



# National Bushfire Recovery Agency

## Bushfire Recovery News – Edition 5

### From the National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

It's been a busy time for us at the agency, with the announcement of [\\$650 million in extra bushfire recovery support](#) last week. We are working with the states and local communities, to ensure these funds support locally-led bushfire recovery. There's more on how this will work in this edition.

The Government announcement of the new package demonstrates our commitment to communities affected by bushfires while dealing with COVID-19 and other natural disasters. We have not forgotten about you. We are ensuring that funding is available for all communities hurt during the 2019-20 bushfire crisis, with a particular focus on the most severely affected areas.

In addition to the grants and support available from the Commonwealth and State Governments, the Red Cross has extended the date for applications for Red Cross Bushfire Recovery Grants to 30 June 2020. There are four categories of grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 each. Once again, I encourage people not to self-assess – you may be entitled to more than you think. Either contact the Red Cross on 1800 733 276 or complete an application online at the link provided below.

Please also take a look at our article about the new mental health assistance being offered by [Beyond Blue](#), and the government's new community [wellbeing and resilience package](#) for bushfire affected areas. Your wellbeing is our priority. It's factored into everything we do. Until next fortnight, take care.

**Andrew Colvin**  
National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

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## This fortnight



### Disability Information Helpline

The Australian Government has funded a dedicated helpline – the Disability Information Helpline – to provide accessible information, counselling and outreach services for people with disability who are concerned about or affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Helpline can help families, carers, support workers and services, too.

The Helpline is free, private and fact-checked.

Call 1800 643 787 to talk about any concerns in relation to COVID-19.

For more information, visit [www.dss.gov.au/disabilityhelp](http://www.dss.gov.au/disabilityhelp).

### Red Cross

Red Cross has extended the date applications can be lodged for [Bushfire Recovery Grants](#) to 30 June 2020.

The cash grants available for eligible people in financial hardship as a result of the Australian bushfires 2019/20 are:

- Emergency grants
- Injury grants
- Primary residence repair grants
- Rebuild grants

Call the Red Cross on 1800 733 276 to enquire about these grants.

### Be You Program

Beyond Blue has developed [resources](#) for schools and early learning centres to help educators deal with the mental health impacts of bushfires and coronavirus.

There are also lots of great resources and tips for managing your mental health at the new [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service Site](#).

And Beyond Blue has released a new podcast that may be of interest. [‘Not Alone’](#) is a series of six podcast episodes accessible from Google, iTunes as well as Spotify.

The first episode features a CFA volunteer who discusses their experience with the Black Saturday bushfires and how they learned to deal with the PTSD that followed.

People with concerns about the impact of [coronavirus](#) can also talk to a trained counsellor on 1900 512 348.

## Key facts and figures

### Australians supported

**277,113** bushfire affected individuals have received direct financial support from the Australian Government through Disaster Recovery Payment, Disaster Recovery Allowance and Back to School payments.



### Businesses supported

**21,248** bushfire affected businesses have received direct financial assistance from the Australian Government, and many more have been able to take advantage of financial counselling services and tax administration support measures.



Source: NBRA calculation

### Debris clean-up



**1,820** properties cleared across New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria, as part of the Commonwealth-State joint funded bushfire debris clean-up program.

## New funding details



Part of the \$2 billion National Bushfire Recovery Fund, the [\\$650 million package announced last week](#) is focused on reviving and strengthening local economies; ensuring community wellbeing for the long-term; rebuilding infrastructure; and nurturing our environment and native wildlife back to health. This commitment is in addition to those funds already available.

The Government has committed an additional:

- \$448.5 million to support the delivery of local economic recovery plans, to help towns and regions get back on their feet.
- \$15 million to forestry industries for transporting logs salvaged from bushfire affected areas.
- \$149.7 million to supporting critical wildlife and habitat recovery efforts.
- \$13.4 million to ensure local communities can access critical emotional and mental health support.
- \$27.1 million to strengthening telecommunications capabilities in preparation for future natural disasters.

The Government has already rolled out measures of over \$1billion to:

- Small business grants
- Primary producer grants
- Concessional loans
- Debris clean up
- Grants to Local Government Areas
- Support for Mental Health
- Wildlife

In addition, more than \$450m in other support is hitting the ground:

- \$214.9m in disaster recovery payments and allowances
- Over \$240m in shared support for Community Recovery Packages with states under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

## What happens now?

We are taking a collaborative, flexible approach to recovery with our \$448.5 million Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program.

We will prioritise the most severely impacted regions, working with the states and local communities to fast-track the delivery of locally-led projects that align to recovery plans in these regions. While this package prioritises the most severely affected regions, we will ensure there is funding available for all communities hurt during the 2019-20 bushfires.

Projects under the Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program could range from initiatives that promote local economic activity and support community wellbeing to those that focus on the landscape and water, replacing produce and stock, or building future resilience.

## Who decides?

Each community has different needs and each project will be assessed on its merits. No limit of funds has been set per region. The state government, local councils, community and NBRA will together identify suitable projects.

Each project will be assessed against criteria. The criteria will be finalised with the states, and they are likely to include the following project requirements:

- will support local needs
- will increase recovery and resilience, or enable local and regional growth
- can be realistically delivered within an appropriate timeframe

## How to access funds

Please speak to your local council if you have ideas about recovery for your bushfire-affected area that haven't already been considered. Councils can contact their state government to discuss ideas and how to link in with regional recovery planning.

The NBRA will be working with state governments and the local bushfire recovery coordinators to support regional recovery plans.

# Small business grants

## \$168 million delivered to NSW small businesses

Small business grants of \$10,000 are being delivered rapidly in NSW. With application processes being expedited by removing red tape to make applications easier, business owners have been able to access vital stimulus at an immensely difficult time.

These grants have provided vital assistance to businesses in the most severely impacted LGAs in NSW. Many of these businesses rely on tourism and visitation to their towns and have lost their peak summer season income, followed by little or no trading over the Easter period due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

So far Service NSW has received 16,870 applications for the \$10,000 small business bushfire grants ... that's more than \$168 million to regional small businesses (as at 18/5/20).

**Don't forget if you are a small business in NSW, SA or VIC you can apply for the small business grants too.** We encourage all business owners to apply.

If you don't know if you are eligible please call your states service centre:

- In New South Wales call 13 77 88
- In Victoria call 1800 560 760
- In South Australia call 1800 302 787

# Messenger

## COVID-19 hasn't stopped us helping the community

The NBRA has recently added a new Messenger function to our [Facebook page](#) so we can receive and reply to questions from the general public. We want to make information more accessible and Messenger provides the community with a safe place to ask questions, while still adhering to the physical distance rules.

To date, we have had around 640 engagements in just over 5 weeks. In most instances we have been able to reply to messages very quickly - usually on the same day during business hours.

Working together with our state and local counterparts and associated charities, Facebook Messenger allows us to triage questions for the correct services and allocate queries to local facilities who can provide direct contact and up to date local information.

Questions received have fallen into six main topics:

- charities – access to grants and services, and where donated funds have gone
- eligibility for support for individuals and families
- confusion on assistance and ineligibility
- the Clean-up Program
- the impact of COVID/bushfires on employment
- how people can get involved in helping with bushfire recovery

Another benefit for the community is to help the affected community understand the role of the Federal Government in the National Bushfire Recovery Program while the recovery centres are closed.

Our aim is to help bridge and identify gaps in information and correct misguided information that can circulate through the grapevine.

The [NBRA Facebook](#) page is a great way to keep up to date with the Federal Government's recovery program and see what is going on.

We know that not everyone in a bushfire-affected community is able to access Facebook. The NBRA is also available by phoning (02) 6228 6300 or emailing [contact@bushfirerecovery.gov.au](mailto:contact@bushfirerecovery.gov.au).

## 2020 Landcare Australia Bushfire Grants



*Left: Wildlife Feeding Station at Nana Glen (Credit to Nana Glen Landcare Group)*



*Right: Rob Fitzclarence of Cann Valley Landcare Group at one of the gullies feeding into the Genoa River at Wangarabell (Credit Cann Valley Landcare Group)*

### Good news for the environment!

Landcare Australia recently announced over \$300,000 grant funding for 23 projects that will have a positive impact on the environment, landscapes and bushfire affected communities. The projects include restoring essential wildlife habitats, eradication of invasive weeds, erosion control and protection of our waterways and aquatic habitat.

Landcare groups receiving a grant include:

- Wilsons Creek Huonbrook Landcare who are helping the ancient Gondwana Rainforest in Nightcap and Mount Jerusalem National Parks recover from the Mt Nardi fire.
- Nana Glen Landcare Group who are assisting native species by providing additional food and water stations and nest boxes for species impacted by the Liberation Trail fire.
- Habitat Recovery Alliance who are assisting in habitat restoration through the seeding and planting of local native species within the area impacted by the Cudlee Creek fire.
- Cann Valley Landcare Group/Far East Gippsland Landcare Network who are helping endangered species in the region.

Landcare bushfire grants have been made available due to the donations received during the bushfires. Dr Shane Norrish, CEO Landcare Australia, said, "The donations have made it possible for Landcare Australia to support Landcare groups and other community groups to undertake good quality, hands on projects that will greatly increase bushfire recovery efforts in their local communities. Without this type of support, most community groups would struggle with the size of the recovery task."

To check out what projects have been funded in your state visit <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/2020-bushfire-recovery-grants/?source=home>

There has also been more good news for the environment with the Australian Government's commitment of a further \$149.7m for bushfire affected ecosystems. The Bushfire Recovery for Species and Landscaped Package announced by the Prime Minister on 11 May 2020 includes funding for habitat regeneration, waterway and catchment restoration, erosion control, and weed and pest management.

For more details visit [www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au](http://www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au)

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## Contact us

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They can subscribe at [bushfirerecovery.gov.au/news/subscribe](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:media@bushfirerecovery.gov.au)

Phone: 02 6271 5015

Website

[www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au](http://www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au)

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