

Australian Bushfires Report

January 2020 to January 2022

Two years ago Australia experienced the worst bushfire season on record. Incredible generosity from people in Australia and worldwide enabled our grants and recovery program to support those impacted as they recover and rebuild their lives. While our grants have now been disbursed, our recovery work continues.



On Kangaroo Island in South Australia, Sabrina stands smiling at the concrete foundations for her new home. "I can hardly wait to have a normal kitchen again, with an oven, my own room, and an inside toilet!"

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Diina Perera



\$242m
total raised



96%
Disbursed or spent
as of 31 December 2021.
The remaining 4% of funds
are enabling our ongoing
recovery work.



5 cents
Of the total funds
raised, less than five
cents in the donated
dollar spent on essential
administrative costs.



\$205m
provided in
direct cash
grants to
6,131 people.

02 Introduction



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera

I'm both humbled and grateful to share this report with you.

Humbled by the strength and tenacity of Australians striving, day by day, to rebuild what was lost in the worst bushfire season on record, followed by devastating floods, and amidst this global pandemic.

Grateful for all who stand with them: donors near and far, companies sharing their expertise, and the emergency services workers – including 3,400 Red Cross volunteers and staff – who give their hearts and smarts to the relief and recovery effort.

I am proud too of what has been possible thanks to the generosity of so many people.

This story continues.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of natural disasters.

Together we can build stronger communities and be better prepared, by acting for humanity now.

Thank you for joining us in this effort.



Kym Pfitzner
CEO, Australian Red Cross

Cover story

While there was no stopping the fires that claimed her family's home and farm, their preparation helped ensure Sabrina's family stayed safe. She encourages anyone living in an at-risk area to have an emergency plan and supplies at the ready.

After the fires, Sabrina launched a social media channel where residents share their stories of recovery. She helped fundraise for new firefighting equipment. And helped to organise CB radios that will allow residents to stay in touch should telecommunications fail in any future disaster.

"We have the best people, it's a small community, everyone helps each other. They're hardworking and resilient... We've had an outpouring of love and money and volunteers", explained Sabrina.

Red Cross continues to support the community with the physical and emotional impacts of the fires. "They have never forgotten about us," she says.

"It's been a hard road – mentally, financially and emotionally stressful. I'll be so relieved when the house is finally done."

"We're living just 30 meters from our new build and watching every step of the process. Some days I'm amazed, like when the staircase was built, and some weeks it feels like it's taking forever. We're tiling and painting now, and the floors will be next. Once we're in I think I'll feel like I can put my feet up at long last. And then we can really begin the next chapter of our lives."

Red Cross also provided Sabrina's family with a cash grant.



Paying our respects

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' 60,000 years or more of living history, and their continuing physical and spiritual connection to land, sea, and waters. In this we recognise their intrinsic knowledge of the ecological system. We also acknowledge the unique impact climate and environmental challenges are having and will continue to have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural heritage, traditional food sources, sacred sites and song lines, tribal totem animals, and the trauma associated with being displaced from traditional lands and the healing needed to reconnect to country.

Recovery snapshot

03

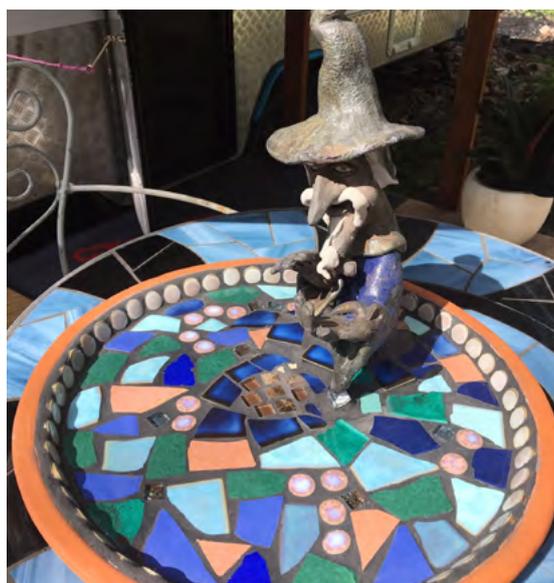
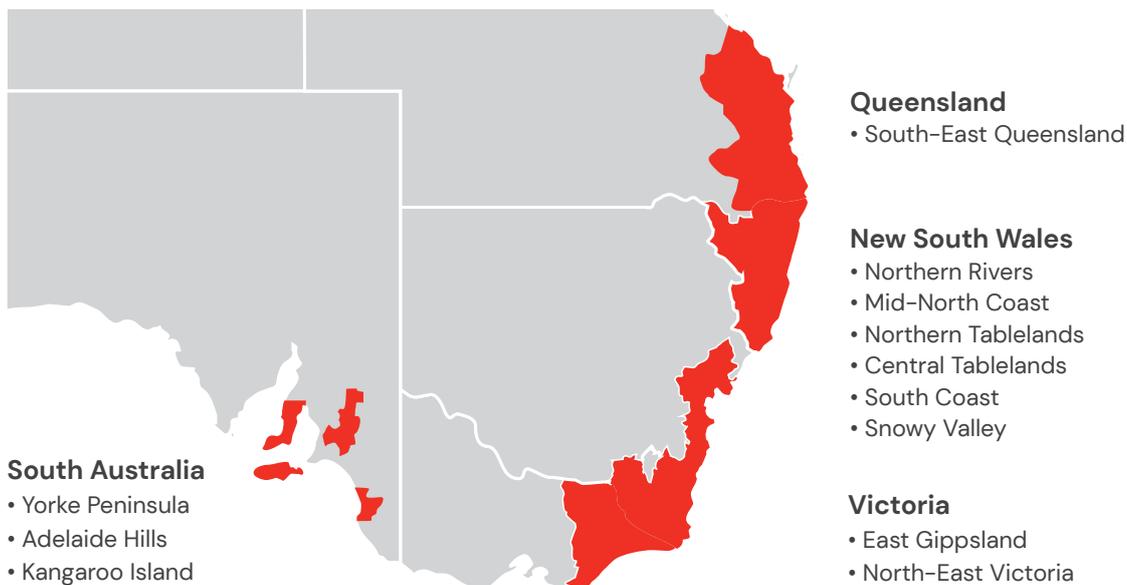
Of the \$232m disbursed or spent as of 31 December 2021:

- **\$205m was provided in direct cash grants to 6,131 people**
- Some people received more than one grant, depending on their circumstances
- Those hardest hit by the fires received amounts over \$90,000

On the ground and online, in addition to financial grants, we've:

- **Assisted 67,764 people** with recovery through 1-1 support, workshops, at community events and with information and referrals.

- **Trained 5,225 people from local government and community services** in Psychological First Aid, Farm First Aid, Communicating in Recovery, Disaster Preparedness, and Recovery Basics among others
- **Supported 1,157 community members** with disaster resilience activities
- Distributed over **18,700 hard copy information resources** and over 91,000 people were reached with recovery information online
- Advocated for communities on **67 recovery committees** at local, regional and state levels.



Art from the ashes

“What I found outstanding and what is remarkable about the Red Cross is we had very, very tailored recovery support,” said Norelle in Nymboida, NSW.

In Nymboida that custom-made support came in the form of top up funding for the Festival of Small Halls and funds to hold mosaic classes.

These tailored, individual solutions that emerge from within each community after a disaster is how Red Cross supports recovery. [Read more about the mosaic workshops.](#)

A birdbath made by Norelle in mosaic class.

04 Ongoing recovery

“We started providing grants within a few days of the fires... but many people don’t seek assistance immediately. Some people think initially they are able to cope without financial assistance, some people are too proud, some are too traumatised, others believe their neighbours are worse off and more deserving. It is complex but just as important that we offer support over the medium to long term, as in the initial response.”

“Nearly one third of grant recipients applied after June 2020, at least six months after the fires. And 245 people came forward in financial need for the first time more than one year after the fires. This is consistent with our experience of other disasters and was exacerbated by COVID-19.”

“We have also seen people only recently come forward for financial support who have sadly been impacted by two disasters in less than 18 months, firstly the bushfires and then the March 2021 NSW Floods, in addition to pandemic impacts. This has caused extreme financial hardship for these individuals and Red Cross grant support was gratefully received.”

Noel Clement, Director Australian Programs, Australian Red Cross explains the importance of long term support.

Disaster recovery is a long and complex process. It goes beyond finances or rebuilding, and includes people’s sense of hope and self-worth, family security and community cohesion.

While our grants have now been disbursed, our recovery program continues to help **individuals** cope with trauma and access support; **communities** to heal and strengthen their connections; and **service providers** (including governments, other NGOs, and community services) to meet the unique needs of bushfire survivors.

Award winning collaboration

The **Guide to Disaster Recovery Capitals (or ReCap Guide)** is a new resource for people and organisations involved in disaster recovery.

It aims to support wellbeing after disasters by providing evidence-based guidance to aid

decision making, encouraging strength-based, holistic and inclusive approaches to recovery.

The guide identifies seven areas of recovery – natural, social, financial, cultural, political, built and human – and emphasises the interconnectedness between these ‘recovery capitals’.

The ReCap guide includes an [Indigenous Peoples and Recovery Capitals](#) resource.

ReCap was joint-winner of the 2021 [Resilient Australia](#) National Mental Health and Wellbeing Award.

This resource was made possible by collaboration between Australian Red Cross, University of Melbourne, Massey University (Aotearoa New Zealand), the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, and other researchers, government and non-government agencies and organisations from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Find out more at recoverycapitals.org.au

Growing gifts

05



After the fires destroyed David and Norelle's half-built dream home, they replanted their vegie garden first. Pumpkins quite literally emerged from the ashes on their NSW Northern Rivers property in Nymboida. Within weeks they had an abundance of garden produce to share with their community.

Two years on, they've rebuilt their home using the same designs and plans as the one they lost.

"We've still got some painting to do, but our home is even better than we'd imagined", said David proudly. "The view is lush and green, thanks to some good rains, and the wattle is back".

David and Norelle received Red Cross grants, made possible by generous donors, and describe that support as "life changing".

"We have been able to rebuild a home that supports our well being, it is time now to reconnect and support other community members."

"This year we want to support and help our neighbours as they rebuild, those people who have helped us ahead of themselves."

[Read more of David & Norelle's story.](#)

06 Word on the ground

Across 46 local government areas, in four states, Red Cross people are still supporting bushfire survivors. This work, and the information we gather from the field, influences the policies and practices of our partners. (such as local governments, community services, NGOs and community groups). Here's what our Recovery Officers on the ground are saying.

“ The past two years have been a rollercoaster ride for me and my close knit, small community. I owned a four-bedroom home and a café, all destroyed, like many others on Kangaroo Island. Since then I joined Red Cross as a Recovery Officer. I've helped our islanders apply for grants and organise community events. Grants money provided a sense of relief as hope was restored. It's still raw though and it's still tough, it will be like that for a while.

Joseph Tippett, South Australia

“ We all knew that the community was struggling with the combined impacts of the previous drought, the bushfires and the isolation of the COVID-19 restrictions. What really made it hit home was a number of youth suicides over a short period of time in the area. The deaths had a major impact. With the easing of lockdowns I was able to spend more time at the bushfire recovery hubs and in the smaller communities alongside local Red Cross volunteers. What has amazed me is the reception I get walking down the street in my Red Cross t-shirt. The number of smiles and thank-you's I get from people I don't know is a reflection on how highly appreciated the work of Red Cross is.

Jessica Davison, Victoria

“ Yorke Peninsula has a prominent farming community, and although homes were lost and farmers were affected by losing livestock, much of the community maintained a strong 'we need to get on with it' mentality. The community is recovering but much is 'pushed down' with emotions high once the protective layers are gone. There is still so much more to do. People have commented on how reassuring it is to see that Red Cross continues to be there for people.

Linda McCabe, South Australia

“ For the elders in particular, evacuating meant leaving the safe space they grew up on. Being on country is a place where they can always feel the comfort of their mob. In fear of smaller communities and regions being left voiceless, I have visited the community in my Red Cross capacity to speak with the liaison officer and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to ensure all ongoing support and allows community to determine their own needs. These community members are a resilient mob. The ongoing unity will ensure preparedness and put us in a good place for any future event.

Julie Perkins, New South Wales

“ Part of my role has been to work alongside other agencies to support them, as they in turn provide support to our communities. One of the groups I worked with was the Rural Fire Officers. I conducted a workshop for them on how to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and basic self-care. One participant said that he didn't even realise he was stressed, he just knew he didn't feel right! He sent an email to me the following week, saying that had spoken to his family about how he was feeling and was now putting plans in place with their help to look after his own self-care. We often forget the people in community who put their hand up to help and support others. The Red Cross Recovery team are there to provide just that support.

Sally Randall, Queensland

Leading their own recovery

07

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Pereira



As people get further into their recover, their thinking often turns to building resilience and preparedness for the potential threat of future disasters. Experience tells us that this typically occurs in the second and third years, particularly as anniversaries and high-risk weather seasons approach.

Our training workshops help communities to manage their own recovery. Topics range from psychological first aid and communicating in recovery, to disaster memorials, supporting children, and community activism after disasters. Red Cross staff and volunteers tailor our workshops to local needs. This supports community leaders and disaster recovery workers to apply new learning to the specific concerns in their communities.

We have a unique network of community leaders and experts from decades of supporting and

working with communities after disasters. These people form our Disaster Recovery Advisors and Mentors initiative. Our Disaster Recovery Advisors and Mentors are volunteers with professional and lived experience of disaster recovery. Our staff work to connect people in disaster affected communities with our Mentors and Advisors. Mentors act as a sounding board for local leaders who are supporting their communities through the recovery process. When needed or requested, our Advisors attend local community forums to share their expertise on a range of disaster recovery issues.

Our recovery staff and volunteers live in affected communities. Some were impacted by the fires themselves. They understand the local context and help resolve and advocate for people's needs.

08 Mount Beauty's journey of resilience

The community of Mount Beauty, in north-east Victoria, has come together to recover and get better prepared for the next disaster. They've established the Keep Calm Committee, led by local resident, Kitty Vigo.



Kitty Vigo, Facilitator of the Keep Calm Committee and Trish Dixon, Manager of the Mt Beauty Neighbourhood Centre.

Kitty worked with the Red Cross Recovery Teams to organise a community workshop to help locals strengthen the resilience of their community in response to emergencies.

They tailored the two-day workshop agenda to meet local needs. It involved a panel from local emergency management personnel – police, fire brigade, ambulance, local power station, state emergency services, local government and Red Cross – who explained their role during emergencies, so the community would know what they could expect from them.



Residents also had the opportunity to exchange information, ask questions, map risks and identify important community assets that could be leveraged in the event of emergencies.

With leadership from Kitty and the Keep Calm Committee, the community developed a list of priorities and set up a Resilience Group to drive the recommendations, which included:

- compiling a list of vulnerable people who would need help during an emergency;
- making sure residents make digital copies of important documents;
- securing funding for a generator to run the radio station in the event of a power cut, as well as funds for solar panels and batteries;
- train or upskill local people in first aid or a chainsaw course, so that they can help people prepare their properties or assist during an emergency; and
- running preparedness sessions with CFA and having resilience and preparedness experts present on local networks, amongst others.



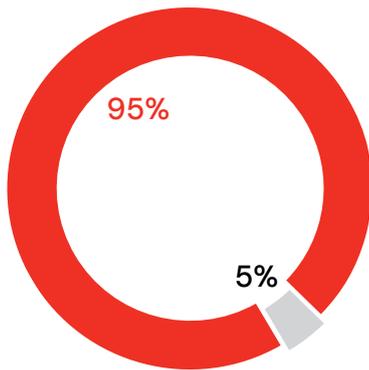
Red Cross Recovery Team helping to strengthen community connections and resilience before, during and after emergencies.

Red Cross will continue to support the community's recovery, but the process in Mount Beauty is working because it truly is community-led. Residents now understand that they need to be responsible for their own preparedness and safety during an emergency. The community is strengthening their resilience and responsiveness to disasters and emergencies. They are better connected, and that will also help them in times of recovery.

[Read more of the Mount Beauty community's story.](#)

How we used donated funds

Fund allocations



95% help for people and communities

Through financial assistance, accommodation pods and a three-year recovery program.

5% Essential administrative support costs

Less than five cents of each donated dollar have been spent on essential administrative support costs. We work hard to keep these costs as low as possible with significant pro bono and other support from many organisations. These costs enable our grants and case work 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.

Of the donated funds 96% has been disbursed or spent to date (on individual direct relief, community recovery and essential admin) and 4% is enabling ongoing recovery work.

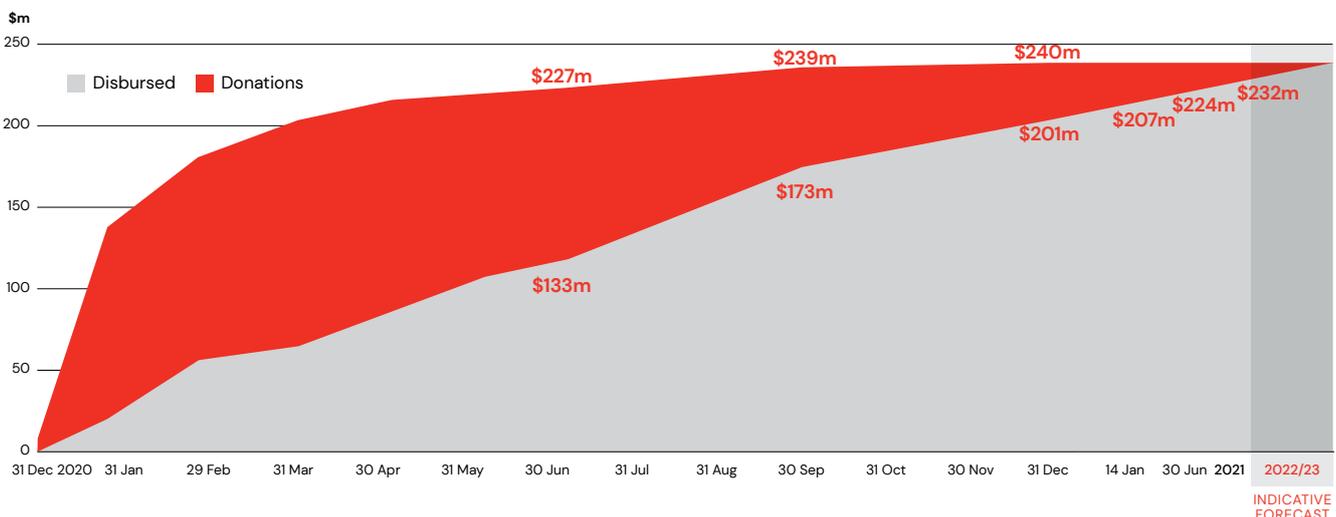
How donations were disbursed

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

- We received an extraordinary amount of donations in January 2020, which we rapidly allocated to bushfire assistance and recovery.
- More than \$40m was received after the fund had closed. These donations had been pledged during the fires, often by organisations based overseas.

Audit: The Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund was independently audited by Deloitte, as part of the Australian Red Cross FY20/21 annual report. The audited financial statements are available at redcross.org.au/annualreports.

Evaluation: Melbourne University is undertaking an evaluation of the 2019/2020 Australian Bushfires Recovery Program by Australian Red Cross. Feedback includes community members and has been very positive. The report will assist Red Cross in our ongoing efforts to improve support for disaster affected communities.



10 Grant payments

Of the \$232m disbursed or spent as of 31 December 2021, \$205m has been provided in direct cash assistance through grants to 6,131 people. Some people received more than one grant, depending on their circumstances, with those hardest hit by the fires receiving amounts over \$90,000.



Bereavement grant

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

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Grant amount: | Up to \$50,000 |
| Grants paid: | 35 grants (\$1.3m) |

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: | Up to \$20,000 |
| Grants paid: | 2,929 grants (\$58.2m) |



Re-establishment grant

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

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

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: | Up to \$10,000** |
| Grants paid: | 2,376 grants (\$22.9m) |

** 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: | \$7,500 or \$15,000** |
| Grants paid: | 651 grants (\$8.5m) |

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: | Depending on individual circumstances |
| Grants paid: | 920 grants (\$11.7m) |



Additional support grant

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

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Grant amount: | Up to \$12,500 |
| Grants paid: | 4,181 grants (\$25.9m) |

Our Grants team



Thank you to our Grants team who have processed more than 13,500 bushfire grants over two years. And to our recovery staff and volunteers who, in highly complex settings, continue to serve impacted communities. They have supported people going through significant trauma, and also navigated fraudulent applications, all with exceptional professionalism and integrity.

Our Advisory Panel

Thanks also to the independent panel of experts who volunteered their time to inform and guide decisions on using the funds.

- **Anne Leadbeater OAM**
National consultant specialising in disaster recovery and community resilience.

- **Hon Patrick McNamara**
Former Deputy Premier of Victoria and Chair of Victorian Bushfire Appeal 2020
- **Ivan Simon**
Co-Chair of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Authority
- **Hon Karlene Maywald**
Former SA Minister for the River Murray and Minister for Water Security, now Managing Director Maywald Consultants

Panellist bios are available at redcross.org.au/bushfirepanel

The panel also included Red Cross staff:

- **Judy Slatyer**
CEO (until October 2020)
- **Kym Pfitzner**
CEO (since October 2020)
- **Noel Clement**
Director Australian Programs
- **Belinda Dimovski**
Director Engagement & Support
- **State and Territory Directors**
contributing as required
- **Heads of Legal and Finance**

Gratitude from grant recipients

Excerpt from an email received from a grant recipient in Cobargo, NSW.

"Red Cross grants have been the difference between rebuilding a secure future ahead or having to sell up and rent for the rest of my life or leave my community and job...

Your grants process has been, by far, the most generous and straightforward to deal with since the bushfires...

The fact is that a bushfire is very different to say, a house fire and that is why appropriate and timely funding is vital...

Your work is meaningful, respectful, generous and fair. I used to ponder which charity actually made a difference to the individual in need. Red Cross does and I will be my first choice to donate to for the rest of my life."

Tom also lives in Cobargo NSW. He received a Red Cross grant which helped him to build this house with his family. [Read more of his story.](#)



12 Insights and opportunities for improvement

Red Cross has been supporting people and communities through disasters for more than a century. These things we know.

Resilience needs investment.

The true cost of disasters is not only physical, but social and economic. The Australian Business Roundtable* found that an annual investment of \$250m in disaster mitigation could generate budget savings of \$11 billion. Other analyses have found savings of between \$3 and \$8 for every dollar spent. Relatively small investments now will support Australians' economic prosperity, while also reducing years of stress and heartache for those who experience disasters.

The Productivity Commission estimates that 97% of all disaster funding is spent on recovery and clean-up while just 3% is spent on mitigation, preparedness and resilience.

Following the Productivity Commission Review into Disaster Funding, the Federal Government produced a National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework which aims to 'take risk out of the environment, and to increase investment in disaster risk reduction'. Red Cross is supporting state and Federal Governments to implement the Framework, with a key focus on reducing humanitarian impacts.

Being prepared is vital at every level.

Families, communities, businesses and governments can all take practical steps to build their resilience. These steps, which range from personalised emergency plans, to disaster drills, business continuity arrangements and investments in community infrastructure, are crucial to protecting lives, assets, social cohesion and the survival of our communities.

We can make it easier for people to access support.

Bushfire survivors told us how exhausting it was to apply to multiple agencies, collect evidence and re-tell stories of trauma. Improved data collection and sharing arrangements can make this much easier. For example. A trusted information source is one option that could be used by multiple agencies as a single point of disaster impact verification, enabling us to provide funds directly and even more quickly to affected people.

More than money is needed for recovery.

Most people who received grants told us that regular contact and check-ins from Red Cross were equally important, and kept them from feeling forgotten. The issues reported to our recovery teams show that communities need ongoing psychosocial support, which evolves with their needs over time.

First Nations expertise is invaluable.

All emergency management agencies must do much more to include and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes respecting and incorporating traditional land and disaster management practices, ensuring relieve and recovery centres are welcoming and inclusive, building respectful partnerships with First Nations organisations and communities, and engaging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers.

National standard could guide emergency response and recovery.

A set of national standards could guide and inform the work of all agencies involved in emergency management. These standards would provide benchmarks for the community to assess delivery. They should be driven by people's needs, based on evidence, ensure transparency, guide resource allocation, and apply to all organisations involved.

Donors need better information to be informed each step of the way.

The majority of people who donated during the bushfires thought their money would be distributed in weeks, if not days. Yet this doesn't match the needs of communities impacted by those disasters. While we have worked hard to provide transparency, we will continue to do all we can to give donors clear information about the reality of distributing funds after a disaster, the need for long-term recovery support, and the practical challenges of providing financial assistance.

*The Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities was formed in 2012 to influence public policy via evidence-based reporting on the unsustainable cost of disasters on life, property and the economy. It's members are from Australian Red Cross, IAG, Munich Re, Optus and Westpac Group.

Community led resilience

13



The bushfires devastated the Aboriginal communities of Baryulgil and Malabugilmah in Northern NSW. These communities, like many others around Australia, are collectively orchestrating their own recovery thanks to local leaders like Terry Robinson, a Community Coordinator for the Malabugilmah Community Emergency Team, with support from agencies including Red Cross.

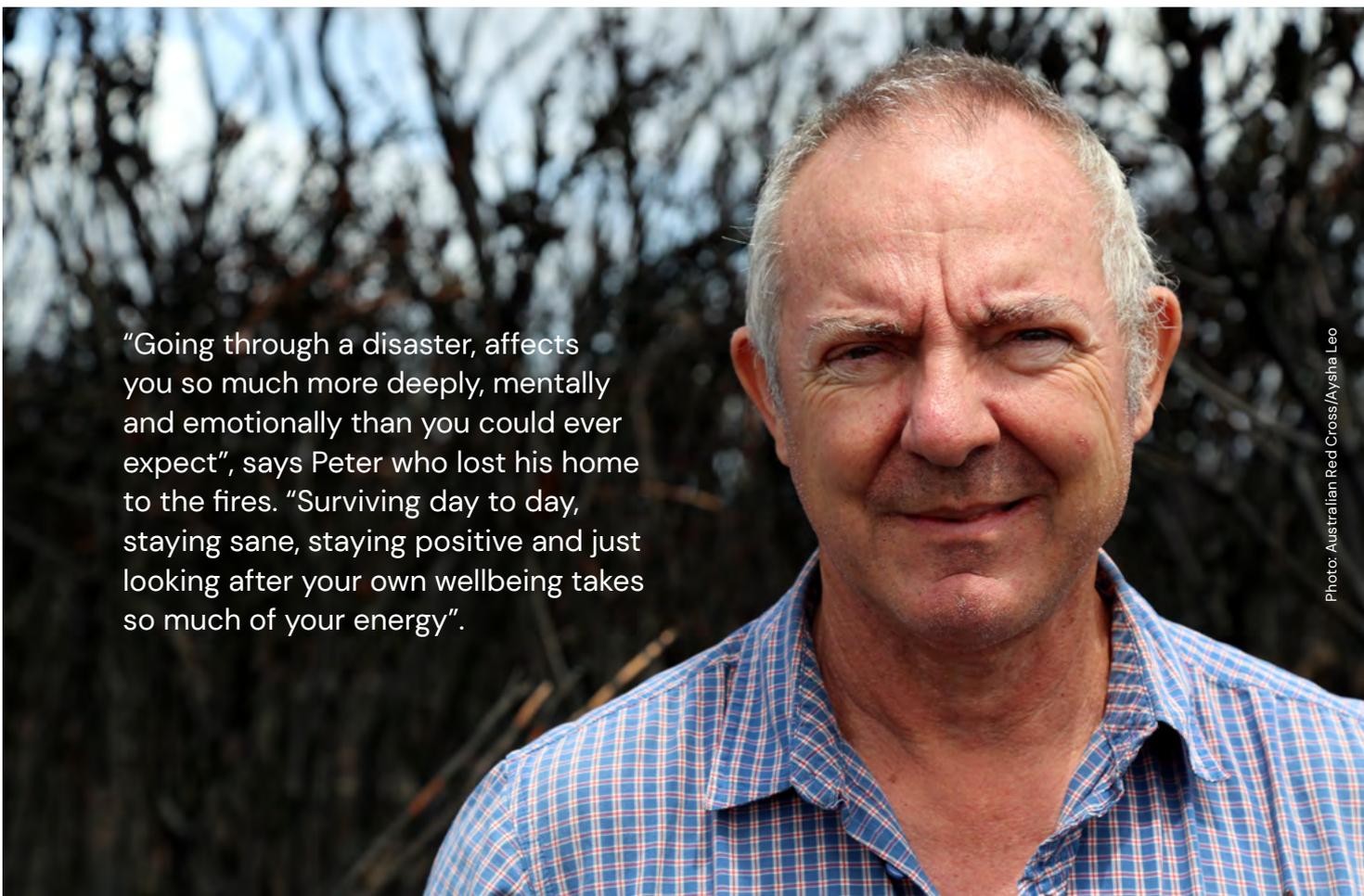
"I can honestly say, for our community, that we weren't prepared... but today we are ready and prepared for whatever arises... thanks to Red Cross and all the agencies involved in the program happening in Malabugilmah and Baryulgil now."

Julie Perkins is a Red Cross Recovery and Resilience Team Leader working in these communities.

"Recovery doesn't happen overnight... it's a long term journey, and people are at all different levels... We'll be involved for a while... but what's growing is the strength of the community..." Julie explains. "It's all community driven ... Nothing happens unless it's come from that community first".

"Aboriginal people are really resilient... We're just merely providing the training, they're going to keep this going... we'll always have a role, if they want us... All strength to them."

[Hear more about community led resilience from Julie and Terry in this video \(4.06 mins\).](#)



"Going through a disaster, affects you so much more deeply, mentally and emotionally than you could ever expect", says Peter who lost his home to the fires. "Surviving day to day, staying sane, staying positive and just looking after your own wellbeing takes so much of your energy".

14 Climate change challenge

It's time to act on climate change

These bushfires, and other recent extreme weather events, are a stark sign of what the future holds if Australia does not act decisively to reduce the speed of climate change, mitigate its' impacts, and build community resilience to frequent and severe disasters.

People in Australia live in a new reality where disasters and emergencies impact us all.

From drought to bushfires, to COVID-19, to floods and cyclones – every single one of us has been impacted by disaster in the past two years; in fact, many of us have been impacted by multiple emergencies.

Red Cross supports individuals, households and communities, to become more resilient and able to anticipate, respond to and recover from crises.

Australia is highly exposed to the effects of climate change.

Climate change is one of the biggest humanitarian challenges society is facing.

Every year, Australian communities face devastating losses and disruption caused by climate related emergencies. The consequences of such events have significant impacts on people, communities, the economy, infrastructure and the environment. The climate changes we are seeing, will impact almost every aspect of our lives, from the way we earn a living to how we move around our cities, feed ourselves and enjoy leisure time.

Every day Red Cross is responding to the increasing humanitarian impacts of climate change.

Governments over-invest in post-disaster reconstruction and under-invest in mitigation that would limit the impact of natural disasters in the first place. As such, natural disaster costs have become a growing, unfunded liability for governments. The total cost of natural disasters in Australia is forecast to increase from \$18.2 billion to \$39 billion per year by 2050.

Beyond the direct costs of increasing disasters, climate change will have long-term psychosocial impacts on the health and wellbeing of billions of people across the globe.



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Louise M Cooper

Humanitarian workers are on the frontline of every disaster, supporting people affected. With the increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, the humanitarian sector is soon to reach the limits of its capacity.

Creating more resilient communities is vital to strengthening our ability to adapt to climate threats.

Everyone – humanitarian agencies, governments, corporates, and community members – must become climate-smart.

Climate change intensifies other challenges faced by those already at risk.

Climate change is a major factor contributing to the ongoing vulnerability of billions of people globally. The impacts of climate change can exacerbate poverty, migration, poor health and increased violence and conflict.

We want to reduce the impacts of climate change on people.

With 165,000 local branches and the support of 14 million volunteers globally, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are uniquely placed to see and respond to the detrimental health, social wellbeing and psychosocial impacts that climate change has on individuals and the social fabric of our communities. We are present in communities before, during and after emergencies. We support people to identify local solutions to local needs and act for humanity.



Thank you

Legendary Australian novelist, poet and playwright Thomas Keneally penned this tribute and donated it to Red Cross in celebration of the humanity shown by Australians during the 2020 bushfire response and recovery.

[Hear Thomas Keneally thank you himself, reciting his tribute "The Power of Humanity" \(1.48 mins\).](#)

The power of humanity.

By Thomas Keneally

You saved strangers when you didn't know whether your own were still standing,

Unobserved, you said, with ashes on your tongue, the crucial words of solace.

Amidst flames so tall, and cloaking smoke, you did the small, brave things for people whose names you did not know.

When the palaver of economics, and the spite of politics, told us we were many, and were bitter, you showed we were one, and were human.

When all seemed devalued, you gave events your own unheralded value.

The value of your offered hours and days, the value of your better gifts and your weary valour.

You served the fleeing and stood in calamity's way.

When all seemed inhuman, you were human.

You honoured the oneness of humankind, the oneness of the earth.

You humbled us with the scale of your good will.

All we can say is, "Thank you." It is not enough to say.

But if we did not say it, we would not be worthy of you.

You have shown us plainly what it is to be a citizen of a blazing world.

Thank you.

Get in touch
with us.

1800 RED CROSS
contactus@redcross.org.au
redcross.org.au