



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

The Hon. David Littleproud MP
Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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BOOST FOR BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Local economic recovery plans will help towns and regions hit by bushfires get back on their feet as part of a new \$650 million package of support from the Morrison Government.

As part of the Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program, bushfire affected communities will share in \$448.5 million from the Morrison Government to support the delivery of local recovery plans with priority given to the most severely impacted regions, drawing on local voices and local governments in close partnership and as part of cost-sharing arrangements with states.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) would lead work to drive a strong economic recovery so the more than 18,600 families and businesses in bushfire-affected areas could get back on their feet.

“The same communities that were hurting most from the bushfires are hurting from the impacts of COVID-19. The impacts have been devastating,” the Prime Minister said.

“This funding injection comes as the damage from the bushfires has made itself clear in the weeks and months after they passed and regions have been finalising the sorts of projects they want to get underway to build back better.

“Every community is different and every community is at a different point in their recovery. That’s why the projects that these funds will support are not one-size-fits-all – they will reflect community needs.

“This is about locals leading the recovery with the NBRA and our state and local partners ensuring our support gets to where it’s needed most.”

“I urge local communities to work with their state governments and to provide the National Bushfire Recovery Agency with their priority projects as soon as possible.

The support will back local projects and recovery plans, in specific areas, as well as initiatives that benefit all bushfire-affected communities. The projects could include those that build community capability and wellbeing, including through workshops and events, projects that focus on the landscape and water, replacing produce and stock, supporting local jobs and building future resilience.

Minister for Emergency Management David Littleproud said I've always wanted a locally led recovery not a Canberra led recovery. This is the mechanism to deliver that and to build it back better.

"We're working side-by-side with families, small businesses, primary producers and the tourism sector to deliver a well thought-out economic recovery as quickly as possible," Minister Littleproud said.

"We know and have seen firsthand just how severe the impact from the bushfires and now COVID-19 has been. The past six months have been incredibly tough for so many Australians.

"To date, the efforts of every level of government have been focused on emergency relief, the restoration of basic services, clean-up operations and the immediate wellbeing needs of people in the most severely impacted communities.

"While we recognise not all communities are at the same point of recovery, some communities are starting to consider longer-term planning. We're here to support them with opportunities to rebuild."

Minister Littleproud said the Government's assistance came on top of more than \$1.33 billion dollars rolling into bushfire affected communities which includes around half a billion dollars of grants and loans that has already flowed to families and businesses, as well as \$214.9 million in disaster recovery payments and \$240 million in Community Recovery Packages.

"We're also stepping in to help regenerate Australia's wildlife and habitats, better prepare our telco network for future emergencies, boost mental health support and help our forestry industry salvage their products," Minister Littleproud said.

"These bushfires affected Australia in many ways and we'll be dealing with the aftermath for a long time to come, but communities should know that our government will be with them every step of the way."

The new support also includes:

- Forestry Transport Assistance (\$15 million): To assist the forestry industry with the increased costs of transporting burned salvaged logs over longer distances to surviving timber mills or storage sites in bushfire affected areas in Victoria and New South Wales.
- Community Wellbeing and Participation (\$13.5 million) - backing Primary Health Networks with additional funding to provide critical, localised emotional and mental health support for bushfire affected individuals.
- Bushfire Recovery for Species and Landscapes (\$149.7 million) - supporting efforts that go beyond the immediate devastation on species and natural assets through habitat regeneration, waterway and catchment restoration including erosion control, weed and pest management.
- Telecommunications Emergency Resilience (\$27.1 million as well as \$10 million from the mobile blackspots program) - strengthening telecommunications capabilities prior to future natural disasters, including the deployment of approximately 2000 satellite dishes to provide a link if other connections are damaged, plus batteries and solar panels, to rural fire depots and evacuation centres.

The \$2 billion Bushfire Recovery Fund has been committed to programs and initiatives to support bushfire recovery in affected communities. This is in addition to those funds already available through existing disaster recovery measures.

- Over 16,700 applications for the \$10,000 small business support grant have been approved – worth \$167 million.
- More than 1300 applications for the \$50,000 small business grant have been approved - worth \$37 million.
- 1700 applications for the Primary Producer Grant have been approved to date, with a total of \$106 million provided to primary producers to date.

To access support and to find further details, visit the National Bushfire Recovery Agency website at www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au

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