

Supporting Our Recovery: What is a Secondary Impact Assessment?

After a major event like a fire or flood, you will see Council staff and specialists visiting our communities. They are conducting a Secondary Impact Assessment (SIA). We know this is a difficult time, and we want to explain why we are here and how this helps our community get back on its feet.

What is a Secondary Impact Assessment?

While emergency services (like the CFA or SES) do an initial impact assessment during the event, a 'Secondary Impact Assessment' is a more detailed analysis of the impact to your property. We visit properties, businesses, and public areas to understand the full extent of the damage. We look at:

- Your Home: A structural and hazards assessment of buildings, structures and sanitary health services on your property.
- Your Wellbeing: Do you have what you need (food, clothes, health support)?

Why are we doing this?

We collect this information for three main reasons:

1. To get you help: We can offer referrals to vitally important services and connect you directly with them. Such services may include housing assistance, financial counselling, assistance with fencing or clean up.
2. To gather detailed information on the true impacts of this event to support our community to recover
3. To secure funding: The state and federal governments provide money for recovery. Our SIA team's data helps to guide where that money is needed most. Your information helps us "make the case" for Strathbogie Shire to get its fair share of support.

What happens to the data we collect?
Your privacy is very important to us. The information gathered by our teams is:

- Shared with recovery partners: Only organisations that provide direct help (like Emergency Recovery Victoria or recovery agencies) will see relevant details.
- Used for planning: We use the data to create a "Recovery Plan" that decides which projects are the highest priority for our town.
- Kept secure: We follow strict privacy laws to ensure your personal details are protected.

A note on our visit: Our teams will always carry identification. You do not have to let us onto your property if you don't feel comfortable, but the more information we have, the better we can support you.

We are in this together. If you have immediate questions, please call Strathbogie Shire on 1800 065 993, 03 5795 0000 or visit www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au

Frequently asked questions

Who are the people visiting my property?

The Secondary Impact Assessment teams are made up specialists in building, environmental health, and community support. They will always carry official Council ID cards.

Do I have to let them in?

No. Your participation is completely voluntary. However, allowing the team to see the impact on your property helps us understand the total damage to our Shire, which helps us get support from the government.

Does this assessment replace my insurance claim?

No. This is separate from insurance. You should still contact your insurance company as soon as possible to start your private claim. Our assessment is about community-wide recovery and seeing if you need extra support from the Council or the government.

Can I get a copy of the SIA report to support insurance claim?

No – this information is not for individual use, rather the information gathered provides data on the broader community impacts and needs. If you require an all-hazards structural assessment, contact the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760.

What if I wasn't home when the team visited?

If you weren't home, the team may carry out an inspection and have left a calling card or a note. You can call our Secondary Impact Assessment Team on (03) 5795 0000 to provide your information over the phone or to schedule a time for us to come back.

What if I need help immediately?

If you are in immediate danger, call 000. If you have no power, no food, or nowhere to stay, please call us on (03) 5795 0000. You do not need to wait for an assessment to get urgent help.

How long will the recovery take?

Recovery is a journey, not a race. Some things (like clearing debris) happen quickly, while others (like repairing bridges) take more time. We will use the data from these assessments to keep you updated on the timeline for your specific area.

Why can't I start cleaning up straight away?

Although it may feel urgent to remove debris or begin repairs, starting clean-up before an official assessment can expose you to serious health and safety risks. Fire-affected sites often contain hazards that aren't visible or obvious.

What hidden hazards might be present?

Fire can destabilise structures, damage materials, and expose contaminants. Common risks include:

- Asbestos-containing materials: Fires can make asbestos friable, releasing tiny fibres that can cause long-term respiratory illnesses.
- Chemical and waste contamination: Debris, ash, fire retardants and runoff often contain harmful pollutants that can affect soil, waterways and human health.
- Unstable structures: Trees, powerlines, roofs, walls or other building elements may collapse.
- Damage to Onsite Wastewater Management Systems that may compromise their function.

Are there legal or environmental responsibilities I need to be aware of?

Yes. Under Victorian environmental legislation, landowners have obligations to manage contaminated land and ensure actions protect both human health and the environment. Official assessments help identify risks and outline what safe clean-up must involve.

When can I start cleaning up?

Wait for official notification. Council and relevant agencies will inform you when secondary assessments are complete and it is safe to begin clean-up or rebuilding.

Can I start clean-up myself if it looks safe?

No. Starting early can expose you, your family or workers to serious risks — including asbestos fibres, chemical contamination, or structural collapse. Following completion of your SIA you can then arrange clean-up.

Need to talk?

We know this is a stressful time. If you need to speak with someone about how you are feeling, you can contact:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14 (24/7)
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- Emergency Recovery Hotline: 1800 560 760