



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQs about the extra bushfire recovery support announced by the Australian Government on 11 May 2020, which adds to the help already in place.

Recovery progress so far

How quickly is funding hitting the ground?

- Financial assistance is being delivered in 100 Local Government Areas.
- Almost all of the \$2 billion National Bushfire Recovery Fund has now 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.
- More than \$1.33 billion dollars is already rolling into bushfire affected communities. This 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.
- For updates on progress visit bushfirerecovery.gov.au or [subscribe](#) to the National Bushfire Recovery Agency's newsletter.

What help is available?

- For the support available, visit bushfirerecovery.gov.au or call your state hotline:
 - In New South Wales call **13 77 88**
 - In Victoria call **1800 560 760**
 - In South Australia call **1800 302 787**
 - In Queensland call **1800 173 349**

How will COVID-19 impact the delivery of this new support?

- The recovery needs of bushfire-affected communities have not been forgotten.
- COVID-19 has meant the National Bushfire Recovery Agency has needed to adapt the way it engages with communities, but engagement certainly hasn't stopped.
- The Agency is doubling down on its efforts to ensure communities have what they need to recover. As we all move forward, the Agency and all stakeholders will continue to comply with all the policies of government around COVID-19.

This week's announcement

Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program

- Bushfire affected communities will share in **\$448.5 million** from the Australian Government to support the delivery of local economic recovery projects.
- Funding will be delivered through a new Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program, to help towns and regions hit by the fires get back on their feet.
- As you would expect, priority will be given to the most severely impacted regions.

Forestry

- **\$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.

Native Wildlife and Habitats

- **\$149.7 million** is focused on supporting communities and organisations to take on-ground action to protect native species and build knowledge for better land management.
- This funding will support efforts that go beyond the immediate devastation of species and natural assets through habitat regeneration, waterway and catchment restoration including erosion control, weed and pest management.

Community Wellbeing

- The Australian Government is backing Primary Health Networks to work closely with local governments, with an additional **\$13.5 million** in funding over two years to provide critical, localised emotional and mental health support for bushfire affected individuals.

Telecommunications

- The Australian Government is committed to strengthening telecommunications capabilities before the next bushfire season.
- **\$27.1 million** in support will include the deployment of approximately 2000 satellite phones, plus batteries and solar panels, to rural fire depots and evacuation centres.

How can I find out more?

- For updates on how these initiatives are being implemented and how your community can benefit, [subscribe to get updates](#) from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency.
- If you have a project that you think might be relevant to your region's economic planning efforts, talk to your local council.
- Councils can contact their state government about the Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program.

New Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program

What has been announced?

- Bushfire affected communities will share in **\$448.5 million** from the Australian Government to support the delivery of local economic recovery plans. This will be delivered through a new Regional Bushfire Recovery and Development Program.
- Funding will be available to support key projects identified in bushfire affected regions. This approach will support regional communities to realise their own visions for recovery, supported by well-coordinated support from all levels of government.
- Priority will be given to the most severely impacted regions.

Will all of the funding go only to the most severely impacted regions?

- Funding is available for all bushfire impacted regions. Of course, those that have been most impacted will be prioritised.
- We anticipate around three-quarters of the \$448.5 million funding will be directed to the most severely impacted regions.

How much funding will each region receive?

- Each community has different recovery needs. There is no set amount per region. We expect to distribute funding proportionate to impact and need.

How can I access funds for my project? Who do I contact?

- Community members should speak to their local council if they have ideas about recovery for their area that haven't already been considered.
- Councils can contact their state government for their region to discuss ideas and how to link in with regional recovery planning. The National Bushfire Recovery Agency will be working with state governments and regional bushfire recovery coordinators to support regional recovery plans.

What types of projects might be included in a local economic recovery plan?

- Projects could range from initiatives that promote economic activity and support community wellbeing, projects that focus on the landscape and water, replacing produce and stock, or building future resilience.

Who decides what gets funded under this new program?

- The key to successful and enduring recovery is collaboration across all levels of government, with priorities driven by local communities.
- As much as possible, existing local and state governance processes will be utilised to ensure we address recovery needs with greater flexibility and speed without duplicating effort.
- National governance will be provided through a National Committee, chaired by the National Bushfire Recovery Coordinator with the states, supported by experts.
- Funding will be fast-tracked where possible, such as projects that are clearly locally-led, generate local jobs, and have clear recovery benefits for communities.

Some communities are not ready to consider long-term recovery. How will these communities be supported?

- We must remain flexible in the support we provide to communities – every community is different and every community is at a different point in their recovery. Funding decisions will reflect these individual needs.

Will the government use local contractors to carry out these projects and initiatives?

- Yes, as much as possible.
- We understand just how important local jobs are to local economies.
- The Government is focused on supporting local businesses and local jobs by engaging local contractors as much as possible.

New measures – Forestry

What has been announced?

- **\$15 million** in funding for salvage log transport assistance to help Australia's sustainable forestry industries in their immediate recovery from the bushfire crisis.
- The funding will help with the additional transport costs of moving salvaged burnt logs to out of range processing mills and storage.
- The Australian Government will be working to deliver this with state governments.

Who will this help?

- Processing mills that have been impacted by a reduction in their local wood supply and need wood from salvage harvesting.
- Forest growers and plantation owners with high volumes of bushfire-affected trees that exceed the processing capacity or capability of local mills.

When and how can people apply?

- Further information on the salvage log transport assistance will be provided in the coming weeks.
- The Australian Government will be working closely with the relevant state governments to deliver this funding.

New measures – Native Wildlife and Habitats

What has been announced?

- **\$149.7 million** is focused on supporting communities and organisations to take on-ground action to protect native species and build knowledge for better land management.
- This funding will support efforts that go beyond the immediate devastation of species and natural assets through habitat regeneration, waterway and catchment restoration including erosion control, weed and pest management.

Who will this help?

- This funding will support recovery actions by local communities and Indigenous land managers, provide updated conservation plans for threatened species and improve monitoring to chart our recovery.

When and how can people apply?

- Funding will be available from 1 July 2020.
- More information on the process for allocating funding will be available soon.

New measures – Community wellbeing

What has been announced?

- **\$13.5 million** over two years to Public Health Networks (PHNs) in bushfire affected regions to support emotional and mental health in communities.
- This measure provides additional funding for non-clinical supports, and will provide critical community-based activities to support individual wellbeing and social cohesion.
- This could include extra social workers in hard-hit areas, community events and activities that bring people together (virtually or in person), or other activities to support bushfire-affected communities wellbeing and recovery.

Who will this help?

- This funding will allow PHNs to expand the range of support they are currently offering and provide an even more tailored community-based response by partnering with local governments.

When and how can people apply?

- The funding will be provided to PHNs over two years from 1 July 2020 until 30 June 2022.
- The Australian Government will work closely with PHNs, the National Mental Health Commission and local government to ensure that funding is directed to activities that will address the needs of the community.

New measures – Telecommunications

What has been announced?

- The Australian Government is committed to strengthening telecommunications capabilities before the next bushfire season.
- **\$27.1 million** in support will include the deployment of approximately 2000 satellite phones, plus batteries and solar panels, to rural fire depots and evacuation centres.

When and how can people apply?

- More information will be available shortly at www.communications.gov.au