

Response to Victorian Bushfires, Australia

Project Summary:

The bushfires which swept the state of Victoria in early 2009 destroyed over 400,000 hectares of land and an estimated 78 communities. Very few Australians were not affected in some way by the scale of this tragedy, including members of our WSP team. Our response was to draw together a team of personnel with skills from across our global business to deliver environmental advice in support of Grocon Pty Ltd, the project managers for the cleanup.

The Challenge:

The immense size of the project combined with the urgency to get people back into their homes and restore communities, presented a major logistical challenge.

More than 3,000 private homes, businesses and schools were obliterated over a vast area with affected zones up to 400km apart. The combination of temperatures in the 40's and hurricane force winds provided unprecedented conditions for a fire of immense proportions and severity.

Grocon Pty Ltd (a large privately owned construction company) was appointed as project managers for the cleanup works and asked WSP to assist them.

Our Work:

Many of the properties in the townships contained asbestos and WSP was asked by Grocon to assist with environmental advice and to provide air monitoring and cleanup certification for each site before rebuilding could commence.

The challenge for our project managers was to manage all our people over this large area and provide supervision,

monitoring and advice to over 50 Grocon demolition teams daily.

In response to the logistics and the enormity of the challenge, our project team drew on expertise and resources from multiple locations across not just our Australian team, but our global team. The importance was in the whole WSP team responding as one. The team met this challenge with conviction and commitment in spite of long hours and often difficult conditions.

The Outcome:

To assist with the emotional recovery of the community it was necessary to remove the waste and physical evidence of the tragedy. Grocon went about their work with sensitivity, speed and efficiency and the manner in which WSP successfully met Grocon's demands is testament to our capacity as a global business. It illustrated our ability to mobilise, lead and integrate large teams of people expeditiously and in a financially viable manner.

At WSP we hope our contribution aided the reconstruction process and helped people recover from the sheer devastation of this unforeseen tragedy. In recognition we contributed part of our services on a pro bono basis.

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