

# Australian Bushfires Report

January 2020 to June 2021

In summer 2019/20 Australia experienced the worst bushfire season on record. People around the globe responded with incredible generosity to support those affected.



During the bushfire emergency of January 2020, Kim's home on Kangaroo Island was burnt down. Kim received psychological first aid at the evacuation centre and Red Cross bushfire grants. Kim hugs Red Cross staff member Mary.

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Aysha Leo

Eighteen months into our grants and recovery program we have disbursed or spent **93%** of the funds. The remaining **7%** is allocated for further grants and ongoing recovery support. Less than **5%** of donated dollars have been spent on essential administrative support costs.

 Total **\$242m** raised.

 **\$224m** has been disbursed or spent, as of 30 June 2021.

 Remaining **\$18m** allocated for further grants, ongoing recovery and support costs.

**RECOVERY TAKES TIME.  
WE'RE THERE FOR  
AS LONG AS IT TAKES.**

- **40,107** people have been assisted with recovery through 1-1 and group support, training and workshops, information and referrals.
- Communities in **46** local government areas are supported by our recovery program.

**DURING THE FIRES**

- **49,718** people were supported at evacuation centres and over the phone

**AFTER THE FIRES**

- **6,085** people have received **13,260** financial assistance grants.

## 02 Grant payments

Of the \$224m disbursed or spent as of 30 June 2021, \$201m has been provided in direct cash assistance through grants to 6,085 people. Some people received more than one grant, depending on their circumstances, with those hardest hit by the fires receiving amounts over \$80,000. We aim to help people when they are ready, and 245 people came forward in financial need for the first time more than one year after the fires.



### Bereavement grant

For the senior next-of-kin of those who died in the fires.

Grant amount:	<b>Up to \$50,000</b>
Grants paid:	<b>35 grants (\$1.3m)</b>

All next-of-kin who chose to accept this grant have received at least a \$20,000 payment, with an additional \$30,000 payment to those who were in continuing financial hardship.



### Emergency grant

To support people whose primary place of residence was destroyed.

Grant amount:	<b>Up to \$20,000</b>
Grants paid:	<b>2,930 grants (\$58.2m)</b>



### Re-establishment grant

To help people who lost their primary place of residence to re-establish a safe place to live.

Grant amount:	<b>\$40,000**</b> owner occupiers
	<b>\$10,000</b> renters or mobile home owners
Grants paid:	<b>2,459 grants (\$76.6m)</b>

People who were eligible for the emergency grant were also eligible for the re-establishment grant if they were still experiencing financial hardship. This grant was originally called 'rebuild grant' but was broadened because we learned that many people were not yet in a position to rebuild homes, but still needed to secure medium-term living arrangements. \*\* This grant was originally \$30,000 and then increased to \$40,000.



### Primary residence repair grant

For home owner-occupiers whose primary residence was structurally damaged.

Grant amount:	<b>Up to \$10,000**</b>
Grants paid:	<b>2,376 grants (\$22.9m)</b>

\*\* The grant was initially \$5,000 then increased to \$10,000.



### Injury grant

For people hospitalised for injuries sustained as a direct result of the bushfires.

Grant amount:	<b>\$7,500 or \$15,000**</b>
Grants paid:	<b>651 grants (\$8.5m)</b>

There is a lack of nationwide data on how many injuries and mental health conditions were sustained during the bushfires. The initial allocation (\$2m) was quadrupled as more people came forward. \*\* The injury grant was initially \$7,500 but a further \$7,500 payment was made available to people with higher out-of-pocket hospital costs.



### Discretionary financial hardship grant

For people impacted by the bushfires and experiencing extreme financial hardship.

Grant amount:	<b>Depending on individual circumstances</b>
Grants paid:	<b>625 grants (\$7.7m)</b>



### Additional support grant

For previous grant recipients who are receiving government support demonstrating low income and still in financial hardship.

Grant amount:	<b>Up to \$12,500</b>
Grants paid:	<b>4,182 grants (\$25.9m)</b>

# Here with a hot cuppa and a helping hand



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera

*When Janet and her young family lost their home in South Arm, Nambucca Valley, NSW Red Cross emergency services volunteer Carol was there to help.*

"Red Cross weren't just there to hand out money. They were there to listen... and that was really nice... They helped by making their grant process easy... Then we'd get phone calls from Red Cross, checking in on us. And all of that definitely helped us.

**"I'm glad we didn't get the money all in one big hit or early, because we weren't in the right headspace early on...** we needed that time to just sit back, breathe, take in what's just happened to us, and then work out a game plan.

"We used every cent that we received from Red Cross to get shelter... We would not have been able to do that without the help of Red Cross and people

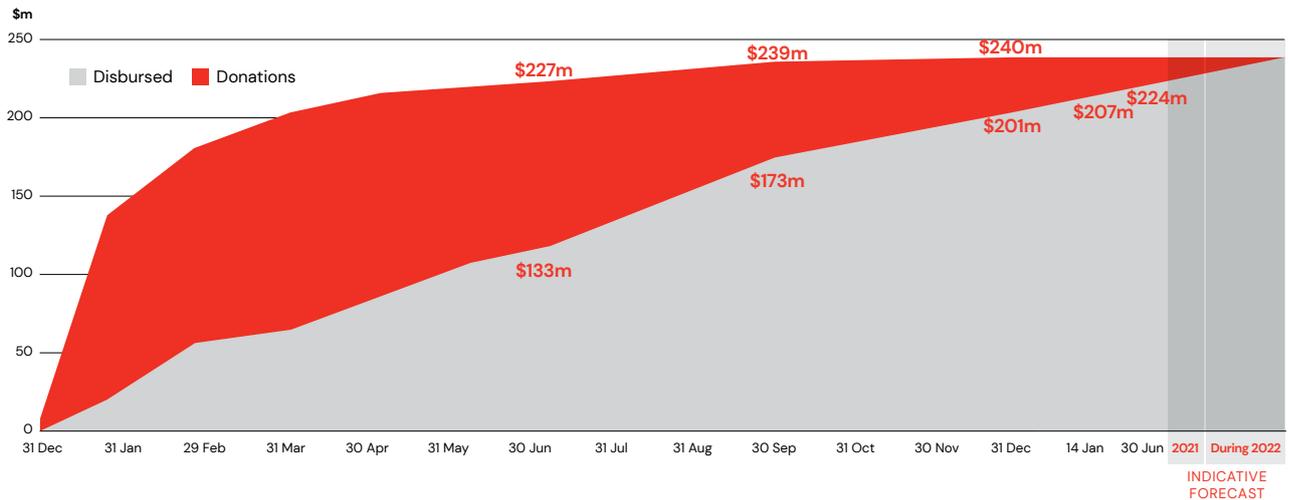
donating to them.

"Every day you're reminded... even 12 months later, you go to get something and then you go, 'Oh, that's right. I've lost that in the fires.' It brings up a lot of trauma, and it's good to talk about it. We've been really lucky to have Red Cross. They were out here for so long, just to sit and chat.

"I was exhausted all the time. I feel like I still am. It's like I still haven't caught up. I'm still dealing with the fire stuff, and then I've had the storms and the flooding on top of COVID... it's just been non-stop for almost two years.

"Red Cross are always there if you needed them... you see the red shirts with tea and coffee waiting for you, and I felt like that was a gentle approach. I've found that really good."

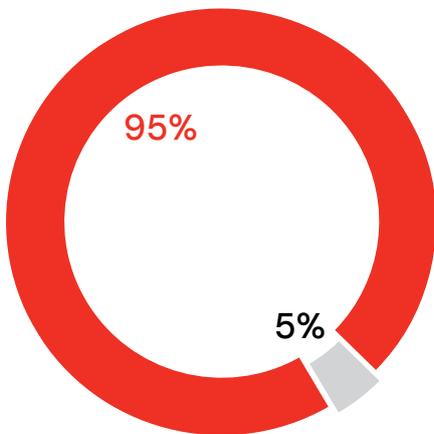
# 04 How we used donated funds



The graph above shows the rate at which funds were donated to and dispersed from the Red Cross Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund.

- We received an extraordinary amount of donations in January 2020, which were rapidly allocated to bushfire assistance and recovery, informed by the needs we were seeing in communities.
- More than \$40m was received well after the fires had ended and the fund had closed. These donations had been pledged during the fires, often by organisations based overseas.
- The remaining \$18m has been allocated for further grants and our ongoing recovery program.

## How donations have been helping



### 95% Help for people and communities

Through financial assistance, emergency teams who provided support in evacuation centres, accommodation pods and a three-year recovery program.

### 5% Essential administrative support costs

We work hard to keep essential administrative costs as low as possible. They are now at less than 5 cents in the dollar. These costs enable our grants and casework teams to operate and help us spread the word about the grants in bushfire affected communities. They also cover IT systems, fraud prevention, fundraising, bank and platform fees.

**Audit:** The Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund was independently audited by Deloitte, as part of the Australian Red Cross FY19/20 annual report. The audited financial statements are available at [redcross.org.au/annualreports](http://redcross.org.au/annualreports).



Belinda is the Aboriginal Community Engagement Facilitator in Central Region NSW. Here she stands next to a burnt tree in Cobargo. Cobargo was decimated during the Summer 2020 bushfires.

“There’s no place I’d rather be than going through this with this community and my family... I’m proud to be able to show up and support on behalf of Red Cross.

“There was always a risk of the fire, but what this area experienced is not something that we’d ever thought would happen... some days it’s still hard to believe... the enormity of the destruction... Cobargo has lost half of its main street... whilst it can be rebuilt, it’s a long road.

“Some people are only just able to lift their heads up... You can see in people’s faces that they’re struggling... Everyone’s experience and needs are

so different... there is no textbook as to how you get through this.

“The adrenaline soon subsides and the memories and trauma sets in... I think, just being kind to each other and know that however you are feeling is OK.

“There are days where you look out and there is just so much devastation... but also amazing amounts of kindness... one small thing from somebody is huge when they’ve lost everything that they’ve ever owned.”

## What grant recipients said

We emailed a survey to people who received a bushfire grant from Red Cross and 606 responded.

- **90%** reported they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the grant application process
- **89%** found Red Cross staff and volunteers supportive and helpful
- **88%** were satisfied with the time it took to receive their grant

## 06 The road to recovery

Experience tells us that recovery is a long journey. This is why our community recovery programs will run for at least three years.

We help people cope with trauma and access support; communities to heal and strengthen their connections; and service providers to meet the unique needs of bushfire survivors.

We have a footprint in 46 local government areas. Our recovery staff and volunteers live in affected communities.

Some were impacted by the fires themselves. They understand the local context and help resolve or advocate for people's needs.

### On the ground and online Red Cross has so far supported:

- **32,039** people through 604 psychosocial support activities including individual support, community events, support groups, and anniversary events.
- **2,846** people were supported with 168 recovery training and workshops.
- **975** people participated in 29 community resilience workshops.



# Thank you

## Gratitude from grant recipients

### Our respect and thanks to:

All those who endured the fires.

All those who stood with them.

All those who acted for humanity by giving their time, skill, labour, kindness and money to the relief and recovery effort.

"Your assistance has really helped me get back on my feet after having my whole property destroyed and all my memories from 33 years of living on this property. Your work in the community is phenomenal and I will continue to support Red Cross when I can into the future."

"Thank you for your support following the terrible bushfires that caused so much upheaval for so many people. Without your generous assistance, many folks like myself would have been dealing with a situation that would have had a detrimental impact. We're recovering and getting some sense of normal life back. Our country here, even with the regeneration and the wildlife that managed to survive the fires, the destruction is ever present every day. With your help, I can and have managed to rebuild."

"I have put the Red Cross financial grant to good use having recently purchased an excavator for my property which is proving invaluable in clearing my land of fallen trees and easing the clean-up generally."

"Thank you with all my heart for the wonderful work you do. I could not have made it through without your grants."

"I am so grateful to have received your generous donations on behalf of thousands of Australians. What an amazing country we live in! You guys rock!"

"My family will be forever grateful for your help in these times of need."

"Your support over the past year has been priceless. Just when things were back to bottom you offered help. Without us asking. We are so grateful for your assistance."

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera



Marilyn Bussani and her family, residents of Runnyford on the south coast of NSW, lost their home in the bushfires. They received grants from Red Cross that helped them move back into temporary accommodation on their property.

"You have saved my life. If not for your support I simply would not be here. I can't thank you enough. I will be writing my autobiography again, as I lost it in the fires, and I will include your generosity and remarkable kindness."

"We have not only been under enormous financial pressure, but the mental strain for the last year has at times been unbearable. We were at our wit's end trying to juggle things. We appreciate your generosity so much."

"You were terrific when we needed you. We are fine now. Many thanks."

## This story continues

Follow our ongoing recovery efforts at [redcross.org.au/bushfirereport](https://redcross.org.au/bushfirereport)

Get in touch  
with us.

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[redcross.org.au](http://redcross.org.au)