



National Bushfire Recovery Agency

Bushfire Recovery News – Edition 13

From the National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

October marks the anniversary of the first of many fatalities in the Black Summer bushfires where 33 people died; three in South Australia, five in Victoria and 25 in NSW. Nine of those lost were firefighters. It is a sombre reminder of the impact of the fires and the traumas they inflicted upon communities. My heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives. We will never forget them as we continue our work with the communities they strove to protect.

I hope everyone is looking out for each other and reaching out when needed. This month is Mental Health Month and in this edition, we highlight valuable work being undertaken in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

For those struggling, help is available. Call Lifeline's dedicated Bushfire Recovery line on 13 HELP (13 43 57) or visit our website bushfirerecovery.gov.au/mental-health

Until next time, take care.

Andrew Colvin

National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

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MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

October is Mental Health Month – a time to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing.

If you're not feeling like yourself after the bushfires (and now COVID-19) it can help to talk.

It's normal to have strong emotional and physical reactions after a significant event. There is no right or wrong way to feel – people can respond to the same event in very different ways.

Some of these responses can include:

- You might feel anxious, overwhelmed or confused; feel sad, irritable or angry, or numb.
- You might feel unwell – headaches, difficulty sleeping, losing or gaining weight.
- Some people might increase their use of alcohol or drugs. Some may even think of harming themselves.

Simple strategies can help like:



Talking to a professional can help you process your reactions and develop healthy coping strategies.

If you want some support, if people are worried about you, or if you're still feeling unsettled even after a few weeks– it is a good idea to talk to someone. Help is available.

If you have been affected by the bushfires, you can access the following mental health support services:

- Up to 10 free counselling sessions if you live in an area heavily affected by the fires
- Up to 10 Medicare-rebated psychological therapy sessions, without the need for a mental health treatment plan or referral
- Free post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) support for emergency services personnel, including volunteers and their families
- Mental health support services online and over the phone.

Go to bushfirerecovery.gov.au/mental-health to see how to access this support, and what other assistance is available to you. Or you can send us a confidential message through Facebook and we'll help you find support near you – click on Send Message at facebook.com/FireRecoveryAU/

Specialist training for those helping bushfire trauma victims

New training is being rolled out to help services provide the best possible care to people who experienced trauma through the 2019-20 bushfires.

The training looks at trauma informed care, mental health first aid and psychological first aid with a focus on the lived experiences and needs of people who went through the fires. It is available for public-facing staff, including GPs, pharmacists, psychologists and emergency services staff.

The training is assisting front line staff to be well equipped and informed to help people who may need mental health support or are struggling after the bushfires.

The Australian Government Department of Health has funded specialist organisations with expertise in trauma-informed care to deliver the following evidence-based training:

- **Trauma-informed care and psychological first aid training** designed specifically for emergency services personnel, GPs and other health care providers. The training is being delivered by Phoenix Australia – Centre for Post Traumatic Mental Health.
 - For more information and to access training, contact Alexandra Howard, Senior Clinical Specialist at Phoenix Australia
 - Phone: (03) 9035 5599
 - Email contact form: phoenixaustralia.org/resources/bushfire-recovery/

- **Free mental health first aid training for pharmacists and pharmacy workers** delivered by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.
 - For more information and to access training, contact Emily Thorp, Pharmacist – Training and Delivery at the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
 - Phone: 1300 369 772
 - Email: learnersupportlearnersupport@psa.org.au

- **Disaster response training for existing and new volunteer psychologists** within the Disaster Response Network (DRN) delivered by the Australian Psychological Society.
 - for more information and to access training, contact Alex Lakani
 - Phone: (03) 8662 3378
 - Email: a.lakani@psychology.org.au

Mental health support for emergency services workers

If you're an emergency service worker who responded to the 2019-20 bushfires, free support services are available for you and your immediate families and kinship groups. This is available wherever you may live.

The support includes:

- prevention and treatment services for emergent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other emotional and mental health issues;
- a structured network for emergency services workers and their families to connect with others who share similar experiences and;
- a national action plan aimed at lowering suicide rates and improving mental health outcomes among current and former emergency services workers.

This support is funded through Emergency Management Australia, commissioning both Fortem Australia and Black Dog Institute to provide their services.

Visit fortemaustralia.org.au and blackdoginstitute.org.au/when-the-fire-wont-go-out/ for more information about the support available to help you manage your mental health and wellbeing.



An Australian Rural Firefighter observes the damage caused by bushfires in Queensland Australia (Photo: Stuart Shaw, Getty Images)

There are also other financial, emotional and community supports available to help you.

Emergency service workers are able to access **up to 10 free counselling sessions** through services commissioned by Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

To find the free counselling in your area speak to your local PHN. Don't know who your PHN is? It's ok, you can use the PHN map locator tool at [health.gov.au/phn](https://www.health.gov.au/phn). If you can't find a service in your area, call 180 22 66 and ask about counselling after the fires. They will talk to you about the options.

See [bushfirerecovery.gov.au](https://www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au) to find out what else might be available to you, or call your relevant state hotline to find out more about bushfire recovery support:

- In New South Wales call 13 77 88
- In Victoria call 1800 560 760
- In South Australia call your Local Recovery Centre:
 - Lobethal Recovery Centre 0418 213 269
 - Parndana Recovery Centre 0438 861 215
 - SYP Community Hub 8852 1820
- In Queensland call 1800 173 349

Local Economic Recovery (LER) projects

Supporting local bushfire recovery: New LER projects announced



Bushfire recovery looks different in each community, and the things that will make the biggest difference differ from place to place.

That's the idea behind the Australian Government's \$448.5 million investment in Local Economic Recovery and Complementary Projects. This is about engaging with local communities so they can inform regional initiatives and lead their own local initiatives to support economic and social recovery and resilience. The NBRA is working with our state, local government and community partners to identify projects that address local recovery needs.

By partnering with the states, and co-funding projects, we maximise the amount of funding available for projects in the most severely affected bushfire impacted communities.

Each state government has responsibility for identifying, assessing and delivering projects under the LER Program, and for working with local governments and communities to bring forward LER project proposals for review and co-funding consideration by the Commonwealth.

LER work is now underway across all relevant states. The first projects have been announced in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, with many more to come.

You can find up to date information on the national approach at any time on the [National Bushfire Recovery Agency Website](#).

Here's a quick recap on recent news.

New South Wales

In New South Wales, the [LER process has just been announced](#).

An open call for applications is happening from 27 October for a \$250 million Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.

The program is administered by Regional NSW, supported by joint funding from the Australian and NSW governments. For more information visit: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/blerfund>

Work is also underway to identify shovel-ready projects that can be fast-tracked to help communities quickly. Announcements are expected shortly.

Queensland

[Six recovery projects](#) were announced on 5 October.

These early projects will share \$6 million in funding to deliver a range of locally developed projects that will contribute to the economic and social recovery of the most severely impacted bushfire communities in the state. The first six projects are:

- Work to design and construct a four-mega litre concrete potable water supply reservoir and infrastructure in Livingstone Shire Council.
- A project to open an underground water source near Chillagoe in Mareeba Shire Council.
- Improving and creating new links within a priority section of Noosa's hinterland trails network
- Upgrading facilities in the Boonah Cultural and Community Hub in Scenic Rim Regional Council.
- Construction of Stage 1 of the Mount Glen Rock Recreation and Nature Reserve development in Somerset Regional Council
- Construction of Stage 2 of the Mount Glen Rock Recreation and Nature Reserve development in Somerset Regional Council

The program is administered by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, with joint funding from the Australian and Queensland governments.

Further projects in Queensland will be announced as soon as they are ready. For more information visit the [Queensland Reconstruction Authority website](#).



Noosa Hinterland Trail Network to be improved under LER funding (Photo: Tourism Noosa)

Victoria

Work will begin shortly on [five LER projects](#), announced on 9 October, in parts of Victoria that were hit hard by the 2019-20 bushfires. The five projects are:

- A start on work scoping essential upgrades to existing community facilities across East Gippsland, such as public halls and other community buildings, so they are more resilient and better meet the needs of those communities.
- Restoring and expanding the Cudgewa community tennis court facilities, which also serves as a general gathering space for broader community activity.

- Building a new 19.5m pedestrian bridge across the East Branch of the Ovens River upstream of Harrietville to support improved community and visitor use of the area.
- Creating three large murals on buildings on the Kiewa Valley highway at Mount Beauty as new points of interest and to support a sense of community pride.
- Re-establishing a tree-lined avenue in Tintaldra commemorating the sacrifice and service of residents in World War 1 and the township's resilience during the 2020 bushfires.

These LER projects are the first to be approved in Victoria. More projects are being brought forward by communities and councils through a process run by Bushfire Recovery Victoria with joint funding from the Australian and Victorian governments. Projects will be assessed, announced and funded as soon as they are ready. For more information go to vic.gov.au/local-economic-recovery-program-bushfire-affected-communities.

South Australia

One project has been approved so far in South Australia - [\\$19.8 million for Kangaroo Island's new desalination](#) plant announced on 15 July.

The state government is consulting directly with local councils, recovery committees, communities, and other stakeholders in bushfire-affected areas, and more project decisions are expected soon.

Wildlife and habitat recovery projects



Metallic green carpenter bee (Photo: Wiki Commons on Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment website)

A further 18 projects will receive funding under the Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery competitive grants program.

The Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Program supports the immediate survival and long-term recovery of fire affected Australian animals and plants and other natural assets, and their cultural values for Indigenous Australians.

The 18 approved projects are in addition to the 19 projects funded earlier this year and bring the total amount of money spent under the program to \$12m.

Successful projects that received funding include the East Gippsland Landcare Network project which received \$131,250 to revegetate areas of East Gippsland with native plants that will enhance the habitat and food for birds and wildlife.

A grant of \$111,194 was also allocated to the recovery of native green carpenter bee populations. The bee populations will be supported by on-ground works on Kangaroo Island including the siting of artificial nests. The project also involves identifying remaining bee populations in NSW and exploring areas with suitable habitat in south-east Australia.

A list of approved projects is available on the [Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment website](#).

Apple and wine grape grants

Bushfire recovery grants for apple producers



Grants of up to \$120,000 per hectare for eligible businesses are available to assist with re-establishing damaged or destroyed apple orchards. Businesses will be required to provide a co-contribution to the value of the grant they apply for.

The grants are available to assist with re-establishing damaged or destroyed orchards.

Eligible activities include:

- replacement of trees (this can include any variety of apple)
- repair or replacement of damaged irrigation infrastructure
- repair or replacement of damaged poles, trellises and netting
- clean up of damaged infrastructure and other site preparation.

You can apply for this grant if you are a NSW, Qld or SA apple grower in active production immediately before the fires whose orchard suffered direct damage during the Black Summer bushfires (eligible events starting from August 2019).

Your orchard must be in an area activated under Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) for the Black Summer bushfires.

To apply for a grant, visit the delivery agency in your state:

NSW - visit the disaster assistance grants page at raa.nsw.gov.au or call 1800 678 593.

Qld - visit the bushfire recovery grants page at daf.qld.gov.au or call 13 25 23.

SA - visit the Department of Primary Industries grants page at pir.sa.gov.au or call 1800 931 314.

Bushfire recovery grants for wine grape producers



Wine Grape Smoke Taint grants of up to \$10,000 are available for ACT, NSW, Vic and SA wine grape producers who have suffered crop loss from smoke taint caused by the Black Summer 2019-20 bushfires, and who are located outside of Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement Category C Disaster Declared Areas (for the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires).

Grants are provided to support eligible wine grape producers impacted by smoke taint to recover from the bushfires and focus on business resilience.

Eligible activities may include:

- meeting standing business operating costs, including (but not limited to) utilities, salaries and rent
- seeking financial advice to support the recovery or future plans of the business
- adjusting the business to be viable in the aftermath of the bushfires
- developing the business and extending business reach through marketing and communications activities
- improvements to make the business more resilient to future disasters.

To be eligible, wine grape producers must provide evidence demonstrating:

- the 2020 vintage of wine grape harvest was tainted by smoke
- at least a 40% decline in income (or grapes harvested) over a relevant 3 month period since 1 August 2019 compared to the same period of the previous year
- ability to make a dollar-for-dollar co-contribution (this can include funds already spent on eligible activities).

Crop loss from smoke taint can be demonstrated through a combination of smoke taint tests by an appropriately recognised laboratory, small-lot fermentation, or other documentary evidence. More information is available at wineaustralia.com/fireandsmokeassessment.

Businesses who have accessed the \$10,000 Small Business Bushfire Support Grant are not eligible to access the smoke taint grant.

To apply for a grant visit the delivery agency in your state:

ACT - accesscanberra.act.gov.au or call 02 6205 0900

NSW - raa.nsw.gov.au or call 1800 678 593.

Vic - ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

SA - business.sa.gov.au or contact a member of the Small Business Team on 08 8429 3801.

NSW Bushfire Community and Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) grants

Eligible local councils, joint organisations, not-for-profits and non-government organisations from NSW bushfire disaster declared areas can now apply for funding under the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF).

This joint Commonwealth-State funding supports community well-being, social and broader recovery and disaster resilience.

The Fund is split into two streams.

Stream 1 provides small-scale grants for eligible local councils in the form of payments of \$100,000 or \$250,000. Eligible councils are required to use a minimum of 25% of the funding towards a council-led small-scale community grants program to contribute towards small community initiatives.

Stream 1 applications close **noon on 27 October 2020**. Apply through the [Resilience NSW website](#)

Stream 2 provides project funding ranging from \$20,000 up to \$300,000 for application by eligible councils, not-for-profit and non-government organisations in all bushfire disaster declared LGAs since 31 August 2019. Projects eligible for funding could include:

- Regional social events and digital communication initiatives that support social recovery, commemoration and improve community connectedness
- Delivery of new social infrastructure within the region supporting community resilience through community connectedness
- Programs and initiatives that support community recovery and well-being including support for improved identity of place, cultural heritage and environmental restoration
- Community education programs to improve regional knowledge and resilience in response and preparedness to future natural disasters and how to be better prepared for hazards into the future
- Local and Regional community strengthening activities that focus on capacity building and planning for the future.

Stream 2 applications close **noon on 10 November 2020**. Apply through the [Resilience NSW website](#).

The BCRRF funding is in addition to LER funding and other support provided through the National Bushfire Recovery Fund.

For more information on eligibility criteria, visit the Resilience NSW website at resilience.nsw.gov.au

Strengthening your business

Did you know that if you are a business impacted by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires in NSW, SA and Victoria, you may be eligible to receive free independent advice on how to rebuild your business?

The Strengthening Business service is part of the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources' Entrepreneurs' Programme.

Luke Burch, owner of Wonboyn Cabins and Caravan Park, is one of the businesses on the NSW South Coast that has benefited from the program.



Luke Burch, owner of Wonboyn Cabins and Caravan Park (Photo: business.gov.au website)

In January 2020, he saw the bushfires reach the park's boundaries. Fire crews were able to protect 90% of the property but Luke lost a workshop, a few van sites, and his future customers.

"For two months we couldn't trade. We sat and wondered if people were ever going to come back," said Luke.

"I could see I needed help to bring my ideas to life. And I needed to talk to someone who had experience in these fields, to give me the contacts I didn't have, basically."

Luke now has a post-bushfire vision for Wonboyn Cabins and Caravan Park.

"I want to build a micro-brewery onsite, and be part of a craft brewery trail down the South Coast of NSW. So something for locals, as well as the road trippers. I want to put Wonboyn on the map as a great destination for food and good beer in one of the best places in Australia."

You can read more about Luke's recovery journey and how other businesses that have benefited from expert advice, funding and incentives offered by the Strengthening Business service at

business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs/Strengthening-Business.

Von-Katz Soaps & Gift Baskets – Recovery after the bushfires

Vonnie Meier of Von-Katz Soaps & Gift Baskets, hand crafts natural soaps from mostly organic and locally sourced ingredients in Kleinton, just north of Toowoomba, Queensland.

The town's residents, small businesses and wildlife were impacted by the summer bushfires so Vonnie was elated to find out that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) wanted to buy 500 of her Australian made soaps for promotion overseas.

"I'm most grateful for the order I got because of DFAT and the National Bushfire Recovery Agency! It makes such a huge difference to a small business!" Vonnie said.



Vonnie Meier, owner of Von-Katz Soaps & Gift Baskets (Photo: supplied by Vonnie Meier)

"I'm proud that I got an opportunity for my soaps to represent Australia overseas because of DFAT support! This order not only benefitted me but also a couple of other local businesses who helped with design and packaging," Vonnie said.

Earlier this year, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency promoted the DFAT program through Local Government Associations impacted by the summer bushfires. It's great to see that one DFAT order has provided positive support to three businesses!

For more information about support available to small businesses, visit the [National Bushfire Recovery Agency website](#).

2021 Back to School grants



(Photo: Pixabay)

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) is offering 2021 Back to School grants. These grants help rural and remote children and young people access quality educational experiences.

The program provides \$50 gift vouchers to students in need through local community organisations. Funding allocations will be announced in December 2020 and organisations will receive vouchers for distribution in January 2021. The vouchers can be used to purchase items from chain stores or local retailers such as school uniforms, clothes, shoes, school bags and stationery.

This round of grants has two streams – one for those in bushfire-affected areas and a second stream offering general support for disadvantaged families. Applications can be submitted online at the [Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal website](#) and close on 30 October 2020.

NBRA officers attend Disaster and Emergency Management Conference



2020 Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference. (Photo NBRA)

On 1 and 2 October 2020, NBRA Liaison and Recovery Support Officers from South Australia and Queensland attended the Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference held on the Gold Coast, Queensland.

The conference was an opportunity to learn about the latest research, technology, policies and practical experiences in disaster and emergency management.

George Hodgson, an NBRA Liaison Officer based in Queensland said, "The conference has been a great opportunity for us to listen to leaders and organisations on how they have responded to recent events both in Australia and New Zealand, and the essential factors for recovery. It has also been a great opportunity to network in a COVID-19 safe 'face to face' environment."

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