

NEW ZEALAND

Parliament protest damage bill climbs: \$242,000 children's slide set ablaze among extensive destruction

2 Mar, 2022 05:41 PM

3 minutes to read

(Campbell, 2022)

Police storm occupation site - tents on fire, slide torched as Parliament lawn cleared. Video / NZ Herald



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A \$242,000 slide that caught fire is among the extensive damage done to Parliament's grounds and the surrounding area.

Riot police today stormed Parliament's front lawn, tearing down tents and shunting protesters away from the site.

The aftermath revealed a once lush green lawn has been turned into a brown paddock of hay and dirt. A mountain of mangled tents and debris remains.

There is also a substantial amount of graffiti outside Parliament.

Rioters also tore up bricks from a driveway to throw at police, which will eventually need to be replaced.

Berms have been damaged, landscaping will need to be redone, and a large-scale cleaning operation is needed.

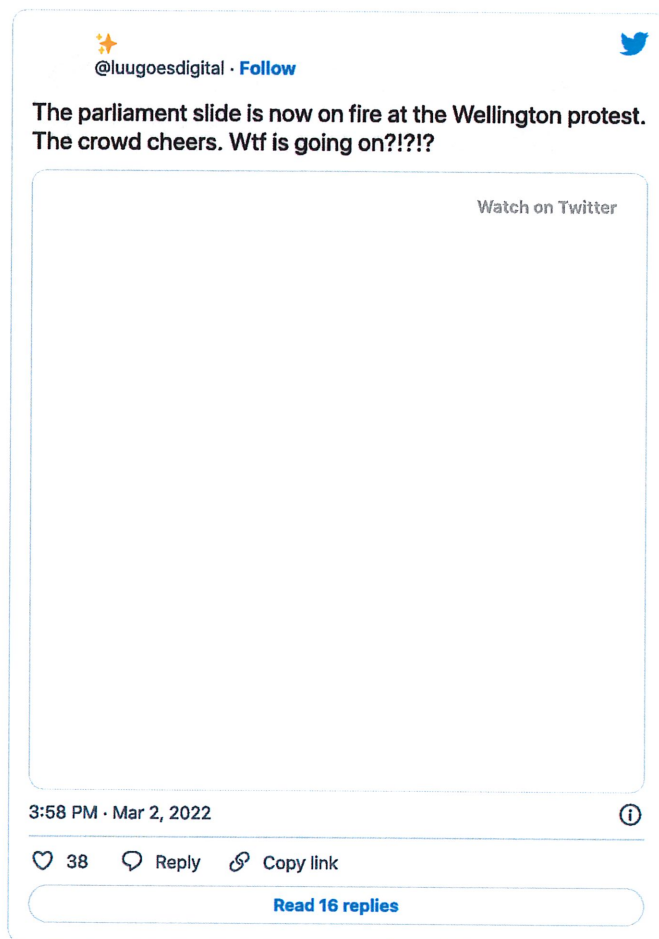
Wellington City Council has a clean-up crew ready to go, although whether they will enter the site tonight remains to be seen.

A community clean-up is being organised to clear out rubbish and other waste. Volunteers can sign up for the effort [here](#) and those wanting to donate money can contribute via the big clean up's [Givealittle page](#).

There is also a fundraising bid for the [slide and children's playground](#).

During the chaos of today's events, a fire broke out among tents close to pōhutukawa trees that line the lawn outside Parliament.

Huge plumes of black smoke filled the air, explosions could be heard, and the fierce orange flames took hold of a slide and play space that was only opened in 2019.



The playground is one of Speaker Trevor Mallard's initiatives to make Parliament more family-friendly, welcoming and accessible.

The centrepiece of the playground is the slide, which was manufactured in Palmerston North and made from sustainable forest beech. The safety pad material is made from recycled tyres.

"Parliament belongs to all New Zealanders and I am delighted to see this play space come to fruition so that families and children can enjoy the grounds of Parliament and feel like they belong, and are welcome here," Mallard said when the playground was opened in November 2019.

Of the carnage today he said "I've never seen anything like it", but would not comment further.

When approached for comment on the slide and the estimated cost of the overall damage, Mallard's office said the Speaker would not be commenting on security and police matters.

A few months after the slide opened it was revealed to have cost \$242,000, which National's then State Services spokesman Nick Smith said was "scandalous".

The combined cost of the slide itself, consultants and civil works amounted to \$572,000.

Outside Parliament's grounds, the damage is the council's problem.

Council spokesman Richard MacLean said the site would be examined closely as soon as it was cleared and safe.

"We are not going to try and make an estimate of what the damage will cost until everything is cleared so we can take a really good look at all of the public property."

MacLean expected landscaping would be the main work the council would need to attend to.

But he said there has also been vandalism, including a lot of graffiti.

"There's a hell of a lot of cleaning that's going to have to be done."

MacLean said the council has a large clean-up crew that would be offering assistance to Parliament, Victoria University, and whoever else needed help.

"We've got a big task in front of us."