



National Bushfire Recovery Agency

Bushfire Recovery News – Edition 3

From the National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

It's hard to believe, but it has now been more than 100 days since the National Bushfire Recovery Agency was established. Together, we've achieved a lot during that time but we're under no illusion about how much work still needs to be done.

Our focus has progressed since those early days where lives, homes and essential services were lost, damaged or in jeopardy. In recent months we have zeroed in on matching government help to immediate needs – making sure people have places to live and money to buy food, pumping money into mental health services so there are free counsellors when you're struggling, and supporting the many businesses and producers battling to rebuild their livelihoods under the extra pressure from COVID-19.

All of those things will continue to be important, and we won't stop championing the needs of bushfire affected communities, particularly in the face of COVID-19.

As 2020 marches on we are also looking ahead to a vision for long term recovery. Work is underway across the country, to ensure the aspirations of communities are incorporated into recovery plans at the local, state and national level. We'll keep you updated on opportunities to have your say, including how your local recovery planning efforts are being recognised in the national framework through the National Bushfire Recovery Plan we are developing. In the meantime I encourage you to feed your ideas and insights to your local, regional, and state recovery committees, or drop us a line at RecoveryPlan@bushfirerecovery.gov.au.

If you have been thinking about providing a submission to the Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements, the deadline is **Tuesday 28 April 2020**. The Royal Commission has a lot of ground to cover in a short time, but they will look closely at every submission they receive.

Until next time, thank you again for playing a part in bushfire recovery during this difficult time. If you would like to hear a little about what motivates the team and I on this recovery journey, have a look at our [100 days video message](#).

Andrew
National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

In this edition

- This fortnight
 - Royal Commission
 - Free financial counselling
 - Telling your story
- Key facts and figures
- Clean up gathering speed
- Snapshot from the frontline – Snowy Valleys Region
- Contact details

This fortnight



Royal Commission

The Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements held its first public hearing last week. You can catch up via the video on the [Royal Commission website](#). Don't be put off by the legal detail at the start – the hearing also explains the issues the Commission will look at and how you can have your say, and includes video testimony about the aftermath of the fire in the Adelaide Hills. Submissions close soon (**Tuesday 28 April**).

[Find out more](#)

If this raises concerns for you, [Find out more](#) support is available through Lifeline Bushfire Support on **13 43 57**.



Free financial counselling

Bushfires and COVID-19 got you feeling overwhelmed? Free financial counselling is available via the National Debt Helpline.

Call **1800 007 007**.

The help is independent and confidential. They can help with planning, renegotiating repayments, grants advice, and much more. Don't leave it, make the call and chat with a professional.

They're open Monday to Friday from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm.



Telling your story

Have you seen the [Fridge Door Fire Stories Facebook group](#), started by the National Museum of Australia? It's a safe space for people to share their experiences of the fires and the things that brought people together. If you're interested in telling your story, or just want to have a look through the harrowing and inspiring accounts posted by others, it's worth a look. The Museum is working on an exhibition on the bushfires which will open in 2021.

[Fridge Door group](#)

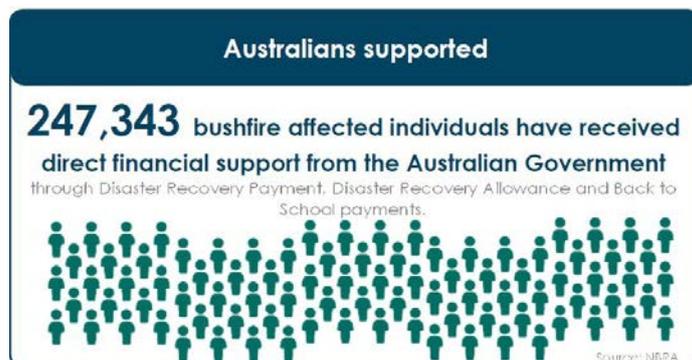
[About the project](#)

[About the exhibition](#)

Key facts and figures

Help delivered so far

Our work to deliver financial help to communities and businesses is continuing. An update on funding dispersed so far is below (at 20 April), with the numbers rising daily.



- More than 247,000 people have received direct financial support through Disaster Recovery Payment, Disaster Recovery Allowance and Back to School payments, with more than \$241 million paid out.
- More than 12,000 small businesses have been approved for the new \$10,000 grant. More than \$123 million has been approved.
- More than 1,000 small businesses have been approved for the larger recovery grants of up to \$50,000. More than \$28 million has been approved.
- More than 1,400 primary producers have been approved for recovery grants of up to \$75,000. More than \$88 million has been approved.
- More than \$11 million has been approved across 217 concessional loans.
- Councils are spending \$60 million in immediate relief provided in January and February to bushfire affected local governments.
- \$76 million has been invested into mental health support services for people impacted by the bushfire disaster.



Clean up gathering speed



Anabel Douglass-Hill at her cleared property, as the Kangaroo Island clean up hits a milestone with the 100th bushfire-affected property now cleared and ready for rebuilding.

For those who lost properties in the fires, having the debris cleared away is a huge milestone.

Across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, the free government clean up work is gathering speed despite the challenges of COVID-19.

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 8204 2051

Clean up in South Australia

This fortnight, we're highlighting clean up progress in South Australia. Work is moving rapidly in South Australia and is expected to be largely complete by the end of May.

Over 240 properties across Kangaroo Island and Cudlee Creek have been cleared and are ready for rebuilding, with the remaining 140 clean ups scheduled for completion by the end of May. The clean up of fire debris has been quite complex – particularly on Kangaroo Island – due to the number of properties impacted, the remoteness of some sites and the prominence of asbestos.

Green Industries SA, the lead government agency co-ordinating the clean-up, has released a schedule showing when properties are expected to be cleaned-up. You can find it at greenindustries.sa.gov.au/bushfires

State Recovery Coordinator Robyn Green is clear that bushfire recovery is still their priority, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. For advice about the support that's available, South Australian residents and businesses can call their local Recovery Centre (contact details can be found at dhs.sa.gov.au/recovery) or the SA Small Business Team on (08) 8429 3801.

"We want to make sure we're supporting people as best as we can," said Robyn.

"Clean-up of bushfire debris is going ahead efficiently in South Australia. We are working closely with local contractors and suppliers, and are on track for completion during May.

"But we know some people haven't registered for the free clean-up. It's not too late, and I encourage people to register at greenindustries.sa.gov.au/bushfires."

Snapshot from the frontline

Snowy Valleys Region, New South Wales - February 2020

The lived experience of bushfire affected communities is one of the foundations of our work on long term bushfire recovery plans.

Before the COVID-19 travel restrictions came about, the National Coordinator, along with three members of the Agency, took a trip to the Snowy Valleys Region of New South Wales. The group spent the day meeting and touring with council members and locals in Tumut, Batlow and Tumbarumba.

The team connected with traditional owners and representatives from the many industries that the area depends upon including fruit, wine and horticulture, agriculture and livestock, tourism, small business, forestry and logging. The devastation of the

communities was tangible, but so was the resilience and eagerness to continue on with everyday life and 'build back better'.

The aim of the visit was to better understand what worked and what didn't - with a large focus on moving forward and solutions. Throughout the day, Andrew and the team were able to provide advice, clarification and information around the various grants available to primary producers and small businesses. Communication challenges, mental health, financial advice, infrastructure and road upgrades were common discussion points.

Long term recovery was clearly at the forefront of people's minds in the region. This visit was extremely informative, and the ideas and issues were taken away for the Agency to factor in to the development of government support for longer-term recovery plans.



National Coordinator Andrew Colvin (right) with local vigner in Tumbarumba NSW

Contact Us

How to subscribe

Do you know someone who wants to receive these updates?

They can subscribe at bushfirerecovery.gov.au/news/subscribe

You'll find previous editions of the newsletter at the link above.

Key contacts

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

Click here for [key contacts in state and Australian governments](#)

Email us

contact@bushfirerecovery.gov.au

Message us

Click the 'Message' button on our [Facebook page](#) to send us a private message if you have a question or concern. Our Recovery Support Officers are online to help.

Media enquiries

Email: media@bushfirerecovery.gov.au

Phone: 02 6271 5015

Website

bushfirerecovery.gov.au

Facebook

facebook.com/FireRecoveryAU/

Twitter

twitter.com/FireRecoveryAU

Update from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency | Edition Number 3



 Forward

[Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)