



National Bushfire Recovery Agency

Bushfire recovery news | Edition 1

From the National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

What a time we're living through. Like you, my team and I are closely watching the evolving coronavirus situation, as it adds complication in an already-difficult time.

However, I'm always encouraged by people's spirit when things are tough. We are seeing people band together through coronavirus, looking out for their neighbours and sharing what they have. Hard times can bring out the best in us, as we saw through the fires and our early steps towards recovery.

While coronavirus introduces a new challenge to bushfire recovery, my team and I are determined to maintain momentum and keep delivering practical help on the ground.

We are still implementing all our measures, but we are taking very seriously the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer. The National Bushfire Recovery Agency will comply with all the policies of government around coronavirus.

Protections such as physical distancing and controls on large gatherings mean we may have to adjust some of the ways we communicate and interact with bushfire impacted communities.

This will not detract from our core goal of delivering support and helping communities rebuild and recover.

As a priority, we are looking at ways in which we can continue to gather information and listen to bushfire impacted communities in the context of the coronavirus arrangements, so we can best support them on their road to recovery.

Our social media channels are a great way to keep in touch with our latest bushfire recovery efforts:

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/FireRecoveryAU/>
- Twitter - <https://twitter.com/FireRecoveryAU>

On behalf of all members of the Agency, I thank you for your ongoing support.

Andrew

Andrew Colvin
National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator

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How the National Bushfire Recovery Agency works

Seventy nine days ago, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency was established to lead and coordinate a national response to rebuilding communities affected by bushfires across large parts of Australia.

Since then, we have been working hard to help communities stand up again, and to get support to where it is needed most.

We are focused on listening to people, and connecting them with the services they need to rebuild and recover. It is critical we remain open to all feedback, and that we adapt as required.

To ensure our efforts make a meaningful and enduring difference on the ground, we are visiting as many communities as possible in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia.

We will continue to work closely with our partners at federal, state and local levels, bringing together our collective ability to address immediate needs as well as enduring challenges.

Our landscape continues to evolve as we learn the extent of the enormous loss and destruction experienced during the 2019-20 bushfire season. The unfolding coronavirus situation is adding further strain on all of us, particularly for bushfire affected communities and businesses.



Andrew with a keen backpacker working with BlazeAid in New South Wales recently

We intend to maintain regular contact with you to ensure you have access to current and accurate information. Our recovery journey is a marathon, not a sprint, and our minds are clearly focused on the long-term recovery efforts – economically, physically, socially and in terms of our environment and habitat.

This Fortnight



Small business boost

Extra support for small businesses was announced on 11 March 2020. It includes a new \$10,000 grant, more staff to support communities, and work to make applying for grants and loans easier.

[Find out more](#)



What we're about

Andrew was in Bega last week, on the NSW South Coast. Watch his video chat with the local council - about the Agency's work, how communities are leading recovery, and our focus on mental health.

[Watch the video](#)



Are you missing out?

One thing we've heard consistently is that too many people are self-assessing. Often, people can access more than they think. Give your state recovery hotline a call to talk through the help available.

[Find out how](#)

Snapshot from the frontline

Kangaroo Island February 2020

During our visit to Kangaroo Island in February, we met some potato farmers. The majority of their crop and stores were ruined, and their potato storage boxes were destroyed. While some potatoes have managed to survive and grow, without the potato boxes there is nothing to gather the potatoes in. Frantic work has been underway by dedicated backpackers to build potato boxes in time to harvest what they can.

The farmers speak wryly of giving the backpackers a 'true blue experience', living through the aftermath of a bushfire. The backpackers were all away from the farm when the fires came through; some back in Europe and others on holidays in Australia. Anything they had not taken with them on that break has been consumed by fire.

The farmers explain that they had harvests of both potatoes and garlic in their shed when it burnt. You think the smell would have been bewilderingly delicious in the midst of the firestorm, but the melting metal and chemical smells of a burning cool room overpowered anything else.

They show us the decaying remains of an eagle on the ground outside. The air burnt so hot during the fire, this majestic bird literally fell from the sky and incinerated.

We will continue to share our reflections on these trips to ensure everyone understand the impact of the devastation and our collective recovery journey. The flow-on effects of these fires cannot be underestimated.



Key facts and figures

Impact of the fires

In the 2019-20 bushfire season, we lost:

- 33 lives
- 3000 homes
- 12 million hectares of land
- 7000 facilities and outbuildings
- millions of native animals and plants.

Help delivered so far

We are working to provide immediate relief in partnership with our federal, state, and local partners. Money is already hitting the ground, including the following funding dispersed so far:

- **147,000 people** have received the disaster recovery payment, with more than **\$173 million** paid out.
- **More than 3,800 small businesses** have been approved for the new \$10,000 grant, just days after applications opened.
- More than **420 small businesses** have been approved for the larger recovery grants of up to \$50,000. More than **\$10.8 million** has been approved.
- More than **1,100 primary producers** have been approved for recovery grants of up to \$75,000. More than **\$70 million** has been approved.
- More than **\$3.4 million** has been approved across **70 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 firefighters, emergency personnel, individuals and communities impacted by the bushfire disaster.

Community visits

The Agency is focused on speaking directly with communities affected by the bushfires. Since we were established, Andrew Colvin and senior Agency representatives have travelled to a number of communities, including the following places, to meet with individuals and groups.

- Ulladulla, Nowra, Bateman's Bay (NSW) – 20 Mar 2020
- Cobargo, Bega, Tathra (NSW) - 17 Mar 2020
- Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley (NSW) - 17 Mar 2020 to 18 Mar 2020
- Cobargo, Tathra, Bemboka, Merimbula (NSW) – 16 Mar 2020
- Mallacoota (VIC) - 16 Mar 2020
- Wodonga, Ovens (VIC) – 13 Mar 2020
- Merimbula (NSW) - 11 Mar 2020
- Clarence Valley, Richmond Valley, Tenterfield, Glen Innes Severn (NSW) - 5 Mar 2020 to 6 Mar 2020
- Scenic Rim (QLD) – 28 Feb 2020
- Launceston (TAS) – 21 Feb 2020
- Tumbarumba, Batlow (NSW) - 20 Feb 2020
- Mogo (NSW) - 15 Feb 2020
- Lake Conjola (NSW) - 14 Feb 2020
- Wyndham, Kiah (NSW) - 13 Feb 2020
- Bells Line of Road, Blue Mountains (NSW) - 8 Feb 2020
- Kangaroo Island (SA) - 7 Feb 2020
- Adelaide Hills (SA) - 6 Feb 2020
- Bega Shire, Eden (NSW) – 31 Jan 2020
- Bushfire Recovery Victoria, Wangaratta (VIC) – 31 Jan 2020
- Yeppoon (QLD) – 23 Jan 2020
- Moruya, Malua Bay, Batemans Bay (NSW) – 17 Jan 2020
- East Gippsland, Sale, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance (VIC) – 16 Jan 2020
- Gosper Mountain (NSW) – 13 Jan 2020
- Wingello (NSW) - 9 Jan 2020

How to subscribe

Do you know someone who wants to receive these updates? They can subscribe at www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au/news/subscribe

Key Contacts

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

[Key contacts in the State and Australian Governments](#)

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