- Clean up completion certificate from BRV (or evidence that demonstrates your property has been through a bushfire damage clean-up process)
- Tax invoice/s (copies are acceptable) for the purchase and installation of the rainwater and/or septic tank – Or – tax invoice/s (copies are acceptable) for minor repairs or reconnections of your existing system
- A copy of compliance certificate from your licensed plumber on completion of work
- Details of the account that the funding support will be deposited.
- A declaration that the replacement of the rainwater and/or septic tanks has not been covered by available insurance arrangements prior to seeking assistance.

For Rainwater Tanks:

- Details of the model and size of the tank;
- Invoice (copies are acceptable) for the initial refill of the water tank;
- Acknowledgement that you have considered the property's water requirements (further information is in **section 11.2**)

For Septic Systems:

- Details of the model and size of the system;
- If required, a condition report on your existing septic system has been completed by a qualified plumber.



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- A copy of the Land Capability Assessment undertaken as part of the permit process and a copy of the invoice for work undertaken during the LCA process;
- A copy of the Septic Tank Certificate of Use on completion of work (further information is in **section 11.2**)

9. What are the funding conditions?

Confirmation

Successful applicants will receive notification via email from Melbourne Water confirming the total financial support the applicant will receive for each rebate component they applied for.

Legislative and regulatory requirements

In delivering the activity rebate recipients are required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislations and regulations, including but not limited to:

The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Tax implications

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this rebate funding.

Payments

Payments will be made as long as:

- You have provided the correct details of the account that the funding will be deposited into;
- You have provided correct invoices as required; and
- other terms and conditions of funding continue to be met.

Audit

The Department and its agents reserve the right to conduct audit activities to ensure all information and activities funded under this Program are correct and accurate. This may

include site inspections, request for further documentation and insurance reports.

Privacy

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department and its agents for the purposes of administering your rebate application and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications. Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative rebate funding opportunities. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws.

The Victorian Government is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the DELWP Privacy Policy online at www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy. You can find the Melbourne Water policy online at www.melbournewater.com.au/privacy-policy

Requests for access to information about you held by DELWP should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by phone on 9637 8697. Requests for access to information about you held by MW should be sent to Privacy Officer, Melbourne Water, PO Box 4342, Melbourne 3001 or contact by phone on 131 722

10. What is the application process?

Before applying, please read and understand these guidelines, and the application form published on:

www.melbournewater.com.au/Bushfire-rebates

If you have any extenuating circumstances that have caused unforeseen costs or have impacted your eligibility, please contact Melbourne Water to discuss your application.



Applications are submitted online using the Online portal.

To apply, go to the program web page: www.melbournewater.com.au/Bushfire-rebates and click on the 'Start New Application' button. To return to a saved draft application, click on the 'Access Saved Application' button.

Attaching required documents:

- Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF, or JPEG. The maximum file size for each file is 5MB.

When you submit your application, you will receive an acknowledgement that the application has been received.

You will receive an application number when you submit an application online. Please quote this number in all communications relating to your application.

If you have documents to submit that cannot be attached to your online application you can email them to Bushfire-rebates@melbournewater.com.au, quoting your application number. Attach all documents to one email, zipping the files if required.

Make sure your application is submitted by 11.59 pm on 31 May 2023

If you cannot complete the application online, you can complete the application form and email or post a hard copy together with the supporting document via the contact details below.

Late and incomplete applications will not be considered.

11. Additional information

11.1. Delivery of the program

Melbourne Water is responsible for administering this program on behalf of the Victorian Government and the Commonwealth Government.

11.2. System requirements

Rainwater tanks

Any rainwater tank installed will need to comply with current Australian standards and local council regulations and permit approvals. Australian and Australian/New Zealand Standards that apply to tanks and their associated fixtures and fittings are:

- AS 2070 Plastics materials for food contact use
- AS/NZS 2179 Specifications for rainwater goods, accessories and fasteners
- AS 2180 Metal rainwater goods – selection and installation
- AS/NZS 3500 National plumbing and drainage code
- AS/NZS 4020 Testing of products for use in contact with drinking water
- AS/NZS 4130 Polyethylene (PE) pipes for pressure applications.
- AS/NZS 4766 Polyethylene storage tanks for water and chemicals

When installing a rainwater tank, consideration must be given to the property's water requirements including water required for the household, firefighting purposes (further information on water supply for firefighting purposes is at **Appendix A**), stock and human drinking water, garden watering, weed spraying or for washing machinery. There are useful guides and water audit calculators available on Victorian Government websites include:

- <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/liveable-cities-and-towns/using-alternative-water-sources>
- <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/soil-and-water/water/farm-water-solutions/what-are-my-options/water-supply-options-for-rural-lifestyle-properties>
- <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/soil-and-water/water/farm-water-solutions/farm-water-calculator>

When getting your initial refill for the rainwater tank installed under this program, ensure you use a licenced water carter. Contact your Local Council for an approved list of licenced water carters.



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Septic tanks

Land Capability Assessments will be required for all properties with damaged septic systems no reticulated wastewater services. The assessment will determine the appropriate wastewater management solutions. System affordability and maintenance will be a focus for the assessment. The homeowner will also need to have approval to install/alter a septic system through their local council.

The Environment Protection Act 1970 (EP Act) sets out the approval process for onsite wastewater systems with flow rates less than 5000 L/day:

- Local government issues a 'permit to install/alter and use' for individual treatment systems. To do so, the council will base its decision on the proposed treatment system and the lodged land capability assessment.
- The council will also consider the proposed end use (indoors and/or outdoors) for the treated effluent.
- The council must refuse to issue a 'permit to install/alter' if the system type is not approved by EPA.

The proposed domestic wastewater management systems must address the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria Publication 891.3 Code of Practice, Onsite Wastewater Management (2013) and the Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1547:2012 On-site Domestic Wastewater Management.

A list of onsite wastewater treatment systems with valid certificates is available at the EPA website: <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/water/about-wastewater/onsite-wastewater-systems>

When Council is satisfied the installations are in accordance with the Code they will issue the owner a Septic Tank Certificate of Use. Further information is at **Appendix B**.

11.3. Accredited Plumber

It is a legislative requirement under the Building Act 1993, and the Plumbing Regulations 2018,

that any work associated with the installation of a rainwater or septic tank be carried out by a licensed plumber.

The reasons why legislation and regulations require an installation be completed by a plumber include:

- Ensuring suitable materials are used to connect the tank to associated pipes.
- Connection of appropriate filter and diversion mechanism.
- Ensuring appropriate connections and suitable locations are used.
- Ensuring appropriate connection to the stormwater system to manage any overflow.
- Ensuring appropriate jointing methods are used.
- Minimisation of risk associated with cross-connection to the mains water supply to prevent backflow.
- Connection of appropriate valves, pipes and pumps.

The work undertaken to meet these requirements must also be performed in accordance with the appropriate Australian Standard (AS 3500 - as referenced by the Plumbing Regulations) or certification.

A licensed and registered plumber also must hold and maintain the required insurance for the classes in which they are licensed. This insurance protects consumers when plumbing work is found to be defective.

A compliance certificate is proof that the work complies with prescribed plumbing services, only licensed plumbers can issue a compliance certificate.

Failure to meet these requirements creates a risk that tanks may not be installed correctly. Incorrectly installed tanks could lead to flooding of neighbouring properties.

It should be noted that receipts and a copy of the compliance certificate are required for support under this program.

A compliance certificate must be included with the application if the total value of the product, materials and associated plumbing is \$750 or greater.



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Ask your plumber to supply you with a compliance certificate on completion of works.

For more information visit www.vba.vic.gov.au

11.4. Program Contact Details

Post:

Rainwater & Septic Tank Replacement Program

Melbourne Water

GPO Box 4342

Melbourne Vic 3001

Email:

Bushfire-rebates@melbournewater.com.au

11.5. Additional program information

Additional information is available at the program web page:
www.melbournewater.com.au/Bushfire-rebates

If you require assistance submitting your application online, contact the Melbourne Water on 13 17 22 or Bushfire-rebates@melbournewater.com.au

12. What is the notification process?

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email after the assessment process

is completed. All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback on their application.

13. Key dates

Applications open	12 August 2020
Applications close	31 May 2023

14. Checklist

Read these guidelines and the information about this program at:
www.melbournewater.com.au/Bushfire-rebates before applying and complete the following checklist.

Have you:

- read these guidelines carefully?
- checked if you are eligible for support?
- checked if your activity is eligible for support?
- checked that you would be able to comply with all relevant laws and regulations in delivery of your activity?
- prepared the appropriate supporting documents?

Appendix A – Water Supply for Firefighting Proposes

When installing a rainwater tank, consideration must be given to the property’s water requirements including water required for the household, firefighting purposes, stock and human drinking water, garden watering, weed spraying or for washing machinery.

Many rural properties that lost dwellings due to the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires are on land subject to the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). The BMO applies to land that may be significantly affected by a bushfire and triggers the need for a planning permit for certain developments and requires new developments to include appropriate bushfire protection measures.

Appropriate bushfire measures include the requirement for a static water supply to assist in protecting property. Water supply and access objectives in Clause 53.02-4.3 of the Victorian Planning Provisions require that a building use for a dwelling (including an extension or alteration to a dwelling), a dependent person’s unit, industry, office or retail premises is provided with:

- A static water supply for firefighting and property protection purposes.

The water supply requirements including capacity, fittings and access are specified in the table below:

Capacity, fittings and access

Lot sizes (square meters)	Hydrant available	Capacity (litres)	Fire authority fittings and access required
Less than 500	Not applicable	2,500	No
500-1,000	Yes	5,000	No
500-1,000	No	10,000	Yes
1,001 and above	Not applicable	10,000	Yes

Note 1: A hydrant is available if it is located within 120 metres of the rear of the building

The water supply may be in the same tank as other water supplies provided that a separate outlet is reserved for firefighting water supplies.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the relevant fire authority, the water supply must:

- Be stored in an above ground water tank constructed of concrete or metal.
- Have all fixed above ground waterpipes and fittings required for firefighting purposes made of corrosive resistant metal. Include a separate outlet for occupant use.

Where a 10,000-litre water supply is required, fire authority fittings and access must be provided as follows:

- Be readily identifiable from the building or appropriate identification signs to the satisfaction of the relevant fire authority.
- Be located within 60 metres of the outer edge of the approved building.
- The outlet/s of the water tank must be within 4 metres of the accessway and unobstructed.
- Incorporate a separate ball or gate valve (British Standard Pipe (BSP65 millimetre) and coupling (64-millimetre CFA 3 thread per inch male fitting).
- Any pipe work and fittings must be a minimum of 65 millimetres (excluding the CFA coupling).

Further Information

Further useful guides and water audit calculators available on for water use:

- <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/liveable/using-water-wisely>
- <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/liveable-cities-and-towns/using-alternative-water-sources>
- <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/soil-and-water/water/farm-water-solutions/what-are-my-options/water-supply-options-for-rural-lifestyle-properties>
- <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/soil-and-water/water/farm-water-solutions/farm-water-calculator>

Guidelines and information for remote outlets on water tanks in the Bushfire Management Overlay (water for firefighting purposes):

- <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/documents/20143/69511/Remote-Outlet-Guidelines-V2-Sep2017.pdf/03929d46-5ecc-6b54-af36-d71be177d362>
- <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/bushfire-protection/bushfire-management-overlay>

Appendix B – Septic Waste System Assessments

Many rural properties that lost dwellings due to the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires are within Special Water Supply Catchment Areas under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. Any development must consider, protect and enhance environmental values including water quality in these areas.

Most rural properties are not serviced by reticulated sewerage infrastructure. Domestic wastewater systems must manage effluent onsite. Wastewater systems must be designed, sited and developed to prevent pollution of land and water resources.

A Condition Report from a licenced plumber is required for properties with existing systems to determine how efficiently the systems are operating and if an upgrade or replacement system is required (for example if the system is damaged beyond economic repair due to the bushfire, or is found to be non-compliant with current Australian Standards).

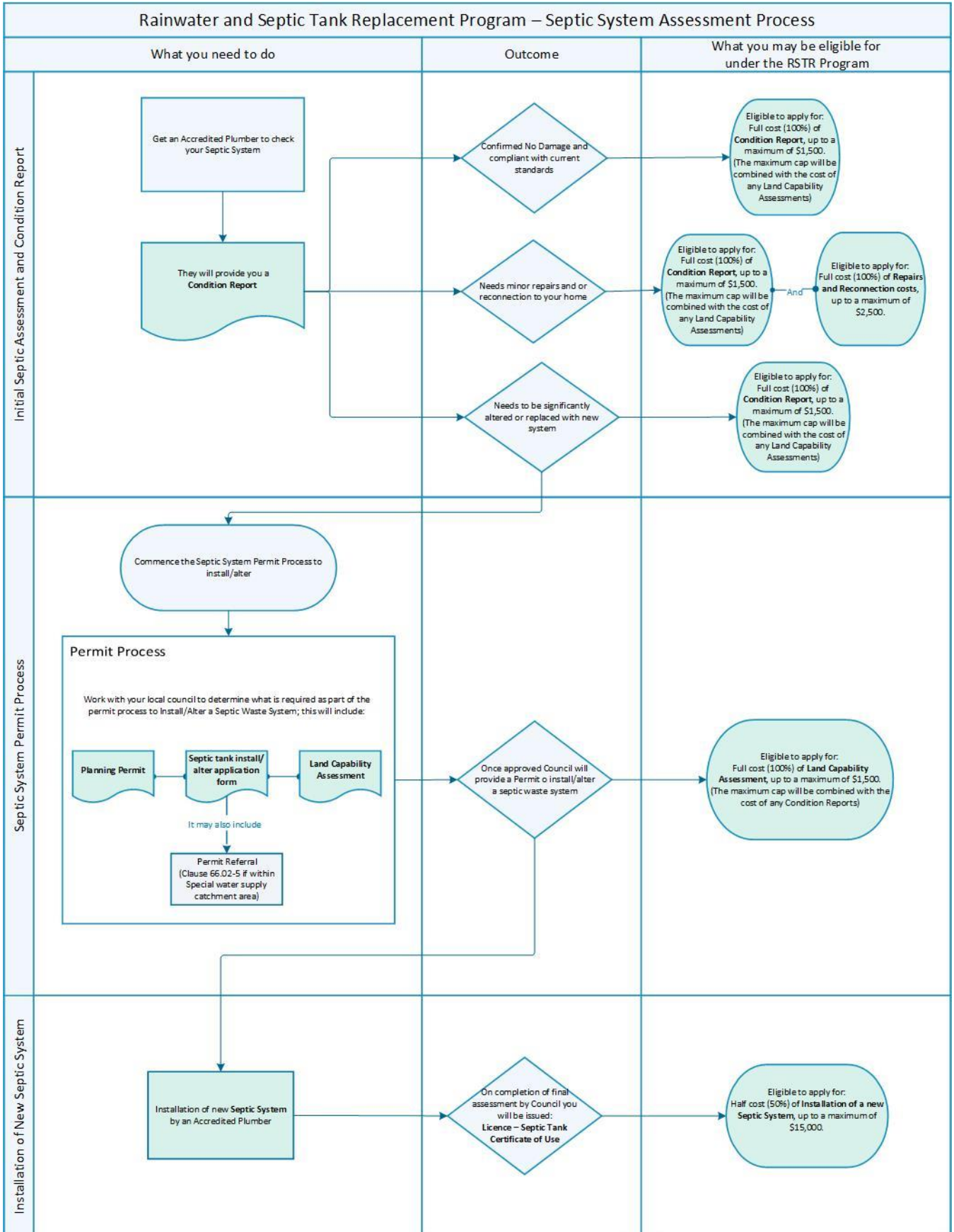
Where changes are required to an existing wastewater treatment system or a new system is required the applicant will need to make a Septic Tank System Permit Application to install a new or alter an existing septic tank system through your local Council.

As part of the Permit Application process a Land Capability Assessment will be needed. The assessment is used to determine the appropriate on-site domestic wastewater solution. This assessment identifies building and development constraints including soil types, drainage lines, land slope, proximity to waterbodies as well as other relevant landscape concerns. This will provide landholders and their architects, designers, engineers, insurers and builders with preliminary advice and options to guide the design and siting of a house. This is important work to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

As part of the Permit Application process, Council Environmental Health Officers will undertake a site assessment to verify the information given through your application and Land Capability Assessment. If you are within a Special Water Supply Catchment Area your application may be referred to the responsible land management authority (water corporations, Catchment Management Authorities, or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning). Once the Environmental Health Officer has confirmed that site conditions are consistent with the information contained in the application, the applicant will be issued a Permit to install/alter a septic tank system.

Once a licensed plumber has installed the new system, the Environmental Health Office will conduct a final assessment to ensure satisfactory works. Upon completion of installation the property owner will be issued a Permit to Use a septic tank system.

Undertaking the Condition Report and Land Capability Assessments may reduce the time required to process permit applications and will also inform individual property owners and their architects as to any additional site-specific investigations needed to rebuild.



Appendix C – Definition of key terms

The below is a definition of key terms used throughout the Rainwater and septic tank replacement program – guidelines and application process document.

Definition of key terms	
2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires	The bushfires across Eastern Victoria that commenced on 21 November 2019 and subsided in March 2020 and directly impacted the Local Government Areas of Alpine, Towong and East Gippsland.
Application form	A standardised form that an eligible customer completes to formally apply for the RSTR program rebate.
Delivery Agency	Melbourne Water will provide the service delivery of the RSTR Program through its advice to customers and processing successful applications.
Department	The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is the lead Department for the RSTR Program
Eligible application	An eligible application is when a customer has met the eligibility criteria and has submitted all the supporting documentation.
Guidelines	The RSTR Program guidelines aim to streamline specific processes that comply with government code of practice, and guide customers to determine a course of action. Guidelines are not binding and are not enforceable.
Minister	The Minister responsible for Water and Emergency Services portfolios.
Personal information	Any data that can be linked to identify an individual. Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014</i> and other applicable laws.
Program funds	The funding available to applicants as part of the RSTR Program.
Rainwater tanks	Rainwater tanks are devices for collecting and maintaining harvested rain. Any rainwater tank installed will need to comply with current Australian standards and local council regulations and permit approvals.
Rebate	The RSTR program will provide a financial rebate to successful applicants through a direct cash back deposit into the applicants nominated bank account.
Septic tanks	Septic tank systems are a type of onsite sewage facility (OSSF). They can be used in areas that are not connected to a sewerage system, such as rural areas. The treated liquid effluent is commonly disposed in a septic drain field. Any septic waste system installed will need to comply with current Australian standards and local council regulations and permit approvals.
Significantly damaged	Damaged beyond the function they were designed for and/or do not meet current Australian standards or permit requirements

