



# National Bushfire Recovery Agency

## Bushfire recovery news | Edition 2 | 6 April 2020

### From the National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

I'm writing this fortnight's message from my house, as we get used to the new normal. But while many of us work from home, it is a timely reminder that many bushfire victims no longer have a home to work from.

For those of you who lost your home in the bushfires and are now facing COVID-19, please know you're in our thoughts every day. I'm speaking with colleagues and partners to ensure temporary accommodation is as settled as it can be. If your living situation after the bushfires isn't working, [please get in touch](#) so we can find you some help.

For everyone who has been affected by the bushfires and now COVID-19, be assured you are our priority. We know you've been hit twice - even more if you have also suffered through drought and/or flood. We are here to help.

You can now message us directly from our Facebook page to ask questions or share concerns, and our Recovery Support Officers will respond directly to you.

There are some new highlights I'd like to share with you. The details are then provided in the main newsletter below.

The Red Cross has announced new \$20,000 grants for owner-occupiers who had their homes destroyed in the fires, and Paralympics Australia is offering funding to help athletes with disability replace para-sport equipment.

As of 4 April, more than 10,000 businesses have received direct financial assistance through our grants and loan programs. Many more have been able to take advantage of financial counselling and tax administration support measures. This is in addition to the 233,000+ bushfire affected people who have received direct financial support through Disaster Recovery Payment, Disaster Recovery Allowance and Back to School payments. These numbers are rising daily.

This is a hard time, and even the most resilient people are feeling the strain. If you're struggling, or supporting someone else with their mental health, think about getting some help. There are numbers and links below for free counselling.

Adapting to this strange new world, the team and I have been visiting bushfire affected areas 'virtually'. This has meant checking in with locals over video and telephone calls, to hear how things are going and what help is needed. It is one way we're staying in touch despite coronavirus, so we can problem solve together. We are also mindful that some people do not have ready access to phone and internet, so we are working on other ways of staying in touch.

Lots of government support has been announced recently to help get us through coronavirus. [We've put together a combined list of support](#) - including assistance for bushfires, drought, flood and COVID-19 - to make it easier to see what help is available. Take a look, and keep in mind we will update it as things change. If you are not sure, please don't self-assess. Call the relevant hotline to help you make an informed decision.

I wish you a safe and healthy Easter with the ones you love...and remember, while we do need to physically distance from each other, it is vital we keep socially engaging with each other during this difficult time.

## Andrew

Andrew Colvin  
National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

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## How are you feeling?

If you are struggling after the fires, or someone you know is, you have options.

You can access up to 10 free counselling sessions in your local area. Call **180 22 66** and ask about counselling, or [look up your local Primary Health Network](#) to book in directly.

There are online options too. You might like to have a look at [Head to Health](#) – a website that links you to trusted services you can use online or over the phone.

For support over the phone call:

- Lifeline: 13 HELP (13 43 57)
- Mensline: 1300 78 99 78
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

## Financial support

A range of financial help is available to bushfire affected communities. Have a look at our [website](#) for the full list.

Below are three grants and payments to have on your radar.



Red Cross offers new \$20,000 rebuild grant

A new grant is available from the Red Cross, to help homeowners experiencing financial hardship as a direct result of bushfires.

The Rebuild Grant of \$20,000 is available across Australia, and is for home owners whose primary place of residence was destroyed or rendered permanently uninhabitable as the result of a bushfire between 1 July 2019 and 28 February 2020.

It assists with the early stages of rebuilding their homes, such as the costs of building plans, council approvals and fees, and safety assessments.

There's more information on the Red Cross website about this and their other grants for bushfire affected communities.

See [redcross.org.au/bushfire-grants-questions](https://redcross.org.au/bushfire-grants-questions)

## Have you got the Disaster Recovery Payment yet?

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment is a one-off payment for people impacted by a major disaster, including the bushfires.

It's \$1000 for adults and \$400 for kids.

You don't have to be receiving other government payments to qualify.

If you were injured or lost a loved one (immediate family) in the fires, you are eligible for the payment. You can also make a claim if your home or an asset at your home was damaged or destroyed.

Don't overthink it or self-assess – just call 180 22 66 and find out if you're eligible.

## Need to replace para-sport equipment?

Paralympics Australia is about to open up a funding round for athletes with disability, to help purchase specialist para-sport equipment.

Known as the Para-sport Equipment Fund, the initiative is designed to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in para-sport, by helping with the high cost of equipment.

If you have lost para-sport gear in the fires, this is a great chance to replace it.

Applications open today, **Monday 6 April** and close on Friday 5 June 2020.

[Find out more](#)

## This fortnight



### Meet our new Deputy

Our new Deputy Coordinator, Rina Bruinsma joins us from the Department of Finance. Rina with a truckload of experience in delivering grants that are easy to apply for. You'll see more of Rina on social media over the coming weeks – another great reason to follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)



### How to stay in touch

We're still here to help, it just looks a little different as we adapt our communication channels due to COVID-19. We have opened up a direct message function through our Facebook page, so you can contact us directly with questions and concerns. [Find out more](#)



### Combined list of help available

Support from governments, to help you through the pandemic. We've put a list on our website, so you don't have to hunt around. It includes bushfire, COVID-19, drought and flood assistance. [Find out more](#)

## Register for clean up



If your property was destroyed in the fires, you've probably heard about the debris removal and clean up operation that's underway through your state government. The removal of debris will be provided at no cost to those affected by fire.

The clean up program covers properties used for residential, small business and primary production purposes, regardless of whether you were insured or uninsured.

Clean up is still happening, despite the challenges of COVID-19. We know how important it is for communities to get a clean slate back so rebuilding can begin.

If you haven't registered your property yet, click the link below for your state and get yourself on the list:

[Register for clean up in New South Wales](#) or call **13 77 88**

[Register for clean up in Victoria](#) or call **1800 560 760**

[Register for clean up in South Australia](#) or call **08 8204 2051**

This fortnight, we're putting a spotlight on clean up progress in New South Wales. Stay tuned for updates from other states over the coming weeks.

Laing O'Rourke is the company contracted in New South Wales to deliver the clean up. They are getting on with the job as quickly and safely as possible and progress is now well underway.

Clean-up works have started in the Bega Valley, Blue Mountains, Clarence Valley, Eurobodalla, Hawkesbury, Kempsey, Mid Coast, Richmond Valley, Shoalhaven and Wollondilly areas.

At the same time the clean up team on the ground is calling and meeting property owners to schedule inspections and plan for clean-ups.

As work continues to ramp up into the next phase, the clean up team will be adding more resources to help contact more property owners every day and schedule inspections at their earliest convenience. For New South Wales areas that are next on the clean up list see [cleanup.lnbr.com.au/](http://cleanup.lnbr.com.au/)

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## Future focus

### A plan for recovery on the Scenic Rim

Later this week we are due to connect over video chat with the team at Binna Burra Lodge, an ecotourism icon about 70 km south of Brisbane on the Scenic Rim. With around 60 staff before the fires, it's a major driver of the local economy.

When fire went through in September, the Lodge and all of its heritage-listed cabins were destroyed. Getting the access road open has been a priority so visitors can eventually return to some of the undamaged accommodation. Urgent work has been needed to stabilise the jaw-dropping cliffs that overlook Lamington National Park after the heat from the fire 'cooked' the soil.

The scale of the task is daunting, but the Binna Burra team are tackling it bit by bit. They've formed a recovery council with shareholders and other stakeholders, and they're working with governments to towards a goal of rebuilding.

The Queensland Government has led a project to support the clean up and recovery at Binna Burra, with the Australian Government chipping in to help fund it. A taskforce is fast-tracking work worth almost \$1.8 million, including master planning to inform recovery and restoration needs.

We look forward to talking through the challenges with the team at Binna Burra, and with some of the local businesses and workers that rely on tourism in the area. The Lodge had been planning a staged reopening this month, but no doubt the coronavirus pandemic has had some impact on that.

If you're interested in following the Binna Burra journey, or talking to the team about how they're approaching recovery, you can connect via the [Binna Burra website](#).



*A sneak peek from Twitter of Binna Burra's safari tents getting some love with repaired frames, floors and brand new roofs @binnaburra*

## Snapshot from the frontline



*Major General Andrew Hocking (right) at the Ovens Incident Control Centre in Victoria*

### Victoria's Alpine Region - March 2020

While many can picture the bushfire losses along the east coast, the situation for the alpine region in northern Victoria is less well known. For some of our staff, who have family in that area, the impacts are all too familiar.

One of our Deputy Coordinators, Major General Andrew Hocking (or 'Hocks'), took a small team with him to Wodonga and Ovens on 13 March, just before the COVID-19 travel precautions ramped up.

Local member of parliament, Dr Helen Haines had invited Hocks to meet with Mayor of Toowong Shire, David Wortman and some of the locals that had been staffing Incident Control Centres in the region. Dr Haines spoke about her concerns for planned recovery and emphasised the secondary impacts the areas was facing, with mental health and the local economy top of mind.

Trips like this give us insights into recovery needs at the local level, so they can be factored into planning and program development across all levels of government.

The opportunity for us to speak candidly with the team at Wodonga and Ovens' Incident Control Centres was illuminating. They had run the centres, trained crews and even fought the fires over the course of the summer. Their professional and personal resolve to learn from the devastation was inspiring, as was their genuine consideration of each other's wellbeing.

It's evident the local communities are not only resilient but positive in their plans for their future recovery. We learned more about the fire impact on the district and on

commercial plantations, as well as the differences in tactics and firefighting strategy between local and international firefighters from Canada. Plantation managers discussed a variety of solutions to harvest some impacted areas but also forecast industry impacts a year or two from now.

With every community we meet, we get new insights into the unrelenting passion of local people for getting on with their recovery, and find out how the support on offer matches up to their needs. Thanks to all involved in the trip – we look forward to visiting more communities over the coming months (albeit 'virtually' for now).to visiting more communities over the coming months (albeit 'virtually' for now).

## How to subscribe

Do you know someone who wants to receive these updates?

They can subscribe at [bushfirerecovery.gov.au/news/subscribe](https://bushfirerecovery.gov.au/news/subscribe)

## Key contacts

**If you need emergency assistance, please ring Triple Zero (000)**

[Key contacts in the state and Australian governments](#)

National Bushfire Recovery Agency

Email: [contact@bushfirerecovery.gov.au](mailto:contact@bushfirerecovery.gov.au)

Media enquiries

Email: [media@bushfirerecovery.gov.au](mailto:media@bushfirerecovery.gov.au)

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Website

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