

# Australian Bushfires Report

the power of humanity



January – June 2020



Photo: Cloud House Studio/Daniel Loadman

This report is for all those who endured the Black Summer bushfires and all those who gave so generously in response. It details progress, challenges and how Red Cross is supporting bushfire-affected communities now and into the future.

## SIX MONTHS INTO OUR GRANTS AND RECOVERY PROGRAM

### \$133m has been disbursed or spent

**49,718 Australians were supported through the fires**

by Red Cross teams during evacuations, in relief centres and in fire-affected towns



**4,380 Australians have received grants**

to meet immediate needs, make repairs, cover out-of-pocket funeral or hospital costs, or re-establish a safe place to live

### REMAINING FUNDS



**\$56m**

is being distributed to people as they come forward



**\$21m**

is for emerging and unmet needs over the coming months



**\$17m**

is powering long-term recovery programs in 47 local government areas

## We pay our respects

Red Cross acknowledges the Traditional Owners of all the lands burned during the Black Summer bushfires and their deep connection to Country, flora and fauna.

We acknowledge that well over 84,000 First Nations peoples and 22 discrete communities were affected by these fires.<sup>1</sup> Their losses were deep and personal: not only homes and assets, but songlines, sacred places, totems, traditional food and medicines, memories and histories going back millennia.

We pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We pay respect as well, to all those who fought the fires, defended sacred places, protected each other and cared for each other in the aftermath, and through the long months of the pandemic that followed the bushfires.

Red Cross and others in the emergency management sector must learn from and be led by First Nations' experience of cultural land management, trauma and healing. We can do more to make emergency preparedness, response and recovery more inclusive and culturally safe. We can continue to build meaningful and respectful partnerships with First Nations organisations and communities, and engage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our workforces.

We're awed by and grateful to the First Nations' fire fighters, emergency workers and volunteers, donors, researchers, counsellors, Elders, recovery officers (and so many others) who gave so much to the response and recovery effort.

1. Williamson, Markham & Weir (2020), *Aboriginal peoples and the response to the 2019-2020 bushfires*. Working Paper No.134/2020, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra <https://doi.org/10.25911/5e7882623186c>



## Cover story

When life gives you ashes, grow pumpkins. Norelle and David, who lost their dream home in Nymboida, replanted their vegetable garden as the first step to rebuilding. With grants made possible by generous donors, they gradually replaced furniture and treasured items. Six months after the fire, the foundations for the couple's new home have gone in.

"Just to have the money for that, to know that there's going to be something nice to put into the house, it's like having that lovely happy ending."

**DAVID AND NORELLE NYMBOIDA (NSW)**  
Received emergency and re-establishment grants

# Foreword



**Monica Kincade**  
Recovery Officer

It's been more than six months since the bushfires that devastated huge areas of land and the communities who call those places home.



My name is Monica and I am a Red Cross Recovery Officer on the South Coast and Southern Tablelands of New South Wales. I had the privilege of working with communities following the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009 and my background's in project management, event coordination and community development.

**I've spent a great deal of time with residents in fire-impacted communities to help them apply for Red Cross financial support as well as other available funding.** Many people do not have access to a phone or the internet, so being there on the ground makes these processes easier.

When I listen to people to find out what they need and what their concerns are, I am able to connect them with the right service or agency: be that for warm blankets, new identity documentation or support for their health and wellbeing. I am able to provide them with information on how to support their child or how to look after themselves following a disaster.

Six months is a long time for those dealing with loss and trauma. People are mourning the loss of human life, of vast numbers of wildlife, nature and treasured belongings that are no more. **These fires have changed their perception of the world and what they wanted from it and so begins a slow journey forward, one that is different and unique to each individual.**

As community needs change over time, my role changes too. Looking forward, there will be a focus on building community capacity and helping people get through the long period of recovery.

**In all the fire-impacted communities I have visited, there is resilience, strength and leadership. There are neighbours looking out for one another, strangers helping build new homes for people they once never knew, communities coming together to lead their own recovery.**

My work is guided by their needs and it is my responsibility to listen, advocate and support accordingly. Thank you to the communities on the South Coast and Southern Tablelands who have shared your stories and who have welcomed me in to work with you and learn from you.



"I'm feeling grateful. I feel lucky. That feels a bit strange to say because my house burnt down, but I feel really lucky that I've had all the support from my community, my family and the services. People like Red Cross keep coming through with more and more, so I'm really grateful that people gave to the Red Cross."

**SUSAN, MOGENDOURAH (NSW)**

*Received emergency and re-establishment grants*

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera



“When we go through rough patches in life, it is the kindness of other people that allows you to manage. Red Cross harnessed the kindness of Australians.

It wasn't just the money that made a difference, it was the Red Cross people at the evacuation centres, who comforted, sat down with you, got your details and said ‘How can we help?’

...At my age and state of health I did not feel able to go through rebuilding with all that entails. Red Cross help has eased the many unexpected costs associated with buying a place already built. So, I have purchased a place I can call my own again and I renew my thanks to Red Cross and all who generously support the caring work that organisation does.”

**ANNIE, ROSEDALE (NSW)**

*Received emergency and re-establishment grants*

## More than fire

### The triple impact of drought, fire, and pandemic on Australian communities.

Even before fires started burning last year, many Australians had endured the devastating impacts of one of the most severe droughts on record.

By August 2018, it was reported that 99 percent of NSW and 57 percent of Queensland were in drought.<sup>1</sup> The Red Cross ‘Let’s Talk’ program in NSW helped farming families overcome isolation, and our Aussie Farmers Appeal ensured that thousands of farmers received grants to help with household expenses. But over the next year, conditions remained dry and difficult.

On 4 September 2019, the first fires of what would become our Black Summer started. Fires followed across the country, decimating 10 million hectares of land, threatening lives and livelihoods, stifling our peak tourism season, and badly impacting communities of people who had already withstood so much.

Finally the fires ceased in March 2020. By then, more than 3,300 Red Cross emergency response volunteers and staff had supported communities through the thick of the fires. The first bushfire grants were paid on 6 January, and we were soon providing more than a million dollars a day in grants to those who lost homes. Our recovery teams were out in bushfire-affected communities.

Then on 11 March, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic<sup>2</sup> and five days later, the first of many restrictions on social gatherings in Australia took effect.

Suddenly one of the strongest predictors of positive recovery in the aftermath of disaster – social ties and community connections<sup>3</sup> – was out of reach. Our teams rapidly adapted our door-to-door and community-based support work to phone and online.

But it meant we couldn't go searching for people in isolated areas as we normally would. We couldn't get in touch with people who live off the grid. And we didn't have contact lists for everyone who was affected.

So we sought them out in every way we could – with messages on radio, social media, local newspapers. We distributed postcards and tapped into community networks. We ran virtual community forums and webinars. And as soon as restrictions started lifting in varying degrees across the country, our teams responded in kind – getting out into communities, setting up local recovery events, and talking to people about their challenges and how we might help them through the other side.

The road to recovery will be long. We have known this from the start – from lessons learnt over decades of disaster relief including the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria. There will be surprises and set-backs along the way. But our promise remains the same: to be there for recovering communities at every step, through every crisis, no matter what.

We are grateful to every single person, community group and company who showed compassion and gave generously, ensuring we can deliver on this promise.

1. Reuters online, Farming Impact of Australia's worst drought in living memory, 6 August 2018.

2. World Health Organisation, 2020 <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

3. University of Melbourne, Beyond Bushfires, 2016, p. 17 [https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/3043187/Beyond-Bushfires-Final-Report-2016.pdf](https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3043187/Beyond-Bushfires-Final-Report-2016.pdf)

# Response to 2019/2020 bushfire season

Credit: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker



Red Cross supported **49,718 people**



through **37 fires**



across **5 states and territories**



at **176 evacuation, relief and recovery centres**



We registered over **64,570 people** through the Register.Find.Reunite service.

A total of **3,351 volunteers and staff**



gave **60,257 hours** to the response and recovery effort.



“When we got to the relief centre, Red Cross were just so lovely. They’ve got these beautiful big smiles on their faces, and they greet you the minute you come in, or they talk to the kids.

Red Cross are helping people every day. It’s those little things that make you feel that little bit better about what’s happening. If they weren’t there, I don’t even want to think about it.”

**CHELSEA, MALLACOOTA (VIC)**

*Evacuated during the fires on New Year’s Day*

# Key dates

## SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2019

-  **4** Fires in QLD
-  **6** Fires in NSW  
QLD and NSW emergency teams activated
-  **29** Fires in NT and WA
-  **30** Fires in TAS and SA
-  **11** SA emergency team activated
-  **24** Fires in VIC
-  **29** VIC emergency team activated
-  **12** WA emergency team activated

## JANUARY

-  **1** **ABC NYE Appeal**  
\$11m total donated to DRR fund
-  **6** First emergency grants paid (then \$5k)
-  **18** Committed to three-year recovery program
-  **20** Bushfire fund advisory panel formed  
Bereavement grant announced  
Fund allocation overview released
-  **31** SA fires declared under control  
\$135m total donated  
**\$24M TOTAL DISBURSED OR SPENT**

## FEBRUARY

-  **3** Injury and residence repair grants announced  
Emergency grant increased to \$10k  
\$142m total donations to DRR fund
-  **9** NSW fires declared under control
-  **17** First Red Cross recovery officers commence work
-  **27** VIC fires declared under control
-  **29** \$180m total donated  
**\$58M TOTAL DISBURSED OR SPENT**

## MARCH

-  **30** \$203m total donated  
**\$66M TOTAL DISBURSED OR SPENT**

## APRIL

-  **1** Rebuild grant launched (\$20k)
-  **16** First bushfire report released
-  **30** \$215m total donated  
**\$86M TOTAL DISBURSED OR SPENT**

## MAY

-  **15** Rebuild grant updated to re-establishment grant (\$10k-\$30k)
-  **28** Grant application dates extended to 31 August
-  **31** \$219m total donated  
**\$107M TOTAL DISBURSED OR SPENT**

## JUNE

-  **11** Amounts increased for injury, repair and bereavement grants
-  **19** Re-establishment grant increased to \$40k for owner occupiers
-  **30** \$227m total donated  
**\$133M TOTAL DISBURSED OR SPENT**

## JULY

Recovery program continues including community outreach

## AUGUST

-  **31** Applications for all current grants close

## SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER

Majority of funds allocated to existing grants and emerging needs to be disbursed. (Some funds will continue for recovery program and to support people in ongoing hardship.)

# How we are using donated funds



Total funds raised since July 2019: **\$227 million\***

\*Funds pledged during the bushfires continue to arrive. \$27 million was received since our last report in April 2020.

## HOW FUNDS WERE ALLOCATED

### On-the-ground disaster services (FY 19/20 only)



**\$5m**

for 24/7 support – enabling 3,351 volunteers and staff to help with evacuations, relief centres and outreach services

### Financial and practical assistance



**\$56m**

Emergency grants for people whose homes were destroyed



**\$20m**

To help home owners make urgent repairs



**\$1.8m**

For next-of-kin of those who died



**\$8.5m**

Grants for people injured in the fires



**\$2m**

Other financial hardship



**\$87m**

Re-establishment grants for people whose homes were destroyed



**\$28.7m**

Further support as needs become evident

### Community recovery



**\$18m**

Recovery program for 3+ years in bushfire-affected communities

### At 30 June 2020, \$133m had been spent or disbursed.

This includes:



**\$119m**

paid in grants to 4,380 people



**\$5m**

for emergency response, including relief centres and evacuations



**\$1m**

for our 3-year community recovery program



**\$8m**

on admin support costs

### Admin support costs

These are the necessary costs of managing a fund of this size and distributing money as quickly and efficiently as possible. They include the set-up of a dedicated grant payments team, casework support for people with complex needs, fraud prevention, data security, and the fundraising systems that made it possible to raise money. They are still under 4¢ in the dollar for each dollar donated.

### In-kind support

We have been able to keep admin support costs low thanks to incredible in-kind support from corporate partners, who helped us set up call centres, detect fraud and so much more. We acknowledge and thank **KWM, EY, Accenture, Microsoft, Deloitte, KPMG, Land Rover Australia, MSJ and HWL Ebsworth**, among so many others.

### Interest

\$200k of interest on funds has been earned this financial year, and added to the funds available to bushfire-affected communities.

# Bushfire grants

All grants amounts have increased over time, based on both the funds we have available and the need for continued financial support.



## Bereavement grant

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

Lives lost:	<b>35</b>
Funds allocated:	<b>\$1.8m</b>
Grant amount:	<b>\$20,000</b>

### 35 bereavement grants paid at 30 June (\$710k)

*All next-of-kin who chose to accept this grant have received it. Grant amount increased to \$50,000 from July.*



## Emergency grant

To support people whose primary place of residence was destroyed.

Estimated homes lost:	<b>3,117*</b>
Funds allocated:	<b>\$56m</b>
Grant amount:	<b>\$20,000</b>

### 2,723 emergency grants paid at 30 June (\$53.9m)

*\* Figure cited is an estimate provided by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. It does not distinguish between primary residences and investment properties or holiday homes. It also does not include caravans or mobile homes that were people's primary place of residence.*



## Re-establishment grant

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

Funds allocated:	<b>\$87m</b>
Grant amount:	<b>\$40,000</b> for owner occupiers <b>\$10,000</b> for renters or owners of caravans or mobile homes

### 1,802 re-establishment grants paid at 30 June (\$52m)

*People who were eligible for the emergency grant are also eligible for the re-establishment grant if they are 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.*



## Primary residence repair grant

For home owner occupiers whose primary residence was structurally damaged.

Estimated homes damaged:	<b>1,248*</b>
Funds allocated:	<b>\$20m</b>
Grant amount:	<b>\$10,000**</b>

### 1,247 repair grants paid at 30 June (\$8.5m)

*\*This is an estimate provided by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. There is no complete record of how many homes sustained structural damage – including damage to critical private infrastructure such as water tanks, septic tanks and generators.*



## Injury grant

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

Estimated injuries:	<b>unknown*</b>
Funds allocated:	<b>\$8.5m</b>
Grant amount:	<b>\$15,000**</b>

### 399 injury grants paid at 30 June (\$3m)

*\*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 initial grant was \$7,500. A further \$7,500 payment has been offered to people whose out-of-pocket hospital costs reached or exceeded \$7,500.*

Applications for all grants have been extended to **31 August 2020**. We continue to encourage people to come forward.

## Application timeframes

On average, it took **3-5 days** to process a grant application and make payment, assuming applicants provided the documentation needed to confirm their eligibility.

Where applicants did not have documentation or records were lost in the fires, our staff and volunteers reached out to help them finalise their applications as quickly as possible.

# Key considerations when paying grants

## Date range for grant payments

Grants were paid for bushfires occurring between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.

## Charity laws

Red Cross is a public benevolent institution, meaning we must provide relief to people who are in hardship or financial distress. This is generally interpreted to mean we can help people who have personal losses such as homes they live in, but not people who lost investment properties and holiday homes. It also means we can only support people; not businesses or animals or physical infrastructure.

## Ability to apply

The quickest way to provide assistance was to accept applications online. We know this isn't easy for everyone, so we've provided as much in-person and phone support as we can. Not everyone who is eligible has come forward yet, which accounts for the difference between amounts allocated and disbursed under each grant.

## Contacting eligible people

Due to privacy restrictions, we are unable to access a list of contact details for people who have lost their homes, so we cannot contact them directly. We must rely on them coming forward.

We are doing all we can to reach people – from community events and outreach across 47 local government areas, to postcard drops, local print and radio advertising, and working through partners such as Australia Post and the Commonwealth Bank. More than 1,460 applications were received between 1 April and 30 June and we expect this to continue.

## Verifying each application and preventing fraud

Our first priority was that people in genuine need received support as soon as possible. But we also had to ensure donor funds went where they were needed most. Because records of fire damage were being continuously updated, we received many applications where the address provided did not match records of fire damage. Unfortunately we also received a significant number of applications from bots, as well as some that were very cleverly falsified.

This made it necessary to conduct a range of checks on every application that did not match records of fire damage, including visual inspections where we had concerns and other data was unavailable or inconclusive. We tried at all times to minimise the impact on people applying for grants.



"I filled out the form which was really easy...and then we got the first \$5,000, and then a couple of days later we got another message saying 'we've upped it to \$10,000'. I was just so grateful, it made a really big difference."

Having that extra money has taken a lot of pressure off."

**KIM, KANGAROO ISLAND (SA)**

*Received emergency grant and subsequently the re-establishment grant*

## Allocating funds and increasing grants

We calculated each grant allocation based on the total number of people who were likely to need it, using the best available information at the time. Knowing that people would come forward in their own time, we allocated funds for everyone likely to be eligible, not just everyone who applied.

We increased the amount available across all grants as donations increased and more complete records of impact became available. Each time, we contacted previous recipients and made it easy for them to receive additional payments, if they identified they were experiencing financial hardship. More than 1,070 people have received an additional payment for their grant.

## 'Emerging and unmet needs' allocation

While it's vital to provide financial assistance as soon as possible, our long experience shows that some financial and other needs do not become evident until several months after a disaster. We are still seeing people come forward for the first time as they rebuild or re-establish their homes. We are listening to communities and using some funds to address gaps in existing support and continued financial hardship in the coming months.

# Our advisory panel members

Every decision made on the use of Disaster Relief and Recovery funds was informed and validated by volunteer experts on our panel.



**Anne Leadbeater** OAM

Anne is an independent national consultant specialising in disaster recovery and community resilience. Her background is in community development and adult education, working first in the neighbourhood

house sector and then for 16 years in local and state government.

Anne has worked with communities recovering from drought, fire, flood and cyclone in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland, and in 2014, she headed an international team to evaluate the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal for New Zealand Red Cross.

Anne delivers national training for recovery practitioners and last year she completed a review of the Community Recovery Handbook for the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. Anne lives in Kinglake, Victoria and was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for her work in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires.



**Hon Karlene Maywald**

Karlene is a former South Australian State MP and served as Minister for the River Murray and Minister for Water Security during one of the worst drought periods in living memory. She has served on numerous national ministerial councils including

the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, the Primary Industries Ministerial Council and the Regional Development Ministerial Council.

Karlene was also the Local Recovery Coordinator for the Sampson Flat Bush Fires in South Australia 2015-2016, and a Recovery Duty Minister following the Wangary Fires on Eyre Peninsula in 2005. She is now the Managing Director of Maywald Consultants Pty Ltd, providing water policy and government relations advisory services. She has been a board member of the South Australian Water Corporation, together with related SA Water Board Committees and is currently the Deputy Chair of ICE WaRM.



**Hon Patrick McNamara**

Patrick is the former Deputy Premier of Victoria. He has served as Minister for Police, Emergency Services, Corrections, Tourism, Agriculture and Resources (Including Water, Fisheries, Forestry, Mining, and Energy).

Patrick was appointed Chair of the Bushfire Appeal Fund in 2009, and Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal in 2020. He has also been Chair of Goulburn Murray Water, has been the longest-serving former President of Rowing Australia, and President of the Commonwealth Rowing Association. He provides advice to various businesses and does voluntary work for community not-for-profit organisations.



**Ivan Simon**

Ivan is the Co-Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Authority (NATSIHA), President of the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society (ACAS) and a member of the Board of Management of the Biamanga National Park.

He has a wealth of experience and knowledge of issues faced by Australia's First Nations Peoples gained through his work and his own early life experiences in La Perouse. He has worked across the country in youth, child protection, childcare, family support, accommodation and aged care. This includes work with Aboriginal Hostels Limited, the Department of Community Services and the NSW Office of Juvenile Justice.

Ivan has worked in Aboriginal Housing and was the Director of the Division of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. He was seconded to the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs to assist with the management and administration of the Aboriginal Communities Development Program. He is currently with the Aboriginal Resource Unit, assisting Aboriginal people in public, community and private sector rental housing.

---

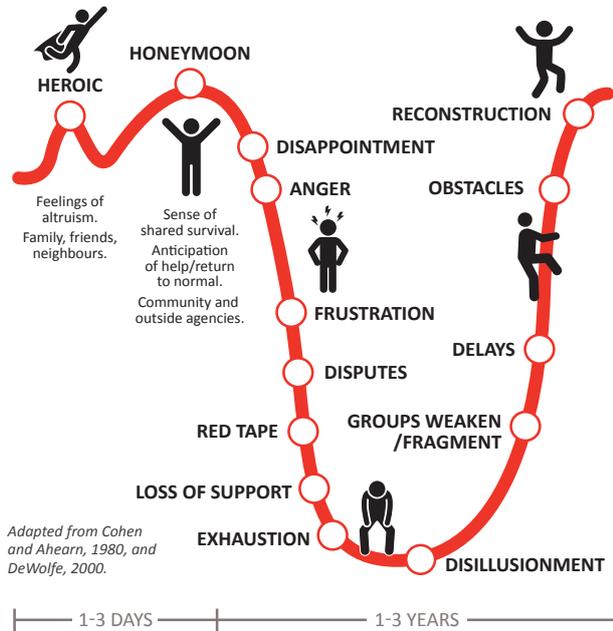
**The panel also includes key Red Cross staff members:**

**Judy Slatyer**, Chief Executive Officer  
**Noel Clement**, Director Australian Programs  
**Belinda Dimovski**, Director Engagement and Support

*Other key staff members, including state and territory directors, contribute to the panel as required.*

# The road to recovery

Recovery is a journey. The trajectory of setbacks and disappointments people experience on their way to their ‘new normal’ has been widely documented. Here is one depiction of what people and communities can experience in the months and years after a disaster.



This is why our bushfire recovery program will run for at least three years. Tailored to the needs of each community, it includes psychosocial support to help people through their trauma; together with training, resources and connections to help communities lead their own recovery.



“About four or five days [after I applied] I got an email and it said that your grant has been deposited into your bank account. I couldn’t believe the amount it came through and I was gobsmacked and that’s because of the extraordinary generosity of the Australian community. It’s an enormous sum of money. It’s more than an enough to give us a start. We will go beyond a start. We can replace other things that maybe, would have been further down the track had there been less money coming forward.”

**HOWARD, WANDELLA (NSW)**

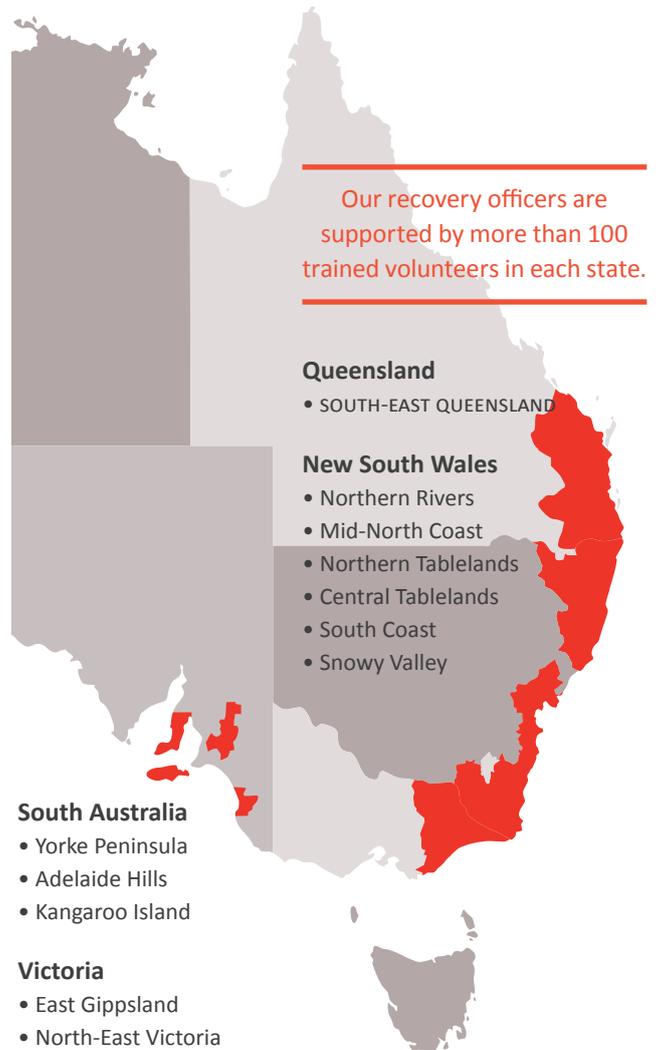
*Received emergency and re-establishment grants*

## Red Cross recovery: what’s involved?

### People on the ground

Our recovery staff and volunteers live in affected communities. Some were impacted by the fires themselves. They listen and reach out to their neighbours. Through their conversations, they understand individual pain points and wider community trends, and help resolve or advocate for people’s most pressing needs.

### Our recovery footprint



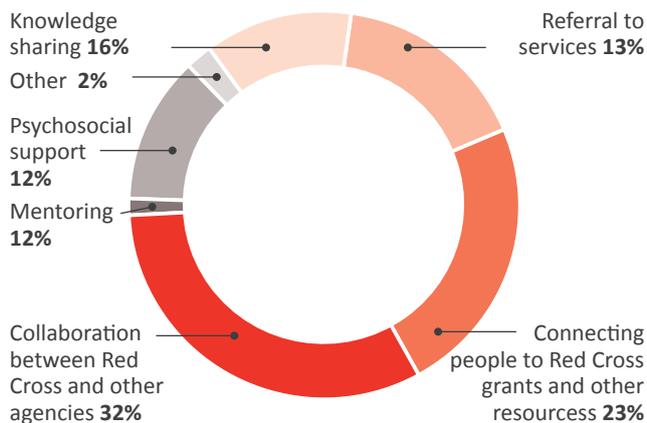
We are recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recovery officers in each state.

## Outreach and 1-1 support

In the early stages of recovery, people often tell us they don't know where to start. The range of services available to them can be confusing, or overwhelming, or they're not sure how best to represent themselves and their needs.

Our outreach activities have helped more than 5,000 people to access the right support. We've reached out via phone, and, where physical distancing measures have permitted, we've been present in community meeting spaces, run dedicated events and visited destroyed properties.

### Recovery outreach at 30 June



## Events and community healing

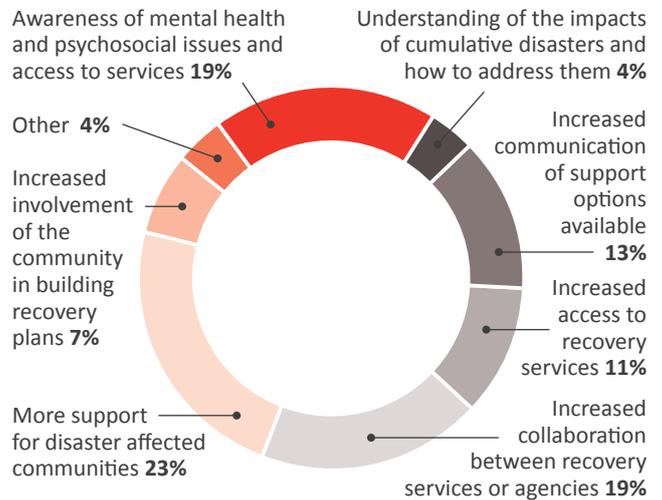
We facilitate and fund local events that allow members of the community to come together to share their experiences and to find strength in solidarity. The power of these local events can't be understated.

For each event, we aim to provide at least one Red Cross representative, trained in psychosocial first aid, to facilitate an environment where people feel safe to talk and connect with each other.

## Community advocacy

We act as a **bridge between community, government and service providers**, working to influence the availability of information and services to better meet community needs.

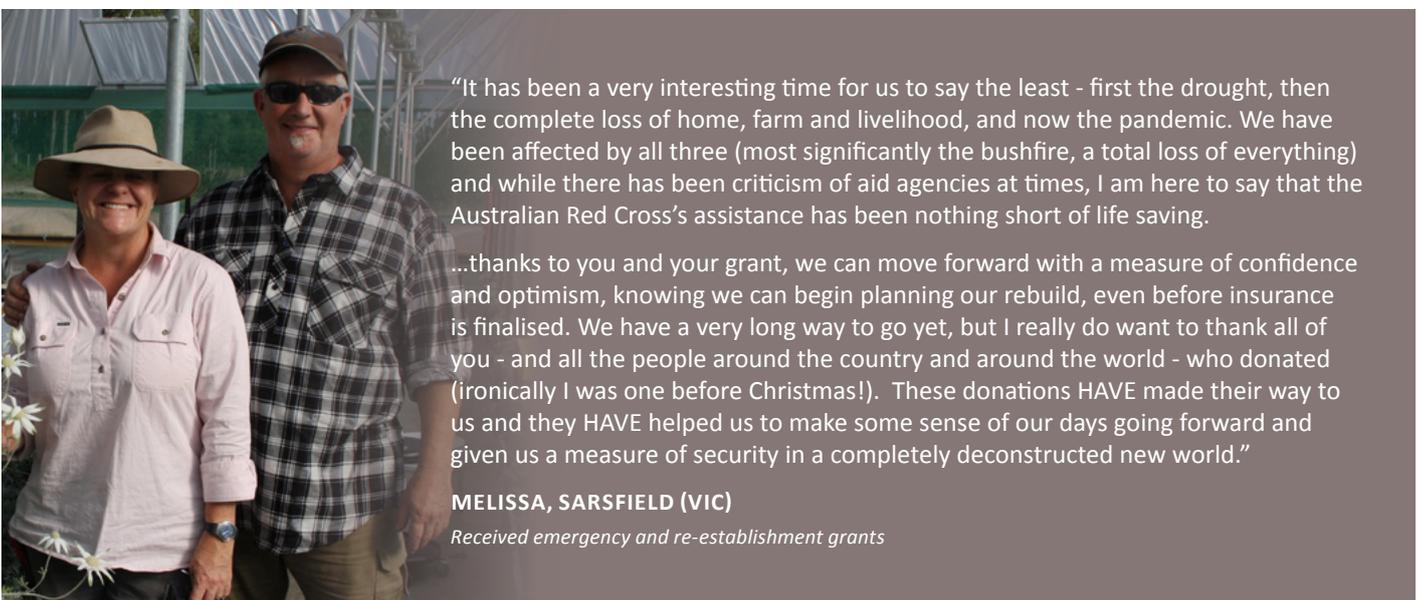
### Community needs we are advocating for at government and local recovery forums



## Training and skills development

Our aim is to resource each community to lead its own recovery. Since February we've run 33 training sessions, with 387 people from local government and communities. Our training modules include Psychological First Aid, Supporter, Recovery Basics, Self-Care and Managing Stress, Communicating in Recovery, and Harnessing Goodwill.

We also **link people with mentors, psychologists and other experts** – people who can walk with communities through their next steps, because they have professional expertise in recovery or they have lived through it themselves.



"It has been a very interesting time for us to say the least - first the drought, then the complete loss of home, farm and livelihood, and now the pandemic. We have been affected by all three (most significantly the bushfire, a total loss of everything) and while there has been criticism of aid agencies at times, I am here to say that the Australian Red Cross's assistance has been nothing short of life saving.

...thanks to you and your grant, we can move forward with a measure of confidence and optimism, knowing we can begin planning our rebuild, even before insurance is finalised. We have a very long way to go yet, but I really do want to thank all of you - and all the people around the country and around the world - who donated (ironically I was one before Christmas!). These donations HAVE made their way to us and they HAVE helped us to make some sense of our days going forward and given us a measure of security in a completely deconstructed new world."

**MELISSA, SARSFIELD (VIC)**

*Received emergency and re-establishment grants*



Richard Adams from the Mogo Chamber of Commerce, with recovery officer Monica Kincade.

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera

### Taking recovery online

During COVID-19, we complemented in-person training sessions with webinars. We've hosted 10 webinars so far, with 1,091 people attending.

- Bushfire recovery during COVID-19**  
With Dr Rob Gordon, Disaster Recovery Psychologist
- Supporting children and young people to recover from disasters**  
With Lyn Page, Psychologist
- Leading in recovery for NSW local government**  
With Dan Long, Disaster Recovery Mentor
- Supporting community service organisations to help their affected communities**  
With Anne Crestani, Disaster Recovery Practitioner and Kris Newton, Disaster Recovery Mentor
- Sharing the challenges faced by volunteer wildlife carers**  
With Lyn Page, Psychologist and Suzy Nethercott-Watson, CEO of Two Green Threads and volunteer wildlife carer
- What does community-led recovery mean?**  
For people who were impacted by bushfires and the organisations/governments supporting them  
With Steve Pascoe, Disaster Recovery Mentor

### Disaster Recovery Mentors

We're supporting local community leaders through our Disaster Recovery Advisors and Mentors Australian (DRAMA) program. The program is designed to help communities to be agents of their own recovery, drawing on the advice and support of someone who's been there before.

We've got 25 mentors available, with 16 of those recruited since February. We've connected 13 community leaders in bushfire-affected areas with our mentors.

In Victoria, we have dedicated volunteer mentors for Mallacoota, Buchan, Cann Valley and Sarsfield. The mentor is a sounding board who helps to normalise the recovery experience, and advise people on ways to avoid unnecessary pitfalls as they navigate next steps.



"Today we went and paid for three new water tanks, coming to a total of \$5,095. I then went to the Commonwealth Bank and imagine my joy when there was the deposit of \$5,000 from Red Cross.

To say THANK YOU... is putting it mildly. What a blessing!!!! You have more than 'made my day'....

I shall continue my volunteer work with the Cobargo branch of Red Cross with a bounce in my step."

**WILMA, QAAMA (NSW)**

*Received residence repair grant*

# The need for change

Red Cross has identified several areas where change is needed to improve outcomes for people affected by disasters. We outlined them in a voluntary submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, as well as federal and state/territory reviews.

## Acting on climate change

The Black Summer bushfires are a stark sign of what a future of non-mitigated climate change will look like. While much has been done to improve infrastructure, we see the need for great investment in community adaptation and resilience. This will not only benefit those who are currently most vulnerable, but also reduce the cost of climate-related disasters.

## Sharing data to make it easier for people to access support

Many people report having to approach multiple agencies and navigate multiple systems to get the support they're entitled to. Access to safe, reliable and ethically managed data could greatly reduce the time involved in getting financial assistance out, and protect against fraud. A trusted information source could be used by multiple agencies as a single point of disaster impact verification, saving people from having to re-submit documents and re-tell their stories.

## Privileging and learning from the voices of First Nations peoples

There is more all emergency management agencies should do to include and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We need to engage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers, build further meaningful and respectful partnerships with First Nations organisations and communities, and leverage their deep and long-standing knowledge of caring for Country and coping with disasters.

## Amplifying the efforts of communities themselves

During the Black Summer bushfires, an estimated 38% of all response activities were self-generated by communities. This ranged from innovative fundraising events to logistics operations to get relief items into communities. There is an opportunity to foster and amplify community mobilisation efforts within emergency management arrangements.

## Embedding recovery further into emergency management

As we face a future with more frequent and severe natural disasters and other emergencies, the need for effective recovery responses has never been greater. Recovery capacity needs to be well resourced within all jurisdictional emergency management arrangements. The expertise of civil society organisations can be further leveraged here.

## Developing national standards for emergency response and recovery

A set of national standards could guide and inform the work of all agencies involved in emergency response and recovery. These would provide benchmarks for the community to assess delivery. Standards should be driven by the needs of people and communities, based on evidence, apply to all organisations providing support, encourage transparency, and guide decisions on resource allocation (including the use of donated funds).

We look forward to working with governments and others to implement change as the recommendations from the Royal Commission and other reviews become known.

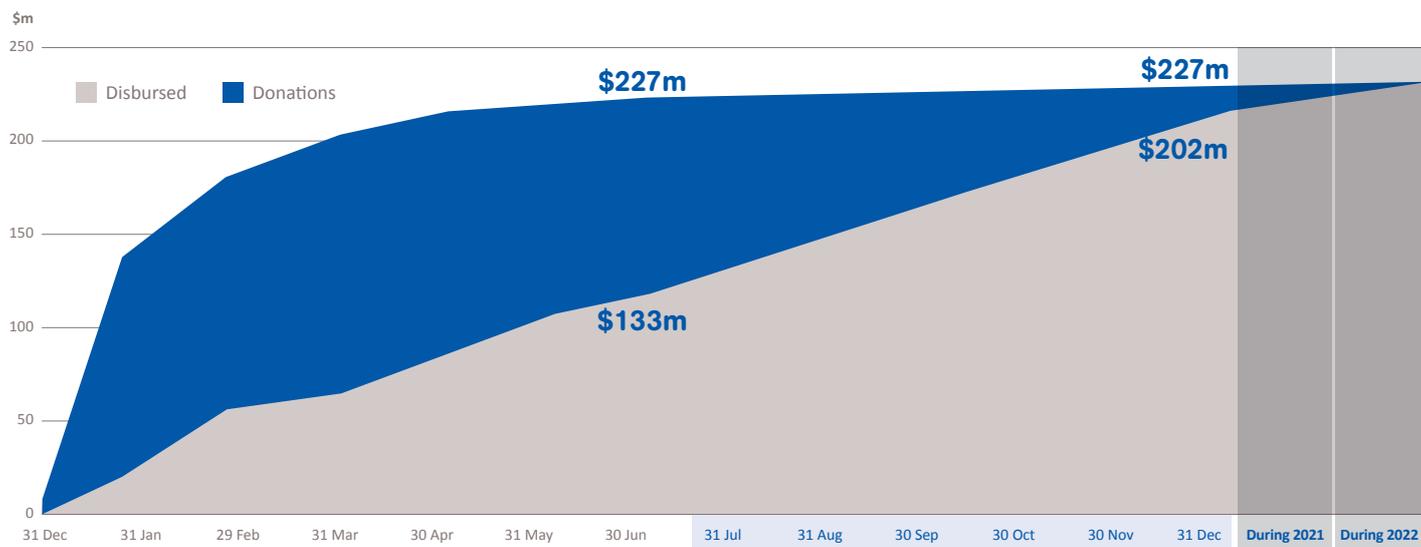


"I went through all the grant applications with mum and helped her out. The Red Cross one was the most straightforward, but also not flippant. It was like, you knew this organisation was aware of what it's like when those things happen, and it's not easy to apply for things in that state of mind. For someone who was as stressed out as my parents, there was no mystery to it, it was a simple one-pager. Once those boxes were ticked ... within a really short time Red Cross was providing that initial relief and has continued to do so."

**JACK, COBARGO (NSW)**

*Jack helped his parents Tom and Sharyn (pictured) to apply for emergency and re-establishment grants after their family home was destroyed. Photo credit: Tegan Wotton*

# The Disaster Relief and Recovery fund



## INDICATIVE FORECAST

The graph above provides an indicative timeframe for the full disbursement of funds donated to Disaster Relief and Recovery in FY19/20.

- We are working to have the majority of funds allocated to existing grants and emerging needs disbursed by the end of this year. This is dependent on people who are eligible coming forward to apply for these grants.
- An estimated \$25m will be disbursed or spent in the 2021 and 2022 calendar years. Of this, \$15m will be for the community recovery program and \$10m for emerging needs within bushfire-affected communities.

## Audit of the fund

Red Cross has engaged external auditors Deloitte to perform a specific audit on the Disaster Relief and Recovery fund, which in FY19/20 was directed entirely towards the Australian Black Summer bushfires and associated support.

This audit has commenced and will be completed in October 2020 in time for our complete FY19/20 Annual Report, which will be available on our website in late October.

## To all those who have endured the Black Summer:

You have shown the power of humanity in the face of disaster. Your courage, fortitude and kindness will never be forgotten. We are proud to stand with you and we will continue to do so.

# Thank you

Bushfire recovery work has been powered by thousands of generous donations from individuals, community groups and companies, near and far. We are humbled by the goodwill and giving spirit that continues to surround us and those affected by the fires, as we work together towards long-term recovery.

**The following list of organisations acknowledges our top financial donors.** We are grateful to them, and to every single person who gave and raised funds for our relief and recovery efforts. We are also grateful to all international donors and Red Cross and Red Crescent societies who worked generously to help facilitate donations.

Apple	Chanel Foundation	Fund	Mirvac	Shell
A2 Milk	Charter Hall	Gumtree	Mitsubishi Corporation	Singapore Airlines
Accent Group	Chep	GVC Australia	Mortgage and Finance Industry Collective	Society of Women Leaders
AESOP Foundation	Chevron	H & M	Mortgage Choice	Sonic Healthcare
Afterpay	Chicago Mercantile Exchange	H&R Block	Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia	South32
Air New Zealand	China Steel Corporation	Hewlett-Packard	MSN	Sportsbet
Amcors Limited	Chubb Security	Hillside Australia New Media	MTR Corporation	Sumitomo Corporation
American Australian Association	Citi Group	Hisense	Munro Footwear	Suncorp
AMP Foundation	City of Sydney Council	Hitachi Australia	NAB	Suntory
ANZ	CMV Foundation	Holden	NCL Australia	Super Retail Group
Ansell	Coles Group	HSBC	Newmont Mining	Supercell Oy
ARA Group	Colgate-Palmolive	IBM Australia	Next	Swisse
Campbell Arnotts	CommBank	ING	Nippon Paint	Sydney Airport
Arts Centre Melbourne	Conoco Phillips	Inpex	Nomad Restaurant	Tabcorp
Ashurst LLP	Costco	Intuit	Oceania Cruises & Regent Seven Seas Cruises	TAL Community Foundation
ASX Limited	Country Road Group	Isaacson Davis Foundation	OneBookShelf	TEG Dainty
Aussie Home Loans	Cricket Australia	Itochu Australia	Oracle	Telstra
Australia Post	Crown Resorts Limited	JB Hi-Fi	Origin Energy	Tennis Australia
Australian Football League	CSL Innovation	Jefferies LLC	Packer Family Foundation	Tetra Pak
Australian Nursing Federation	David Jones Limited	JP Morgan Chase	Paphitis Foundation	The Ernest Heine Family Foundation
Australian Olympic Committee	Dell Australia	Kathmandu	Paul Ramsay Foundation	The Intrepid Foundation
Australian Unity	Diageo	Kering	PEXA	The KDB Group
AV Jennings	Dulux Group	KFC	Pickles Auctions	The Stan Perron Charitable Foundation
Bakers Delight	Ebay	King & Wood Mallesons	Posco	The Trustee for JLT
Baxter International Foundation	EDL Group	Kirkland Lake Gold	Priceline (Australian Pharmaceutical Industries)	Ticketmaster
BHP Foundation	Endeavour Energy	Klarna	PVH	TK Maxx
Bluescope Steel	Ernst & Young	KPMG	PWC Foundation Trust	Transurban
BMW	Estee Lauder	La Trobe Financial	Qantas	Uber
Boohoo.com	F45 Training	Laing O'Rourke	QBE	UBS Australia
BP Australia	Far East Land	Laser Clinics Australia	REA Group	Uniqlo
Breville	Fitness & Lifestyle Group	Lendlease	Real Estate Industry Collective - Beyond the Bricks	United States Tennis Association
Broadsheet	Flexigroup	Liberty Financial	Relief Runs	UTC Australia
Bunnings	Flybuys	Lion	Revlon	Vodafone Australia Foundation
Bupa	Ford Foundation	Loan Market Group	Rio Tinto	Western Union Foundation
Burberry	Foster's	Mapletree Investments	Roche	Woodside Energy
California Community Foundation	Foxtel	Mastercard	Salesforce	Xero
Canaccord Genuity	Fulton Hogan	Maurice Blackburn	Samsung	YUM! Brands
Capgemini	Gandel Philanthropy	Mazda Foundation	Sanofi	Zurich Foundation
Carnival Australia	GE Foundation	McDonalds	SAP Australia	
Carsales	Genesis Care Ltd	Medicines Australia	Scenic Tours	
Cartier	GHD Sydney	Melbourne Cricket Club	Serendipity Software	
Catch.com.au	Gilbert & Tobin Lawyers	Mercer		
CBRE	GlaxoSmithKline Australia	Merrimac Middle East		
	Google	Michael Hill Jeweller		
	GPC Asia Pacific	Michael Kors		
	GPT Group	Microsoft		
	Great Heights Charitable			

A list of top financial donors and the National Societies who supported our response to the bushfires is available at [redcross.org.au/bushfirereport](https://redcross.org.au/bushfirereport).

1800 RED CROSS | [contactus@redcross.org.au](mailto:contactus@redcross.org.au) | [redcross.org.au](https://redcross.org.au)

