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Working with the Chain Gang

Making the Links: Risk Mitigation

Macedon Ranges, Victoria



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The Problem

Three Chain Road, in Macedon Ranges Shire, has experienced significant bushfire threats in recent years. Residents and stakeholders have historically expressed conflicting views about how the roadside should be managed to both preserve ecological values and mitigate fire risk.

In Victoria, Local Governments have responsibility for emergency risk reduction, fire prevention, and environmental management of the public land in their care. Individual landholders do not have the authority to undertake fire prevention works on public land.

The Response

With residents, the project working group collectively developed an action plan that achieves the following agreed objectives:

- Minimise the chance of ignitions;
- Enable containment of fires that start on or close to the road;
- Enable safe access during a fire for emergency vehicles and road users;
- Minimise the spread of high threat weeds both within the road reserve and on adjoining lands;
- Protect and enhance conservation values and threatened species populations.

The Project

The project working group developed a Roadside Action Plan to manage fire risk and conservation values for Three Chain Road between Carlsruhe and Lancefield in Victoria. This included:

- Establishing a partnership between the residents of Three Chain Road, the Country Fire Authority, Regional Roads Victoria, and Council;
- Undertaking research to establish areas of environmental values and fire risk;
- Conducting a series of workshops to build a common understanding of the values and the risk;
- Building a consensus about how each section of the roadside should be managed.

The Outcome

Resilience was built through collaborative exploration, decision-making, and developing personal relationships. Guided by local and expert knowledge, the Action Plan achieves the needs of all involved in the project.

From global to local, it is well recognised that greatest beneficial impact in disaster risk reduction is seen when decisions are made, and action is taken, at the local level. This is confirmed from the Sendai Framework, to the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, and Safer Together at State level. This project is a clear example of these principles in practice.

The Implementation

The Action Plan will be implemented progressively with priority works undertaken. This will involve:

- Roadside slashing – modifications to current program,
- Ecological thinning,
- Permit process for environmental works on roadsides,
- Weed control,
- Community engagement,
- Burning and native grass introductions,
- Erecting signage.

Processes and learnings from this project will be consolidated and replicated on other complex roadsides as resources allow.

