

# Eastern Victorian Fires 2019–20 State Recovery Plan

Bushfire Recovery Victoria  
August 2020



**BUSHFIRE RECOVERY  
VICTORIA**



**VICTORIA**  
State  
Government

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

BRV proudly acknowledges the First Peoples of Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

## **Accessibility**

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# Message from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

The Eastern Victorian Fires 2019–20 had a devastating impact on communities and the environment and I am committed to ensuring that the right support is provided to help with recovery and rebuilding.

Homes were lost, farms destroyed, businesses affected, and the natural environment ravaged. Tragically, five lives were lost, and I join all Victorians in extending my sympathies to their families, friends and work mates.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of emergency workers and volunteers, who over many days and nights fought to bring the fires under control, supporting residents to protect their lives and livelihoods. I also extend my thanks to the many volunteers who stepped up to provide support in response to the fires and who continue to give their support today. We have seen the best of humanity in action.

In the months since the fires, Victorians have demonstrated extraordinary strength and community spirit as they start to rebuild their lives.

The Victorian Government is dedicated to standing shoulder to shoulder with communities to ensure people can access the immediate, medium and long-term support that will help them to recover and rebuild.

Our approach to recovery is guided by the principle that a locally-led and locally-driven

recovery will ensure the best outcome. Affected communities should be confident they will be not only empowered to lead recovery efforts but also well supported over the long haul.

The road to recovery is long and while much has been done since the fires were contained there is still a long way to go. The Victorian Government has invested more than \$347 million towards bushfire recovery and established Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) as a permanent agency to support the long term recovery journey. BRV is working closely with the Commonwealth Government and local governments to streamline assistance and support individuals, businesses and communities to get back on their feet.

The 2019-20 Victorian fire season was unprecedented and caused devastation and loss in communities across East Gippsland and North East Victoria. These communities have since been subject to the compounding impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Victorian Government will continue to stand with these communities every step of their recovery.

Together we will work to ensure these communities emerge stronger, better and more resilient in the future.

**Hon Lisa Neville MP**

*Minister for Police and Emergency Services*



# Message from the Emergency Management Commissioner

The Eastern Victorian Bushfires were devastating for many of our Victorian communities, families and businesses.

Over the fire season, 1.5 million hectares of land was burnt, 42 National Parks and conservation reserves were impacted, 458 residences damaged or destroyed, as well as 51 business buildings and community facilities.

My thoughts continue to be with the family, friends and colleagues of the five people who lost their lives this summer. I also acknowledge the tragic loss of three firefighters, which highlights the inherent dangers of firefighting.

Keeping the community safe from fires over the summer was a true partnership with the community supported by a huge team with many different agencies contributing.

We have and continue to listen and learn from community members in East Gippsland and the North East about what they experienced during the fires, about what they need right now, and what their priorities are for the future. That's what a community-led recovery and the State Recovery Plan is all about.

The community is at the centre of everything we do in emergency management in Victoria and this must continue throughout the recovery effort.

We must enable and empower individuals and communities to support themselves and each other. This is crucial to preparing for and responding to emergencies and supporting recovery and resilience in the aftermath.

We can all act to improve the resilience of Victorian communities. This Plan sets out those important foundational steps the Victorian Government is undertaking and puts communities in a stronger place to lead their own recovery.

**Andrew Crisp APM**

*Emergency Management Commissioner*



# Message from the CEO of Bushfire Recovery Victoria

The 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires devastated individuals, families and communities. The impacts of the fires were far reaching – on people’s health and wellbeing; on buildings, fences, bridges and roads; Aboriginal culture and Country, local and regional economies, and on our environment and biodiversity. These impacts will be felt for many years to come.

The process of rebuilding and recovery will take years and require the support of partners from across the state, local and Commonwealth governments, businesses, non-government organisations and the community.

As a new permanent and dedicated recovery agency, BRV will work directly with local communities so that they can lead their own recovery. We will ensure those communities are at the front and centre of our recovery efforts, coordinating across all our partners to ensure recovery services and support are integrated, seamless and easy to access.

BRV’s early focus has been on listening to people and providing them the immediate financial, accommodation, wellbeing and other supports that they need, while progressing the

clean-up of buildings damaged and destroyed in the fires. We have established community recovery hubs – one-stop-shops for services and supports in local communities that are staffed by local people. Importantly, BRV also supported the establishment of Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) across the affected communities to ensure locals have a loud voice in driving recovery.

The Eastern Victorian Fires 2019-20 State Recovery Plan (this Plan) presents the Victorian Government’s priorities and actions for the next 12-18 months. It is an account of the services and support the State will provide across the fire affected regions to December 2021. This plan will continue to be updated and subsequent versions will be more reflective of the aspirations and priorities of local communities, as CRCs establish and work with their communities to develop plans to lead their own recovery – which BRV will support every step of the way.

**Lee Miezis**  
*Chief Executive Officer,  
Bushfire Recovery Victoria*

# The Eastern Victorian Fires 2019-20

## The fires

The bushfires that swept through eastern Victoria in the summer of 2019-20 were significant.

Lives were lost, thousands were displaced, and numerous communities were temporarily isolated. The bushfires were unprecedented in being prolonged over many months and occurring alongside bushfires across the eastern seaboard and other parts of Australia:

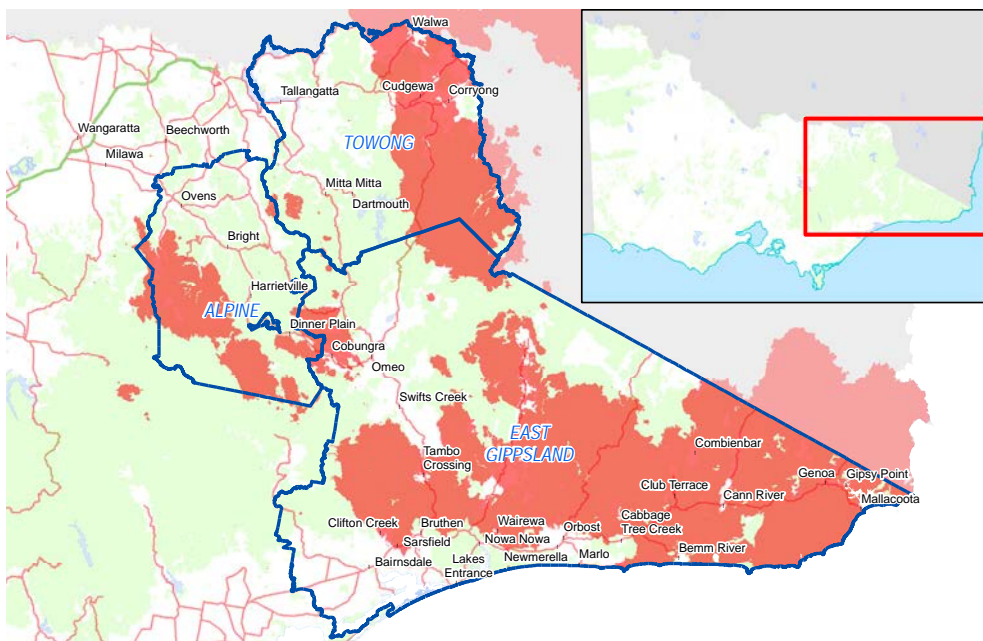
- On 21 November 2019, more than **150 fires** had ignited, with **2,000 firefighters** and **500 trucks** on the ground.

- On 31 December 2019, approximately **4,000 people** were forced to shelter on the Mallacoota foreshore as fire threatened the town. Over the next two days almost **2,000 were evacuated** by air and sea.
- On 2 January 2020, a **State of Disaster** was declared in parts of Victoria that would last ten days.
- More than 60,000 people** are estimated to have evacuated East Gippsland as a result of the warnings and the State of Disaster declaration.

When all significant fires across Victoria had been contained in February 2020, over **1.5 million hectares** had been burnt.

More than half of the East Gippsland LGA was burnt (1.1 million hectares). In Towong LGA, 205,000 hectares were burnt and 187,000 hectares in the Alpine LGA were burnt.

## 2019/20 Bushfire Burnt Area with Local Government Areas



### Disclaimer:

This map is a snapshot generated from Victorian Government data. The State of Victoria does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for error, loss or damage which may arise from reliance upon it. All persons accessing this information should make appropriate enquiries to assess the currency of the data.

0 7.5 15 30 45 60 km

■ Burnt Area



BlazeAid volunteers work on fencing (photo used with permission)

## The impact

The bushfires resulted in far reaching devastation for local people, communities, ecosystems, businesses and infrastructure. The impacts continue to be felt in affected communities and across the state.

Individuals, families and communities who experienced the fires have lived through, and continue to experience, significant levels of distress and anguish. For many, this comes after previous experiences of fire.

The impacts have been particularly acute for Aboriginal Victorians given the deep spiritual connection to and cultural obligation to care for Country. The destruction of Country has taken a significant toll on Aboriginal communities, causing immense grief as bushfires begin to reveal the extent of the damage to the environment, loss of and damage to significant cultural heritage and large numbers of deaths of wildlife, in addition to destroying or damaging the homes of Aboriginal individuals and families.

Habitats and national parks were significantly impacted, with devastating effects for Victoria's biodiversity.

Key regional industries such as agriculture, tourism, forestry and retail were severely affected.

Homes, businesses, community facilities and thousands of kilometres of roads and fences were damaged or destroyed.

## Compounding stressors and COVID-19

Many of the fire impacted areas were already facing pressures from drought and industries in transition. Following the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires all affected communities have experienced further challenges emerging from COVID-19.

The physical distancing restrictions placed on people to help minimise the spread of the virus, paired with job losses and other economic impacts, have further isolated people and compounded existing stressors relating to financial hardship, accommodation, and psychosocial health.

The restrictions have also required a changed approach to the clean-up and operation of the Community Recovery Hubs to ensure services can continue in impacted communities. They have also affected activities that rely on people coming together, such as Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) and tourism.

As we approach the 2020/21 summer bushfire season, many communities are still responding to the twin impacts of the 2019/20 bushfires and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The trauma, health and economic impacts of these continue to be felt deeply.

This plan takes these impacts into consideration.





## Snapshot of impacts

### People & well-being



**5**

people lost their lives



**120+**

communities directly impacted



**313**

homes destroyed or damaged



**2,687**

calls to the BRV bushfire recovery hotline



**1408**

case support cases



**1,371**

evacuees by sea from Mallacoota; 551 by air



**3 LGAs**

were directly affected, and 5 adjacent LGAs were indirectly affected

### Aboriginal culture & healing



**1,000**

Over 1,000 known registered Aboriginal heritage places were impacted within the fire affected areas



**248**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people impacted



**42**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had homes destroyed or unliveable



**14**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander run businesses affected

### Environment & biodiversity



**170**

rare or threatened species have had more than 50% of their habitat impacted by fires



**1.5m ha+ burnt**



**463,000 ha**

of National Parks and other Parks Victoria managed land impacted by the fires



**57%**

of state forest burnt in the three most directly hit LGAs



**\$30m**

at least \$30m in damage to buildings and infrastructure managed by Parks Victoria

\*Please see Appendix B for all sources

## Business & economy



**\$114–  
\$199m**

estimated decline across all industries in Alpine, East Gippsland and Towong



**\$79–  
\$181m**

estimated decline across all industries in Indigo, Mansfield, Wangaratta, Wellington and Wodonga



**\$330–  
\$350m**

in lost tourism revenue in bushfire affected regions between December 2019 and March 2020



**656**

farm infrastructure damaged or destroyed



**22%**

of agricultural land in the fire affected area was burnt



**10,000**

livestock lost



**\$325m**

economic impact on farms in Victoria through loss of assets and production (as at February 2020)



**8,600**

Around 8,600 businesses were within 5km of the fires



**80-100**

fishing and aquaculture businesses impacted



**\$391m**

in cumulative expected production losses by end 2022

## Buildings & infrastructure



**458**

residences damaged or destroyed



**51**

business buildings and community facilities destroyed or damaged



**\$40m**

in damage to agriculture buildings



**6,350 km**

fencing destroyed



**\$69m**

of fencing lost



**1 school destroyed**

(Clifton Creek Primary School)



**1,162**

buildings destroyed, damaged or closed as a result of the fires



**1/3**

A third of homes destroyed in the fires are believed to be uninsured, or underinsured



**742**

properties requiring clean up, as at 26 June



**1,400 km**

Arterial roads closed



**1,500**

road signs and over 14,000 guide posts damaged or destroyed



**4.6 days**

Average lengths of telecommunications outage incidents



**324**

telecommunications facilities in Victoria impacted by fire

# Beginning the journey together

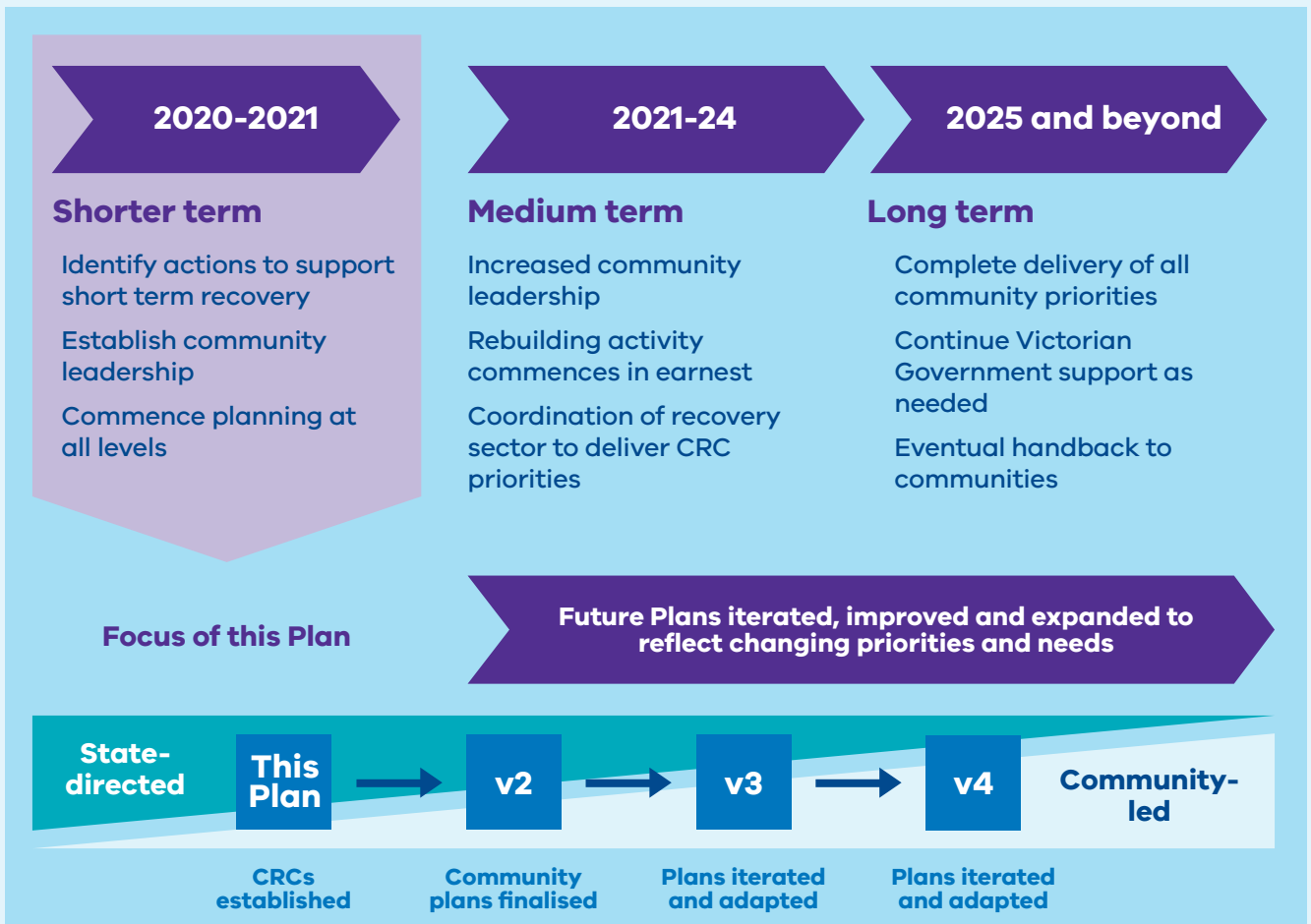
The journey of recovery takes time – sometimes many years. As a permanent agency, Bushfire Recovery Victoria will support people and communities along their recovery journey every step of the way.

Six months on from the fires of December, January and February 2019/20, people are still coming to terms with the fire events and their broad-ranging impacts. The subsequent onset of a one-in-100 year pandemic has made coming to terms with those impacts, coming together as a community and moving forward as a collective that much more difficult.

Successful recovery is community centred, responsive and flexible, and it relies on community engagement to support them to move forward.

Recovery will occur differently in different places and on different timelines – and that’s okay. Community-led recovery is open-ended and not pre-determined, which means ideas are considered and agreed collectively by the community, and activities and priorities are adapted and refined as required.

## A high-level timeline of the recovery journey



## “Community-led” – what does it mean?

One of BRV’s recovery principles is to use community-led approaches.

A community-led approach moves beyond a traditional community engagement method, where the community provides input or is engaged through a process determined by the government.

In practice, this means that BRV and Local Government is supporting the creation of Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) to understand local impacts, identify local priorities and develop a community recovery plan.

BRV will support CRCs to bring their plan to life through funding projects, delivering services and coordinating supports from third parties such as philanthropists and appeal funds.

## The first version of a State Recovery Plan

This Plan is intended to inform a range of recovery activities to occur over the next 12-18 months. It is by no means exhaustive or exclusive – more activities will occur than what appears in this Plan, but what’s in this Plan is what we know is needed six months on from the fire events.

Much of the activity outlined in this plan is State-directed rather than community-led, because of its urgency and because people rightly expect these activities to occur as a matter of course.

Over the coming months, as CRCs are established and find their feet, the community-led model will become more prominent, with locally identified priorities and projects driving government and partner recovery activity. BRV will do everything it can to support communities to deliver the future they determine. The Victorian and the Commonwealth Governments have committed more than \$100 million for funding programs that communities and councils can draw upon to deliver on locally-identified needs. Grant information and guidelines are available at [www.brv.vic.gov.au](http://www.brv.vic.gov.au), with further programs to be added in the near future.

This Plan will be updated a number of times over the coming years to take account of progressive community-led planning and development, as well as further funding outcomes from State and Commonwealth budget processes in future years.









## Delivering through partnership

BRV recognises that the work of recovery can only be effectively pursued through partnerships. All levels of government, businesses and industry associations, charities, volunteer groups and not-for-profits are hard at work making a difference in so many different and valuable ways. The collective endeavours of the recovery sector in Victoria can be harnessed to make a powerful and long-lasting difference for the people and communities affected by bushfires.

The community itself, given voice through CRCs, community clubs and associations, and individuals and families, must remain at the centre in an empowered position to inform and drive the efforts across the whole of the recovery sector.

# Framing the recovery

The significance and scale of the recent bushfires and the need to adjust to elevated fire dangers pose key recovery questions. These are questions BRV is working through in partnership with other levels of government and communities

-  **How** does Victoria recover, rebuild and reconnect communities in the regions impacted by bushfires?
-  **What** are the shared state, regional and local priorities for recovery? How do these priorities link to recovery plans in order to rebuild these communities? What are the recovery outcomes needed to achieve this, and how can we measure progress over time?
-  **What** are the existing activities, strengths, expertise and experience across all layers of government, the community and others that can be brought together in a holistic approach that leverages ongoing and new initiatives?
-  **How** are recovery activities coordinated and delivered across all levels of government and the New South Wales-Victoria border, and with third parties, non-government organisations and the private sector in an integrated manner while keeping community at the centre of the recovery?
-  **How** can impacted communities become stronger and more resilient to support them adjust to the 'new normal' of elevated fire danger?
-  **How** can we coordinate activities across the New South Wales – Victoria border?
-  **How** are lessons and experiences from previous major events identified and considered throughout the recovery journey?
-  **How** does the Victorian Government, through BRV, support community-led recovery given pre-existing stressors impacting affected communities, restrictions and complications (e.g. COVID-19, drought and timber industry transition)?

These questions have guided Victorian Government recovery activities to date and informed the development of the Eastern Victorian Fires 2019-20 State Recovery Plan (this Plan). This Plan, and BRV's Recovery Framework (See [www.br.vic.gov.au](http://www.br.vic.gov.au)) outline a roadmap to answer these questions, and over the coming months and years the Victorian Government will work closely with community, businesses, government and non-government partners to iterate and refine our response.



*Waterside in Mallacoota*

## A whole of government response

Responding to these challenges requires a whole of government response that leverages the expertise and capacities of all Victorian Government agencies.

This Plan describes how the Victorian Government will support the recovery of communities impacted by the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires over the next 12-18 months. This Plan will be updated as the needs of communities continue to be identified and as they evolve throughout the longer-term recovery journey. BRV will work with bushfire-affected communities to help them develop plans that represent distinctive needs at a community level and will continue to incorporate those needs into future iterations of this Plan.

BRV is responsible for coordinating and supporting the state's rebuilding and recovery activities for the areas affected by the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires through a whole of Victorian Government effort—and this plan puts this mandate into action. The agency works closely with affected communities, all levels of government, businesses and non-government organisations to meet recovery needs. This Plan also reflects the agency's awareness of, and planning for, the compounding effect of COVID-19 on bushfire-affected communities during some of the most critical recovery months. The impacts of COVID-19 are likely to stretch into the beginning of the Summer 2020/21 bushfire season and beyond.

This Plan is guided by and intended to be read in conjunction with BRV's Recovery Framework. The Framework provides a consistent and community-led approach for the planning and delivery of recovery activities across five lines of recovery. This Plan therefore comprises five chapters which take a deep dive into each line of recovery.

This Plan also responds to the issues raised in *After the flames: Community Reflections*, prepared by Ken Lay AO APM, then Chair of BRV following his meetings with individuals, communities and businesses impacted by the fires as well as experts, Members of Parliament, State Government Ministers and the Commonwealth Government through the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. *After the flames* summarises these discussions and the Chair's own observations and reflections to support BRV's work into the future.



## BUSHFIRE RECOVERY VICTORIA

**A permanent agency dedicated to a whole of government recovery effort.**

BRV was established on 6 January 2020 as a permanent agency dedicated to working with bushfire-impacted communities to recover.

BRV's role complements the work of Victorian Government departments and agencies by focusing on whole of government coordination and a community-led approach to recovery. See [www.br.vic.gov.au](http://www.br.vic.gov.au)

## RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

**A consistent basis for a whole of government recovery effort. This is underpinned by other recovery frameworks, including the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan.**

BRV has developed the Recovery Framework to guide the response to the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires.

The Framework provides five lines of recovery to guide a holistic and coordinated recovery; principles for effective recovery; and an approach to community-led recovery.

See [www.br.vic.gov.au](http://www.br.vic.gov.au)

## THIS PLAN

**A comprehensive and coordinated plan for a whole of government recovery effort.**

This Plan uses the Recovery Framework as a basis to plan holistic and coordinated support for people and communities affected by the fires.

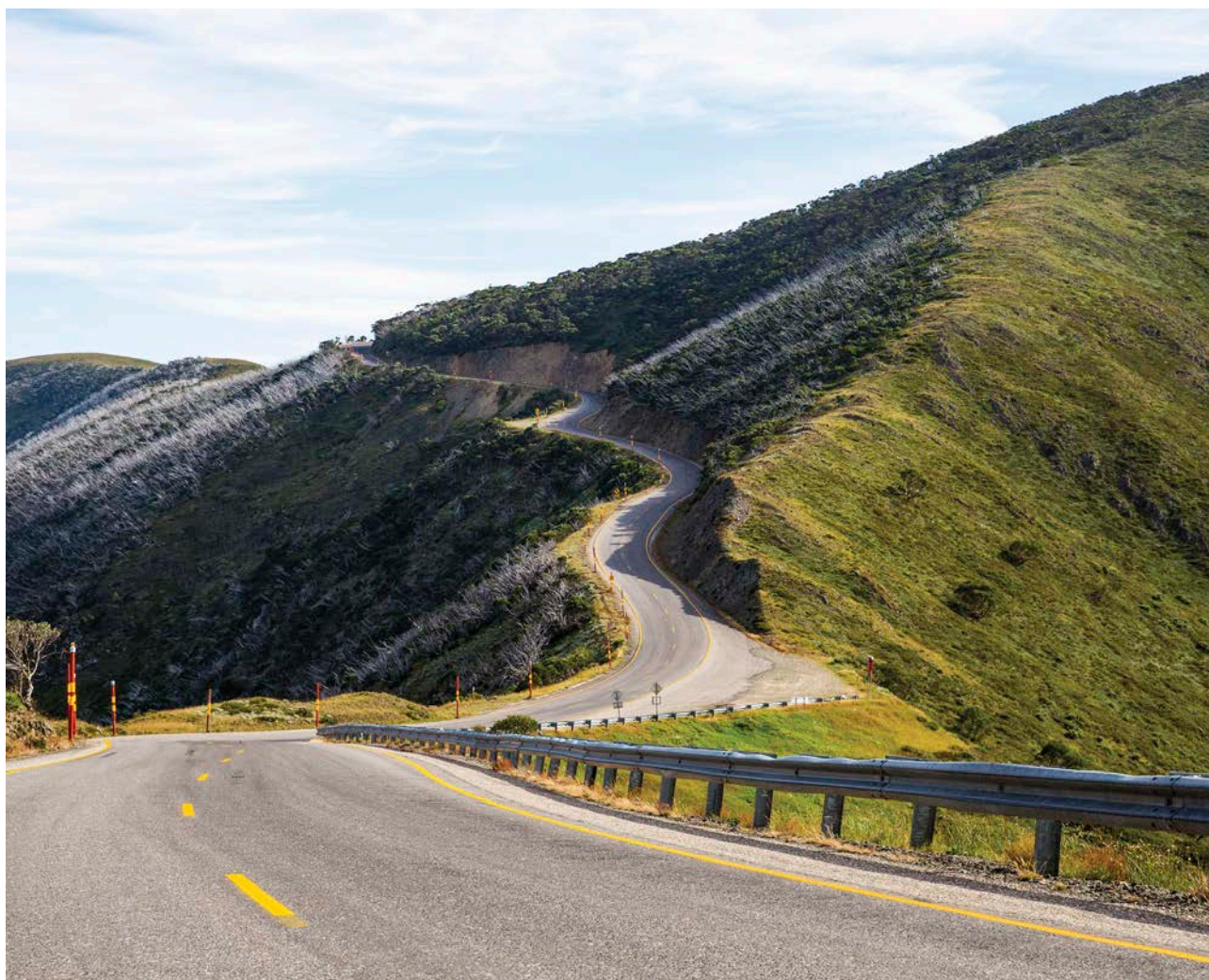
It outlines what the Victorian Government will do in the coming 12-18 months to help communities rebuild and recover.

It also outlines how community priorities will guide funding decisions and delivery of this plan.



# Progress to 30 June 2020

Work is already well underway in assisting bushfire-affected communities to recover. The Victorian Government has invested more than \$360 million towards support for bushfire-affected communities across Victoria – and this will continue to grow as families and businesses access supports. In addition to the emergency response and immediate relief activities conducted during the bushfires, the Victorian government has already conducted a range of recovery activities to help communities in the months since the bushfires. This includes short-term recovery activities that needed to be undertaken immediately, medium-term activities that are already underway, and preparatory activities to enable future recovery or resilience-building work.



*Courtesy of Visit Victoria*

## Some examples of progress to 30 June 2020 include:

### People and wellbeing



Established the Bushfire Case Support Program to support over **1,400 recorded cases**.



Distributed **\$16.9 million** in **Personal Hardship and Assistance Payments** (emergency relief and emergency re-establishment payments).



Drew on the Bushfire Case Support Program to **support the roll out of the Housing Assistance Grant payments scheme** for owner/occupiers and renters whose principle place of residence was either— destroyed severely damaged by the bushfires.



Developed the **Mental Health Bushfire Recovery Package Implementation Plan** (*Bushfire Mental Health Plan*) to commission services for **individual families and communities affected by the bushfires**.

### Aboriginal culture and healing



Established **governance mechanisms** to ensure **Aboriginal ownership and direction** of the recovery journey for Aboriginal communities (e.g. Aboriginal Reference Group).



Released **\$3.5 million** for Bushfire Recovery Grants for Aboriginal communities.



Provided **intensive culturally appropriate case support assistance** to Aboriginal communities.

### Environment and biodiversity



Established the **\$17.5 million** Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery Program



Conducted more than **2,000 wildlife assessments**, including around **270 veterinary assessments**.



Managed pest animals (deer, pigs, feral cattle, fox and goats) in **245,000 hectares** of high priority habitat.



Staged re-opening and re-establishment of access to Cape Conran and other natural visitor destinations (prior to COVID-19 restrictions coming into place).



Released Version 1: *Victoria's bushfire emergency: Biodiversity response and recovery*.



Installed **temporary bridges in partnership** with the Australian Defence Force and other partners at Buchan Caves Reserve, in line with community priorities to open for the March long-weekend.



**Rescued an at-risk population**, temporarily relocated and returned healthy Eastern Bristle birds to Cape Howe.



Re-established **80 per cent** of the Southern Ark predator control program.



Allocated **\$42,000** in funding to **Wildlife Shelters and Carers**.



Allocated **\$900,000** for on-ground works, community education and capacity building projects through Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants.

BRV has also established a range of other processes to prepare for medium and long-term bushfire recovery planning and activities. Community Hubs have been established to coordinate local recovery efforts, while CRCs are in the process of being established to ensure that recovery planning includes bushfire-affected community members directly.

## Business and economy



Released **\$14.6 million** in Small Business Bushfire Support Grants of up to **\$10,000** to **1,457** successful applications.



Released **\$1.7 million** in grants to **65 small businesses** and **non-profits**.



Awarded **\$21.4 million** in **primary industry** grants.

## Buildings and infrastructure



Completed **68 per cent** of clean-up, with more than **1,300 structures** cleared out. Clean-up is on track to be fully completed by the end of August.



Rebuilt **309 kilometres** of fencing with new materials



Distributed over **\$4.4m of fencing grants**, enabling agricultural activity and building resilience for future bushfires.



Completed 454 bushfire hazard assessments



Introduced **permanent planning provisions** to create exemptions for the temporary use and development of land for bushfire recovery



Introduced **new planning provisions** to simplify processes for rebuilding dwellings.



Placed four students from the RMIT School of Global, Urban and Social Studies with East Gippsland Council to work remotely and gain valuable regional experience in bushfire recovery. Now some restrictions have eased, there will also be an opportunity for the students to work in East Gippsland.



**Re-opened all arterial roads**



Managed the **transition** of the **tank flush and fill program** from response/early recovery to normal operations.



Provided **early recovery support** for East Gippsland Water through the purchase of silt-buster machines.

# About this Plan

## Purpose

This Plan describes how the Victorian Government will support the recovery of communities impacted by the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires over the next 12-18 months. It presents a Whole of Victorian Government roadmap for recovery and is written for those involved in recovery. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the Recovery Framework which describes how BRV is planning and delivering its recovery coordination responsibilities.

If you are a community member or business seeking support in fire-affected Gippsland and North East Victoria please:

- Visit the BRV website at [www.brv.vic.gov.au](http://www.brv.vic.gov.au)
- Call the Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program on 1800 560 760 or
- Find your local Community Recovery Hub at <https://www.vic.gov.au/community-noticeboard-bushfire-recovery>

## Scope

This Plan outlines **state priorities and actions** for recovery from the **2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires**. It will be updated as community needs are identified, or as community needs evolve throughout the recovery journey.

This Plan complements and builds on existing recovery policies and procedures, such as the Emergency Management Manual Victoria State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Part 4) and the Resilient Recovery Strategy 2019. It focuses on the next 12-18 months, as further assessment and planning is undertaken, especially at the community level, and medium to long-term recovery activities start.

BRV is working with federal and local governments as well as communities to support their own planning processes. As additional plans are developed, they can be integrated into updates of this Plan. These include:

- Community Recovery Committees' **Community Recovery Plans** that identify local priorities
- **Local Council and Municipal Recovery Plans** that identify priorities within Local Government Areas and regions
- **Victorian Government department plans** that identify department specific priorities
- The Commonwealth Government's **National Bushfire Recovery Plan** that identifies national priorities.

# Structure

This Plan will be guided by the eight recovery principles identified in the Recovery Framework. The principles underpin BRV's approach to community-led recovery. The principles support flexible, locally-driven and locally delivered action and can be applied to deal with complex issues and support needs as required. The principles are:

- Understand the context
- Recognise complexity
- Use community-led approaches
- Coordinated all activities
- Communicate effectively
- Recognise and build capacity
- Strengthen communities
- Ensure an inclusive approach.

This Plan is structured around the *Recovery Framework's* five **Lines of Recovery**. More detail on why these were chosen is available in the *Recovery Framework*.

These five overarching priorities provide a lens to ensure recovery planning is holistic and coordinated across different areas of government:

This Plan comprises **chapters for the five Lines of Recovery**, each outlining:

- A lead department
- Recovery priorities
- Actions



# Vision and outcomes

The impacts of the bushfires were devastating on individuals, families, communities and businesses. The compounding effects of COVID-19 at a time when communities and businesses were commencing their recovery journey has added additional pressure on our regions and state.

Until now, BRV's focus has been on supporting Victorians to recover from the immediate impacts of the fire: ensuring people are housed, fed and warm; commencing clean up and reconnecting services; supporting businesses to re-open and encouraging visitors; understanding the scale of the impact on our natural environments and re-locating threatened species, and supporting Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people in the affected regions to recover and thrive beyond the fire event.

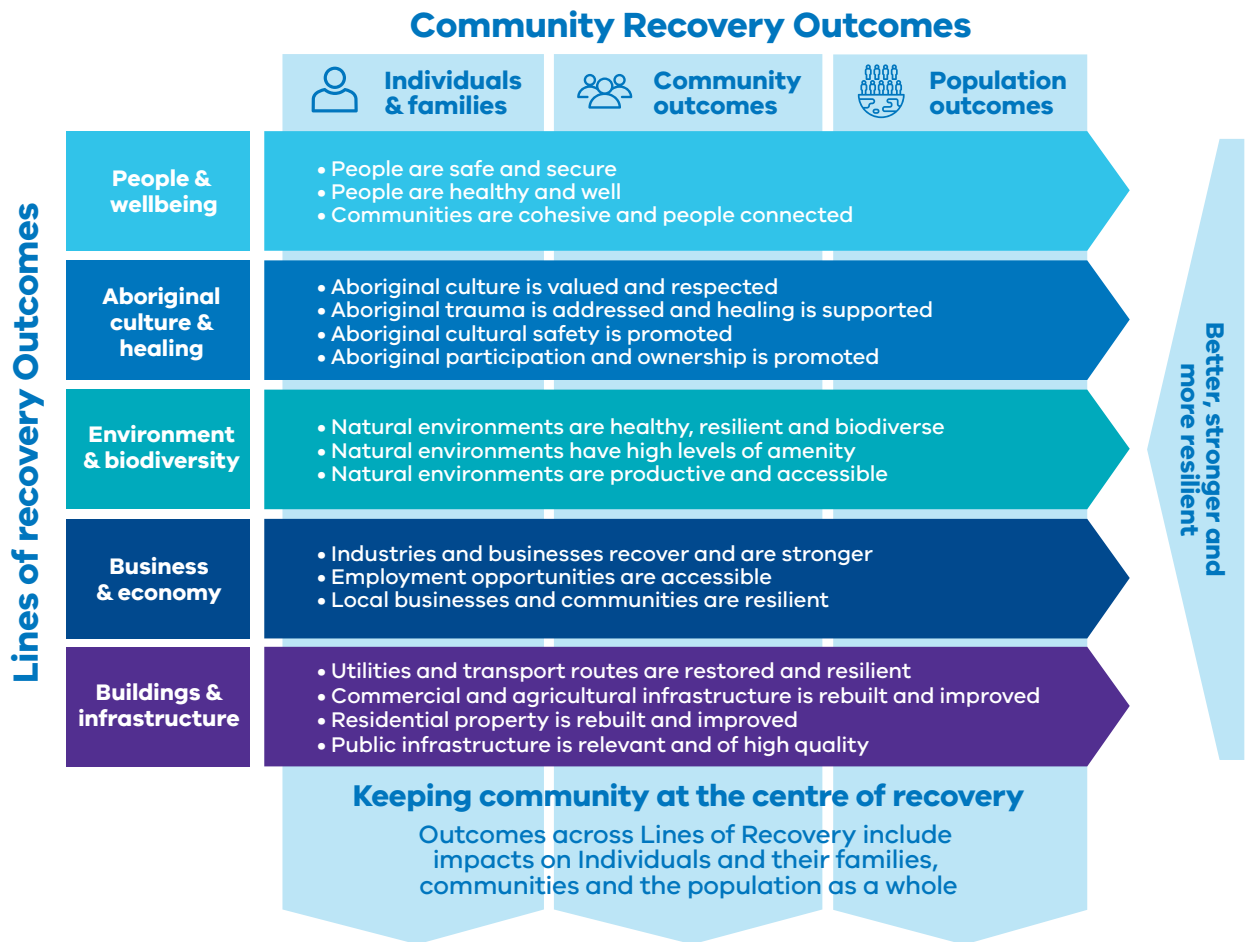
Now, the agency's focus will shift to considering how to strengthen our communities and where BRV wants to be in the medium and longer-term. BRV's vision for Victoria's recovery from the 2019-20 bushfires is to be better, stronger

and more resilient in order to respond to elevated fire threats in future, while also responding to the compounding effects of COVID-19 and the prolonged drought. This vision is a long-term vision and will take many years to be realised. It will require coordinated partnerships across the Victorian Government and with Local Councils, the Commonwealth Government and other partners. It will involve coordinating not just bushfire recovery initiatives, but also aligning to COVID-19 recovery initiatives. Most importantly, it will be led by the priorities and needs of bushfire affected communities through local Councils and CRCs.

The long-term outcomes outlined in the Recovery Framework define this vision (see Figure 1). These outcomes align to the Victorian Government's priorities<sup>1</sup> in health, jobs, education and transport to ensure recovery is coordinated and cohesive. They also have regard to the outcomes outlined in the Resilient Recovery Strategy which set an agreed direction to guide the Victorian Government's recovery programs and service.

1. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/our-priorities/>

**Figure 1: Long-term recovery outcomes**



While the long-term outcomes are aligned to Victorian Government priorities, community-led recovery drives the implementation of this plan. Over the coming months, draft outcomes indicators will be developed in consultation with communities to identify when we have achieved these outcomes. BRV and Victorian Government departments and agencies use an outcomes-based approach to monitoring and evaluation to determine the impact of recovery programs. This is aligned to the expectation in the *Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*<sup>2</sup> that all sector organisations have a role in assurance, and the use of outcome measurement.

The line of recovery chapters in this plan focus on the priorities used to guide the next 12-18 months to December 2021, and the actions BRV will undertake to work towards this long-term vision as outlined in Figure 2 below. These priorities have been developed by Line of Recovery working groups in consultation with community. BRV will continue to work with CRCs to define their recovery objectives and refine these priorities and indicators. These will be developed and iterated as necessary to ensure community-led recovery planning.

**Figure 2: Aligning long-term outcomes and 2020-2021 priorities**



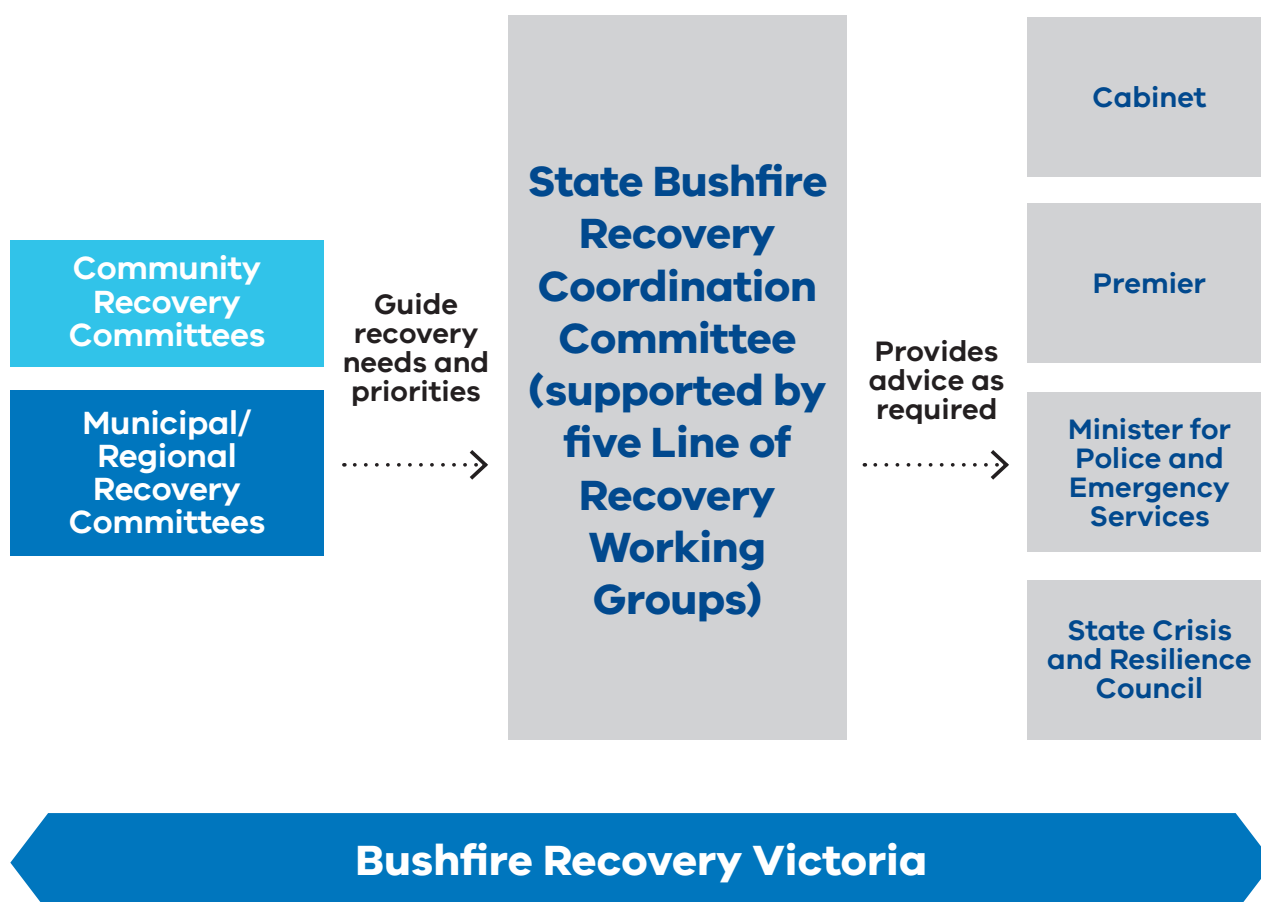
2. Inspector General for Emergency Management, 2019, Assurance Framework for Emergency Management, State of Victoria, September.

# Implementing this plan

## Roles and responsibilities

This Plan brings together and leverages the capabilities of local communities, local governments, Victorian Government departments and agencies, the Commonwealth Government and experts. Future iterations of this Plan will be informed and complemented by municipal/regional and community recovery plans as they are developed.

BRV coordinates and oversees the implementation of this Plan through the following key mechanisms.





Recovery is being planned and will be implemented using community-led approaches, as per the Recovery Framework. **Community Recovery Committees** (CRCs) are the primary mechanism for both understanding community needs and implementing effectively within communities. They will keep local voices, know-how and expertise front and centre during recovery planning and delivery. In this next phase of recovery, BRV will begin the transition from leading recovery activities to providing funding and support to CRCs to help them operate effectively, implement local recovery actions and lead their own recovery.

**Local Government and Municipal/Regional Recovery Committees**, will also provide clear directions to BRV on the needs and priorities of communities as we implement this Plan, and develop future iterations of this Plan.

The **State Bushfire Recovery Coordination Committee** (SBRCC) oversees the delivery and coordination of recovery activities outlined in this plan, supports agencies to undertake

their responsibilities and resolves cross-government strategic issues. SBRCC includes senior representatives from BRV and across government. As required, SBRCC provides advice to the **Cabinet and the State Crisis and Resilience Council** (SCRC) (which includes Secretaries from each Victorian Government Department, the Chief Commissioner of Policy and the Emergency Management Commissioner) on this Plan’s implementation and the recovery needs and priorities of Victorian communities.

SBRCC is supported by five **Line of Recovery working groups**, which include executives from relevant Victorian Government departments and external stakeholders. Their role is to guide the effective implementation of recovery activities, connect initiatives with department recovery services, and foster partnerships with government and non-government stakeholders.

Several advisory groups also provide advice as required:

Advisory Group	High-level terms of reference
<b>Bushfire Recovery Aboriginal Reference Group</b>	<p>To set the agenda and inform bushfire recovery efforts to support Aboriginal communities, and elevate the voices of Aboriginal communities to the Victorian Government.</p> <p>This group comprises representatives from a number of Aboriginal-led organisations (see Aboriginal Culture and Healing chapter for more detail on this group).</p>
<b>Minister’s Special Advisory Council on Bushfire Recovery</b>	<p>To provide expert strategic advice to the Minister on the planning and delivery of recovery activities.</p> <p>This group comprises senior government and non-government stakeholders.</p>
<b>Industry and Worker Advisory Group</b>	<p>To provide advice to BRV on local employment, worker safety and the procurement of goods and services to ensure that recovery and rebuilding activities also help to support local industry, create good local jobs and support skills development where possible.</p> <p>This group comprises representatives from unions and business associations.</p>
<b>State Federal Recovery Consultative Group</b>	<p>To facilitate collaboration and coordination between states and territories and the Commonwealth Government, drawing on the expertise of all jurisdictions to support the 2019-20 bushfire recovery effort.</p>

# Bushfire Recovery Victoria's role to deliver this Plan

BRV has an opportunity as a permanent recovery agency to deliver on this Plan and to support a sustainable, ambitious and coordinated approach to long-term recovery for the communities affected by the 2019-20 bushfires.

BRV is focused exclusively on recovery and supporting communities every step of the way across several key areas, including:

- **System steward and coordinator:** BRV will lead the recovery effort and support coordination, cohesion and accountability across the Victorian Government (including the intersection with COVID-19 recovery initiatives).
- **Commissioning agency:** BRV will commission activity as agreed through SBRCC.
- **Delivery:** BRV will lead delivery where the activity is not core business for a department (e.g. clean-up).
- **Coordinator of funding and effort:** BRV will coordinate funding and activities across tiers of government and line of recovery working groups, rather than along departmental lines. This also involves maintaining the institutional knowledge of what works in bushfire recovery, and the lessons learnt, to build resilience and be prepared for and leading recovery from future fire threats.
- **Coordinator of community solutions:** BRV will provide a single point of contact to support local Councils and communities design, fund and deliver their plans.
- **Architect for community-led recovery and service delivery:** BRV will support a community-led approach to recovery, drawing on national and international best practice. This will ramp up as this Plan is implemented, and in future iterations of this Plan.

BRV has also established and is operating in line with the vision of this Plan to support communities. BRV is recruiting and procuring locally in bushfire-affected communities as much as possible, and putting Victorian businesses and workers first in its procurement and purchasing through application of the Local Jobs First policy.

## Implementation arrangements

In its role as system steward, BRV is responsible for ensuring clear implementation arrangements with a focus on delivery, funding, and monitoring and evaluation.

**Delivery** of this Plan is supported by five cross-departmental line of recovery working groups. These groups are responsible for coordinating delivery activities within their line of recovery across Commonwealth, Victorian Government Department, regional/municipal and community plans. They are also responsible for ensuring recovery is community-led and focused on community priorities.

**Funding** for recovery activities across State, Local Council and CRC plans is coordinated by BRV across the Victorian Government and delivered through grants programs and Regional Recovery Committees. EMV administers the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) in Victoria, through the Natural Disaster Financial Assistance Team.

**Monitoring and evaluation** of recovery activities is undertaken by BRV, with support from responsible departments. Monitoring and evaluation will be aligned to the long-term recovery outcomes articulated in the Recovery Framework and the priorities outlined in this Plan. They will also meet the requirements of the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs. More detail on this approach can be found in BRV's Recovery Framework.

# Prioritisation and funding

From 5 January 2020 the Victorian Government began to announce funding to support recovery for communities, local economies and the environment impacted by the fires. The Government has committed more than \$360 million so far (at 3 July 2020), with a range of initiatives now underway delivering support to individuals, families, businesses and regions. This includes a \$2 million donation to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal.

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments also agreed to jointly fund a range of support measures under the DRFA including clean-up of all affected properties, personal and financial assistance, \$68.6 million for local economic recovery priorities and an \$86 million Community Recovery Package.

Further joint funding to support municipal and CRC identified priorities will be delivered through regional recovery committees.

Initiatives in this Plan will be funded through these announcements and individual departments.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal also delivers support for bushfire recovery, with \$36.4 million raised by 30 June 2020. The Appeal supports medium to long term community recovery initiatives recommended by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel, chaired by the former Victorian Deputy Premier Pat McNamara. The Appeal also delivers direct financial assistance to individuals and families affected by the fires, enables boundary fencing replacement through BlazeAid and delivers support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Support for bushfire recovery in Victoria is also provided by regional and national not-for-profit organisations, such as the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund and the Salvation Army, many of whom have raised funds through public appeals.

Bushfire and COVID-19 recovery activities will need to be coordinated. BRV will work closely with other Victorian Government agencies to ensure COVID-19 and bushfire recovery activities and funding are coordinated.

Appendix A includes a list of grants and prioritisation commitments led by the Victorian Government to support bushfire recovery.

## COVID-19 impacts

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on bushfire-affected communities, as these communities are still recovering from the compounding effects of the bushfires and long-term drought. Physical distancing requirements have added to the challenges these communities are facing, resulting in an extended stabilisation focus in preparation for the shift in focus to growth or resilience.

The delivery of some recovery services, including through the Regional Recovery Hubs, has necessitated a focus on alternative delivery modes, including online and phone service delivery. It has also compounded the need for safe and affordable accommodation to ensure that individuals and families can engage in physical distancing in private accommodation.

The temporary closure of Victoria's regional tourism industry, as well as hospitality and recreational businesses, has had a significant economic impact. Social distancing requirements also resulted in the cancellation of several events planned to stimulate economic activity. This has significantly constrained economic recovery from the bushfires, which has in turn led to increasing unemployment, financial insecurity, and health and wellbeing risks.

Specific recovery projects have also been delayed, for example the volunteer reconstruction of fencing led by BlazeAid, the in-person operations of Community Recovery Hubs, and a range of environment and biodiversity impact assessments.

A range of programs have been established to address the challenges of COVID-19, including the Victorian Government's \$2.7 billion Building Works Package and the Commonwealth Government's JobSeeker and JobKeeper programs. While these are not specifically targeted at bushfire recovery, they will still go towards addressing related problems for bushfire-affected communities, in particular economic impacts.

The Victorian Government also set up a COVID-19 Aboriginal Community Taskforce in April 2020 to inform the government's coordination of services to Aboriginal Victorians, which includes Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and departmental representatives. BRV will work with the Taskforce in delivering this Plan to ensure coordination of activities in bushfire-affected areas.

## Cross-border impacts

The location of the fires impacted many individuals and families living and working across the border. This has raised the need for equitable and convenient access to appropriate services, regardless of which side of the border an individual or family resides. This is especially relevant for Aboriginal communities, as Traditional Owner group boundaries don't align with state borders.

The 2019-20 bushfire season also highlighted some specific challenges with emergency management, relief and recovery, for example:

- Emergency services radio frequencies were not aligned across state borders, which added to the challenge of emergency relief as fire teams could not easily communicate with each other.

- The Safer Neighbourhood Places program evacuation points for some Victorian towns are in NSW, leading to coordination challenges – especially for people trying to get back once road closures were implemented.

We are actively working with NSW on cross-border coordination of recovery efforts, for example through the establishment of cross-border CRCs at Walwa and Jingelic.

The Victorian Government will explore how services can be tailored to the needs of people living and working near the border in order to:

- Ensure an easy and pragmatic approach to service delivery so individuals or families residing close to borders do not miss out on receiving the help they need and access to services to facilitate their recovery.
- Extend access to community events supported by the Victorian Government to rebuild community cohesion and reduce the risks of individuals or communities being isolated.
- Engage local community networks to understand the support required for people living and working across the border.
- Allow access to bushfire support programs for businesses that may be registered as businesses in other states, but have a majority of customers in Victoria.
- Maintaining transport links to support the interstate supply chain.



BlazeAid volunteers (photo used with permission)

# Next steps

This Plan covers recovery activities that have already commenced or will commence in the next 12-18 months. This Plan will be regularly updated to reflect changing community needs. The next steps in recovery planning are to support community-led recovery, monitor outcomes, identify clear funding pathways and to prepare for the future.

## Supporting community-led recovery

The Victorian government will consult with bushfire-affected communities and update this Plan accordingly to ensure that recovery planning is community-led, in line with the Recovery Framework. The priorities in this Plan for each Line of Recovery will be tested and refined to ensure they reflect community priorities.

BRV, together with relevant Commonwealth, State government departments and local Councils, will support CRCs to develop their own recovery plans, with clear local priorities. BRV has established a fund of \$6 million to support communities to develop community recovery plans. Municipal and community plans will then inform future updates to this Plan to support a holistic, community-led approach to recovery efforts.

## Monitoring outcomes

Over the next six months, BRV will also develop an Outcomes Framework to monitor recovery activities. As part of this, BRV will work with local Councils, CRCs and the Aboriginal Reference Group to define the success indicators for the long-term outcomes identified in the Recovery Framework.

## Identifying funding pathways

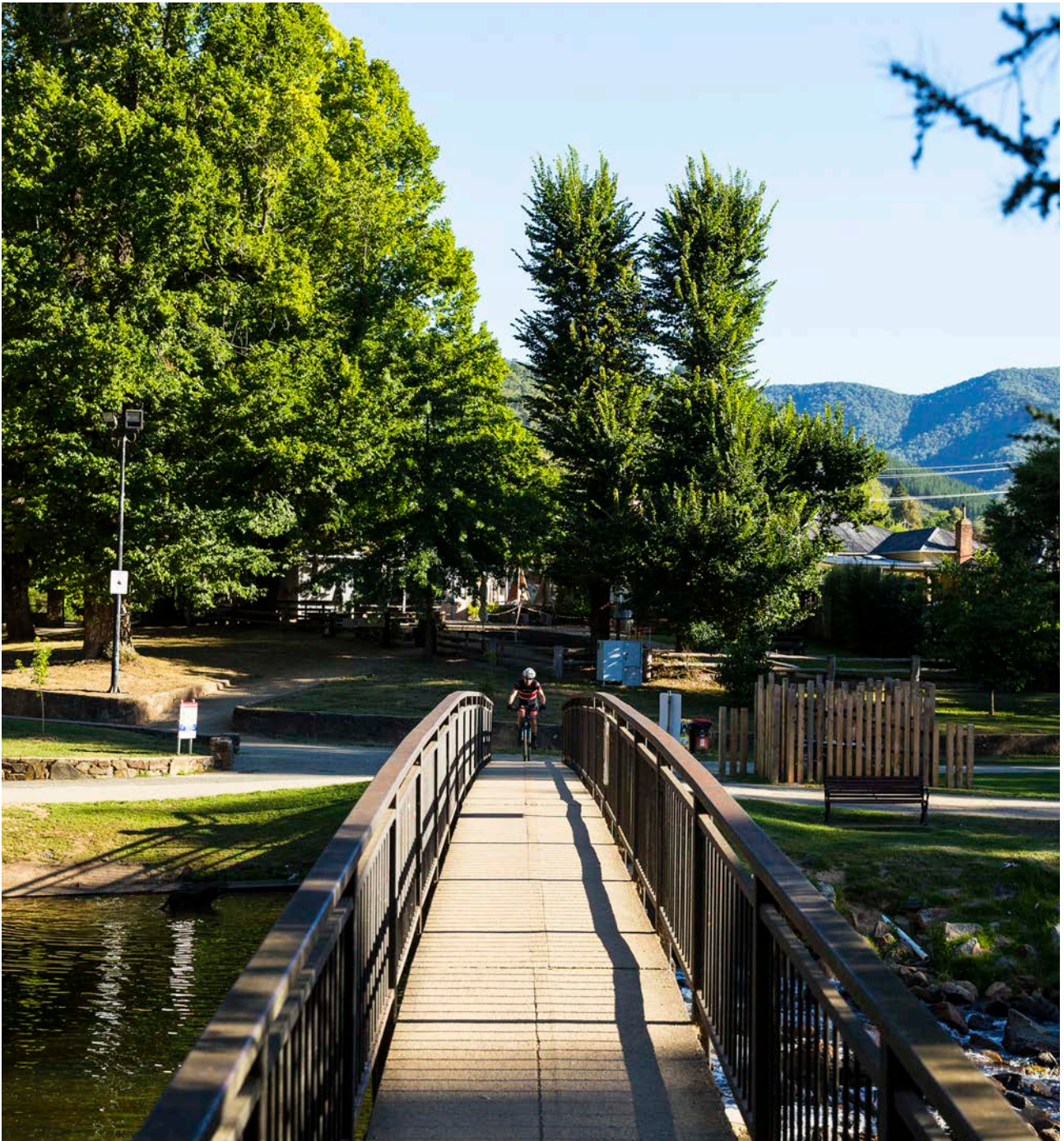
With the release of this plan BRV will also increase its efforts to work with local Councils, CRCs and Victorian government departments to implement planned recovery activities. BRV will play a central role in identifying the right funding sources for proposed recovery activities in CRC and municipal plans to ensure that they can be carried out effectively. BRV will also coordinate across all stakeholders to ensure recovery activities are executed in a prioritised and efficient way that meets the needs of communities.

BRV will directly administer over \$100 million for community-led recovery initiatives (\$68.6 million through the Local Economic Recovery program funds and \$32 million through Community Recovery funding). This will be available for community-led initiatives developed by CRCs, local Councils, or other local or regional bodies. Once these groups develop recovery plans with clear priorities, proposals that align to funding guidelines may be funded directly at the community level, or may be escalated to municipal, regional or state level funding, depending on the initiative's size and complexity. Regional Recovery Committees will have oversight of triaging, escalating and implementing these investments, while BRV will work across Victorian government to support communities in identifying funding. Proposals that identify new types of recovery activities that are outside the scope of existing funding sources will be collated for consideration in the following year.

## Preparing for the future

The release of this Plan and subsequent consultations is also the right time to start explicitly preparing communities for the upcoming 2020-21 bushfire season. Resilience against bushfires has already been improved, and will continue to be improved through recovery activities in the coming months. For example, water treatment plants for North East Water at high bushfire risk sites will have their energy resilience improved to ensure water services can be maintained.

However, the upcoming bushfire season will be a new source of stress and potential trauma for communities that will have experienced more than a year of significant challenges through drought, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also the potential for above average rainfall predicted in Victoria over the coming months, which could result in flood activity. Planning activities must account for these additional challenges and consultations with affected communities will be an opportunity to do so.



*Courtesy of Visit Victoria*

# This Plan

## **The State Recovery Plan comprises five chapters for the five Lines of Recovery:**

- People and wellbeing
- Aboriginal culture and healing
- Environment and biodiversity
- Business and economy
- Buildings and infrastructure

## **Each of the following chapters will outline for its Line of Recovery:**

- A lead department
- Recovery priorities
- Actions

## Snapshot of this Plan

### Our outcomes

- People are safe and secure
- People are healthy & well
- Communities are cohesive and people connected
- Aboriginal culture is valued and respected
- Aboriginal trauma is addressed and healing is supported
- Aboriginal cultural safety is promoted
- Aboriginal participation and ownership is protected
- Natural environments are healthy, resilient and biodiverse
- Natural environments have high levels of amenity
- Natural environments are productive and accessible

### Our priorities to December 2021



- People have timely access to accommodation in appropriate and affordable housing, and all people, including social housing and residential service clients, are supported in their transition or return to permanent housing
- All people, including those in isolated and vulnerable communities, are supported and empowered to overcome financial hardship and to manage their financial recovery, with the assistance of financial counselling and access to legal assistance
- Individuals and communities are aware of, and have access to, appropriate psychosocial support services which are tailored to unique recovery needs, strengthen resilience and are available to isolated and vulnerable people and communities.
- Communities have access to public health advice and support to enable people in these communities to make decisions regarding their own health and to access timely, safe and appropriate medical assistance.
- Children, young people and families have access to adequate and appropriately tailored psychosocial support services. These services are accessible to isolated and vulnerable children, young people and families including those with complex of different needs, CALD and families at risk of family violence.



- Cultural heritage is identified and safeguarded through Country mapping projects and improved data collection methods and interpretation.
- Vulnerable Aboriginal heritage places are protected from bushfires and/or fire management activities.
- The knowledge and understanding that Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities have of Country is acknowledged and respected, and included in recovery planning.
- Aboriginal communities living in the affected areas receive funding to deliver health, mental health and wellbeing activities as determined by the communities themselves.
- Aboriginal communities are supported to prosper through economic initiatives, including strengthening Aboriginal workforce participation, Aboriginal business ownership and resilience and economic development.



- Traditional Owners lead healing and recovery.
- Priority species and habitats have reduced immediate risks to survival.
- We have a strong understanding of the full biodiversity impacts of the fire and have identified strategic priority areas for for action and future work.
- Threats to species and habitats are managed and resilience of species and habitats is increased.
- Biodiversity preparedness and response functions are improved through deeper knowledge and enhanced integration.
- Coordination of wildlife recovery activities are improved across government, non-government organisations and the community.
- Priority waterways and catchment assets are repaired to protect water quality and the natural environment
- Natural habitats are restored.
- We have increased capacity to collect, store and grow threatened flora.
- Climate ready restoration methods are used to restore and/or ecologically renovate natural habitats
- Community knowledge is incorporated and community are resourced to deliver environment and biodiversity recovery.
- Nature-based visitor experiences and sites are re-established in consultation with community and Traditional Owners.
- The community can access firewood.
- The community has confidence that the impacts of the bushfires on economic, environmental, social and Traditional Owner values have been appropriately assessed and incorporated into future forest management.



- **Industries and businesses recover and are stronger**
- **Employment opportunities are accessible**
- **Local businesses and communities are resilient**

- **Utilities and transport routes are restored and resilient**
- **Commercial and agricultural infrastructure is rebuilt and improved**
- **Residential property is rebuilt and improved**
- **Public infrastructure is relevant and of high quality**



- Regional business, including Aboriginal businesses, and primary producers affected by the bushfires:
  - have resumed operations, where feasible
  - are recovering without ongoing financial support
  - are gaining confidence to invest and grow
  - are better prepared for challenges and economic shocks.
- Regional visitor numbers and tourism expenditure have, where feasible, returned to pre-bushfire levels or better
- Unemployment, underemployment and workforce participation have improved at the same rate as other regional areas
- Regional economies are becoming stronger and more resilient:
  - local industries are more competitive and starting to attract talent
  - declining sectors are identified and transition is supported
- Strategic and transformative economic infrastructure investment safe made in regions affected by bushfires
- Local community and business networks are becoming more connected, organised and collaborative.



- Communities have permanent planning provisions (temporary dwellings, streamlined planning controls and building regulations) in place to assist communities to rebuild and improve resilience to future fires
- Communities can navigate the approvals process, reducing the stress of rebuilding.
- Landowners are supported, informed and aware of rebuilding costs in bushfire-impacted communities.
- Local councils have the resources to effectively lead local recovery planning.
- A reduction in time and cost from engaging community in design/rebuild with industry.
- Transport infrastructure and networks are fully restored to at least the state they were before the bushfires.
- The transport network is more resilient to bushfires in the future.
- Restoration and improvement of water services and infrastructure.
- Improvement to septic systems and water tanks is integrated into the rebuilding of infrastructure.
- Communities feel supported when responsible for their own water management.
- Water Corporations build the resilience of their systems to future bushfire impacts.
- Restoration of energy and telecommunications services are supported
- NBN Co is supported to connect Mallacoota to the NBN
- Landowners are assisted as required to resolve any connection issues with providers
- Coverage and resilience of Victoria's telecommunications network in bushfire and disaster-prone areas is supported.
- Restoration and improvement of damaged and dangerous overground electricity lines is supported.
- Restore and improve damaged and dangerous overground electricity lines.
- Debris is cleaned up to enable rebuilding.
- Community Recovery Committees are supported to identify and prioritise the restoration of community / public buildings and further infrastructure investment.
- Critical infrastructure is assessed and rebuilt.
- Victorian Heritage Register sites impacted by bushfire are managed.
- Fencing advice and assistance is effectively communicated to impacted individuals.
- Funding support received by property owners who share a boundary with national park, state park and state forest.
- Fencing program for national park, state park and state forest boundary fencing successfully implemented



Mitta Mitta Community members

## People and Wellbeing Recovery

### State lead department: Department of Health and Human Services

This chapter outlines the priorities and activities that will enable people to be safe, healthy and connected. The scale and depth of community need continues to emerge following the 2019-2020 Eastern Victorian bushfires, as individuals, families and communities work towards recovery.

The effects of COVID-19 have also created compounding impacts on people's health, economic wellbeing and even service delivery models. The priorities and activities in this plan will be updated in the coming months and years to reflect these changing needs.

This Plan contributes to the long-term recovery of the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and to reduce vulnerability through improved resilience to future disasters.

### The long-term people and wellbeing outcomes seek to ensure:

People are **safe** and **secure**  
People are **healthy** and **well**  
Communities are **cohesive** and **people connected**

## Recovery priorities

To focus efforts over the next 12-18 months the agency has developed recovery priorities structured around five people and wellbeing areas. These priorities will guide actions over the next 12-18 months of recovery to support achievement of long-term outcomes. The priorities are:

<b>Housing and accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People have timely access to accommodation in appropriate and affordable housing, and all people, including social housing and residential service clients, are supported in their transition or return to permanent housing.</li></ul>
<b>Individual and household financial assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All people, including those in isolated and vulnerable communities, are supported and enabled to overcome financial hardship and to manage their financial recovery, with the assistance of financial counselling and access to legal assistance.</li></ul>
<b>Psychosocial recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All individuals and communities are aware of, and have access to, appropriate psychosocial support services which are tailored to unique recovery needs, strengthen resilience and are also available to isolated and vulnerable people and communities.</li></ul>
<b>Health and medical assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communities have access to public health advice and support to enable people in these communities to make decisions regarding their own health and to access timely, safe and appropriate medical assistance.</li></ul>
<b>Children, youth and families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children, young people and families have access to adequate and appropriately tailored psychosocial support services. These services are also accessible to isolated and vulnerable children, young people and families including those with complex or different needs, CALD and families at risk of family violence.</li></ul>

## Case study: Bushfire Case Support Program

A farming family lost their primary residence along with farm machinery, outbuildings, water tanks and fences in the East Victorian Bushfires. After the fires the family requested and received case support from the Bushfire Case Support Program.

The case manager made successful referrals to several organisations including the Lion's Club and Anglicare that resulted in contributions for a generator and a water tank that will enable the family to remain on the farm. Other donations have seen the family slowly build up items for their home. More recently the case manager connected the family with an initiative for the donation of second-hand tools.

The case manager also provides ongoing grant information to support the family to identify and access eligible grants. For example, to be placed on a list for a temporary modular home or vouchers for supermarkets. The case manager also supported the family to access the Victorian Government \$25,000 housing assistance payment.

Through the Bushfire Case Support Program, the family has stated they feel they are not alone on this journey and feel connected and supported. Looking ahead, the family is keen to continue working with the case manager to rebuild and refurbish their future new home.



*Cattle in paddock affected by fires*

# Actions

A strong focus on partnerships between Victorian Government Departments, local government, community service organisations and the health sector has enabled the early achievement of several significant actions outlined in this plan.

This Plan provides an overview of the recovery actions planned to commence in the short and medium term within the next 12-18 months. Funding details are in Appendix A.

## Housing and accommodation

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Housing is damaged or destroyed leaving people displaced in unstable or insecure accommodation.</b>	Provide emergency, short-term and medium-term accommodation assistance for displaced residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate between government and non-government stakeholders to coordinate accommodation options to assist people secure emergency, short-term and medium-term accommodation. (PW1.1)</li> <li>Install modular dwellings on properties in fire affected areas. (PW1.2)</li> <li>Introduce regional recovery coordinators to support development and implementation of accommodation response (covered through separate funding). (PW1.3)</li> </ul>	People have timely access to accommodation in appropriate and affordable housing, for as long as they require and all people, including social housing and residential service clients, are supported in their transition or return to permanent housing.	Medium term	PW1
	Continue exploring options for rent relief and financial support, including for those experiencing the compounding effects of COVID-19. (PW2.1)		Ongoing	PW2
	Work with existing networks of homeless community organisations and support services to meet the needs of the homeless community in fire affected regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide assistance to access emergency and short-term accommodation. (PW3.1)</li> <li>Provide case support to assist with the development of a plan for transition to permanent housing. (PW3.2)</li> </ul>		Ongoing	PW3
<b>Residents want to return to permanent and stable housing as soon as possible.</b>	Support households to prepare housing transition plans to transition back to permanent housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage insurance and real estate agencies in this initiative (PW4.1)</li> <li>In partnership with the Victorian Building Authority and Local Councils, provide building maintenance and safety information to affected households (PW4.2)</li> <li>Utilise support offered by Community Housing Agencies to prepare plans for transition to permanent housing (PW4.3)</li> </ul>		Ongoing	PW4
<b>Vulnerable people (social housing and residential services tenants) require additional support.</b>	Waive rent for eligible social housing tenants for up to 12 weeks. (PW5.1) Provide access to information and advice about home and contents insurance. (PW5.2) Continue to offer existing support programs for residential services clients, including making information available about COVID-19 that is open and accessible. (PW5.3)		Ongoing	PW5

## Individual household and financial assistance

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>People experience hardship following impacts on businesses and employment</b>	To assist No-interest loan scheme (NILS) clients impacted by the bushfires and support streamlined access for new clients in affected areas, work with relevant NILS providers to implement the hardship initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renegotiate loan repayment terms or defer loan repayments. (PW6.1)</li> <li>• Apply to write off the loan amount if the loan item has been destroyed and there are no other options available. (PW6.2)</li> <li>• Access a loan of up to \$2,000 with streamlined documentation requirements. (PW6.3)</li> </ul>	All people, including those in isolated and vulnerable communities, are supported and enabled to overcome financial hardship and to manage their financial recovery, with the assistance of financial counselling and access to legal assistance.	Ongoing	PW6
	Provide access to information for individuals and families impacted by the fires on insurance, income protection and available financial assistance programs. (PW7.1)		Ongoing	PW7
<b>People experience hardship following impacts on businesses and employment</b>	This includes assistance to determine options, support loss of critical paperwork, loss of homes or damage to property and management of existing legal matters (PW8.1)		Short term	PW8
<b>Isolated and vulnerable communities experience difficulties to access food</b>	Support to mitigate food insecurity by monitoring food supplies in isolated and vulnerable communities and partner with community organisations to coordinate food relief arrangements, as required. (PW9.1)		Ongoing	PW9
<b>Limited access to critical resources</b>	Support Maternal and Child Health (MCH) frontline practitioners to provide additional/ replacement early parenting resources such as cots, prams, car seats and sterilizer machines for families affected by bushfire. (PW10)		Ongoing	PW10

## Psychosocial recovery

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<p><b>People have experienced psychosocial trauma which impacts their physical and mental wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Provide a Bushfire Case Support Program to help people impacted by the fires to access: counselling; mental health and psychosocial supports, financial counselling, assistance on accessing grants and accommodation and housing. (PW11.1)</p> <p>Review the Bushfire Case Support Program to build the capability of the program to support people impacted by the fires across the breadth of their needs. (PW11.2)</p>	<p>All individuals and communities are aware of, and have access to, appropriate psychosocial support services which are tailored to unique recovery needs, strengthen resilience and are also available to isolated and vulnerable people and communities.</p>	Medium term	PW11
	<p>Provide counselling and mental health support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and health service providers to ensure that counselling and mental health services meet the needs of individuals and families. (PW12.1)</li> <li>• Increase availability of counselling services including through more online, phone and off-line options. (PW12.2)</li> <li>• Provide community resilience training and develop the capabilities of the health and wellbeing workforce to deliver these services. (PW12.3)</li> <li>• Expand service offerings for general psychosocial supports tailored to the needs of different demographic population groupings (e.g. Aboriginal communities, farmers, older people). (PW12.4)</li> <li>• Ensure access to specialist mental health services in line with the agreed local pathways (PW12.5)</li> </ul>		Ongoing	PW12
	<p>Provide public communications and information sessions to help communities understand the impacts of trauma, self-care strategies and caring for others, connected with the bushfires and arising from the compounding impacts of COVID-19. (PW13.1)</p>		Ongoing	PW13
	<p>Provide tailored psychosocial support for key population groups by working with partners to identify specific needs, referrals and support services for: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and impacted tourists from Victoria, Australia and overseas. (PW14.1)</p>		Ongoing	PW14
<p><b>Loss of community cohesion and connectedness leads to increased stress and anxiety</b></p>	<p>Support access to tailored bereavement, grief and loss services through the case support program. (PW15.1)</p>	Ongoing	PW15	
	<p>Provide funding for a range of community-based initiatives through the Bushfire Mental Health Plan to promote health and wellbeing, early intervention, community inclusion, social connectedness and social recovery capital. (PW16.1)</p>	Medium term	PW16	

## Health and medical assistance

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>There are ongoing public health risks associated with the bushfires</b>	Provide public health communications relating to food safety and water supply, air quality, pollution and waste, asbestos risks, fire retardants and copper chrome arsenate in ash. (PW17.1)	Communities have access to public health advice and support to enable people in these communities to make decisions regarding their own health and to access timely, safe, appropriate and effective medications as needed.	Ongoing	PW17
<b>Communities need assistance to re-establish safe and healthy environments where people live and work</b>	Undertake enhanced monitoring and risk assessments of air quality, water quality, food and water security and other related risks, in partnership with other government departments. (PW18.1)		Ongoing	PW18
	Provide advice and information services to recovery agencies, Local Councils and the community on the environmental and public health impacts of pollution and waste, environmental clean-up methods, and appropriate disposal of waste (PW19.1)		Ongoing	PW19
<b>Individuals and families need safe access to search for remaining artefacts in properties destroyed in disaster</b>	Provide Personal Protective Equipment kits and work with Victorian Government Departments and Local Councils to provide relevant safety information to support people to safely recover keepsakes from damaged or destroyed properties. (PW20.1)		Complete, but ongoing as needed	PW20
<b>Potential increases in demand for health and medical services, now, or in future</b>	<p>Work with primary and acute health services and General Practitioners to ensure they are aware of potential increases in demand and coordinate additional health support if required. (PW21.1)</p> <p>Ensure that primary care services and telephone helplines have accurate and timely advice and understand available referral pathways for clients. (PW21.2)</p>	Ongoing	PW21	



## Children, youth and families

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<p><b>Psychosocial support needs vary for individuals and communities impacted by the emergency</b></p>	<p>Provide family violence and sexual assault services and information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with specialist Family Violence Services and other key stakeholders to raise awareness of a possible increase in family violence referrals, including the possible compounding impact through COVID-19. (PW22.1)</li> <li>• Provide training in family violence awareness to BRV staff in regional areas, hub staff and local shire and bushfire case support staff. (PW22.2)</li> <li>• Monitor increases in demand for family violence services and facilitate additional support and information on referral pathways to specialist family violence services. (PW22.3)</li> <li>• Provide therapeutic interventions tailored to address recovery (PW22.4)</li> <li>• Support research to study the impacts of disaster on gender-based violence (PW22.5)</li> <li>• Support local councils in affected areas to deliver primary prevention initiatives. (PW22.6)</li> </ul>	<p>Children, young people and families have access to adequate and appropriately tailored psychosocial support services. These services are also accessible to isolated and vulnerable children, young people and families including those with complex or different needs, CALD and families at risk of family violence.</p>	Ongoing	PW22
	<p>Ensure psychosocial support for children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information and initiatives tailored to the needs of children and young people impacted by the bushfires. (PW23.1)</li> <li>• Provide support for children and adolescents, and their mental health needs, through DHHS Maternal and Child Health, playgroup and parenting services. (PW23.2)</li> <li>• Coordinate dedicated pathways to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. (PW23.3)</li> <li>• Provide mental health support in government and non-government schools, including additional psychologists and social workers (PW23.4)</li> <li>• Provide a Trauma Recovery Team to provide the trauma response support to affected schools and kindergarten services (PW23.5)</li> </ul>		Ongoing	PW23
	<p>Support parents and families to help their children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide post-disaster mental health information and training sessions for parents. (PW24.1)</li> <li>• Provide screening and assessment training for early childhood development professionals. (PW24.2)</li> <li>• Issue child-specific communications for children and young people.(PW24.3)</li> <li>• Provide family therapy training for mental health clinicians. (PW24.4)</li> <li>• Provide community development, health and wellbeing programs such as; sporting, exercise, art, youth connection programs and urban camps. (PW24.5)</li> </ul>		Medium-long term	PW24
<p><b>Support is needed to ensure that school leadership teams are adequately supported in their psychological preparedness and bushfire planning.</b></p>	<p>Strengthen the resilience, capability and capacity of schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deploy place-based recovery teams to coordinate recovery and preparedness for bushfire-impacted schools. (PW25.1)</li> <li>• Target wellbeing and emergency management teams in bushfire-impacted schools and Area to undertake professional learning regarding bushfire planning and psychosocial preparedness. (PW25.2)</li> </ul>		Short-term	PW25



Regrowth along Betka Road, Mallacoota

## Aboriginal Culture and Healing Recovery

### State lead agency: Aboriginal Victoria

This chapter is designed to ensure Aboriginal Victorians and Traditional Owners in bushfire affected areas thrive beyond the recovery of the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires.

[The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023](#) (the VAAF) is the Victorian Government's overarching framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians, organisations and the wider community to drive action and improve outcomes. BRV is committed to the VAAF and to advancing Aboriginal self-determination, supporting healing and promoting cultural safety through recovery efforts. Through this chapter, Aboriginal communities are placed at the centre of their recovery journey. This chapter enables specific responses that are underpinned by Aboriginal self-determination principles to meet the needs and aspirations of individuals, communities, organisations and Traditional Owner groups for the next 12-18 months.

This includes support for Traditional Owners of areas without formal recognition.

Consistent with the principles in the Recovery Framework of "community-led" and "ensuring an inclusive approach" Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Community Organisations in the affected areas will lead recovery, through the Bushfire Recovery Aboriginal Reference Group (the Reference Group).

Aboriginal Culture and Healing is an evolving line of recovery. Initial governance arrangements have been established through the Reference Group (see below). Going forward, BRV will work with the Aboriginal Culture and Healing Working Group and the Reference Group to:

- Establish and build the capacity of Aboriginal CRCs to lead local recovery
- Refine and iterate the alignment of local Aboriginal recovery priorities and implementation plans
- Agree indicators to measure recovery progress

Actions implemented through this Plan will be aligned to Victorian Government policies and procedures, and [Aboriginal and Traditional Owner engagement frameworks](#).

## Bushfire Recovery Aboriginal Reference Group

Aboriginal Victoria and BRV have been working closely with the Reference Group formed after the fire event. The Reference Group is chaired by Matthew Burns, Chief Executive Officer of Taungurung Land and Waters Council and includes representatives from:

- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)
- Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- Far East Gippsland Traditional Owner Representative/s
- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC)
- Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal Healing Service
- Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland Inc
- Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association (LEAHA)
- Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service
- Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (LTAT)
- Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
- First Peoples Assembly of Victoria (North east member)
- Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation
- Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS)

The Reference Group is critical to setting the agenda and informing bushfire recovery efforts to support Aboriginal communities and elevating the voices of Aboriginal communities to the Victorian Government. Chief Executive Officer, GEGAC, Jamie Williamson, has been appointed as the Reference Group's representative to the Special Advisory Council on Bushfire Recovery (SAC), chaired by Ken Lay. The Reference Group also informs BRV, local and regional mechanisms and the Aboriginal Culture and Healing Recovery Working Group.

## Aboriginal Culture and Healing Working Group

The Aboriginal Culture and Healing Working Group (the Working Group) is chaired by the Executive Director, Aboriginal Victoria and comprises membership of senior representatives from DELWP, Parks Victoria, DJCS, DJPR, DHHS and DET. The purpose of the Working Group is to foster relationships, provide guidance, and initiate and connect initiatives for bushfire recovery to ensure that:

- Aboriginal culture is prioritised
- Trauma is addressed and healing is supported
- Cultural safety is promoted; and
- Aboriginal workforce participation, Aboriginal business ownership and resilience and economic development is strengthened.

The experiences of Aboriginal Victorians and communities have often been overlooked in disaster recovery, with little focus on gathering evidence that considers the impacts of bushfires on Aboriginal people. Insufficient or inappropriate engagement and consultation also leads to ineffective recovery responses.

This chapter commits to actions that are culturally safe, inclusive and respond to the particular needs of Aboriginal Victorians and Traditional Owners. The actions are focused on delivery in the next 12-18 months and will enable Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to be adequately resourced to respond to the disaster and deliver recovery initiatives into the future.

For Aboriginal Culture and Healing, the vision is to ensure that Aboriginal Victorians are supported to flourish through the practice of cultural knowledge systems that inform their physical, mental, wellbeing and spiritual health.

### The long-term Aboriginal culture and healing outcomes seek to ensure:

Aboriginal **culture** is **valued** and **respected**  
Aboriginal **trauma** is addressed, and **healing** is supported  
Aboriginal **cultural safety** is promoted  
Aboriginal **participation** and **ownership** is promoted

## Recovery priorities

Aboriginal Victorians are supported to flourish through the practice of cultural knowledge systems that inform their physical, mental, wellbeing and spiritual health. This line of recovery prioritises cultural engagement with education; respect for land practices; connection to land, water and wildlife; and strengthened representation in the workforce.

While some actions relating to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians are integrated across other chapters, to focus efforts over the next 12-18 months recovery priorities have been developed for the Aboriginal Culture and Healing chapter, structured around two areas. These priorities will guide actions over the next 12-18 months of recovery to support achievement of long-term outcomes:

Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultural heritage is identified and safeguarded through Country mapping projects and improved data collection methods and interpretation.</li><li>• Vulnerable Aboriginal heritage places are protected from bushfires and/or fire management activities.</li><li>• The knowledge and understanding that Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities have of Country is acknowledged and respected, and included in recovery planning.</li></ul>
Aboriginal community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aboriginal communities living in the affected areas receive funding to deliver health, mental health and wellbeing activities as determined by the communities themselves.</li><li>• Aboriginal communities are supported to prosper through economic initiatives, including strengthening Aboriginal workforce participation, Aboriginal business ownership and resilience and economic development.</li></ul>



Izaiah and bushfire support worker, Cathy (photo used with permission)

## Case study: A Resilient Recovery Journey

During the bushfires, Megan was evacuated from her home in Cabbage Tree Creek in late-December. She went to NSW where she stayed with her 18 year old son, Izaiah, and his father, but after being evacuated a further two times, the family left for Sydney where they had other relatives.

Izaiah and his father's house in NSW was destroyed by the fires, so Izaiah planned to live with Megan. Because of the road closures, Megan and Izaiah were unable to return home to Victoria until early February.

On their return, they found that the bathroom had been destroyed due to debris, ash and rain collecting in the roof gutters. A bushfire support worker from Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC), Cathy, was able to support the family with a GEGAC Appeal Grant to assist with the bathroom repairs. GEGAC received funding from BRV for bushfire support workers and flexible family support packages.

Izaiah was new to the area and unsure what to do in his bushfire-ravaged community. GEGAC assisted him to access Centrelink's Youth Allowance and supported him to

apply for a Certificate 3 in Conservation and Land Management. GEGAC's bushfire support worker coordinated funding for his enrolment through the Statewide Children's Resource Program and provided funding for safety boots and clothing required for the course through GEGAC's flexible family support packages. Now that he is enrolled, GEGAC is also supporting him to transfer to Abstudy for the duration of his course.

Through the bushfire support worker, the family was also supported to access a range of other collaborative supports from other organisations; firewood to keep the family warm during winter; donated toys and a referral to an art therapy program that supports people to cope with stress and traumatic experiences.

Megan and Izaiah are very happy with the support they have received from the bushfire support worker, not just for immediate recovery from the bushfire, but also by providing Izaiah with an opportunity to engage in further education. Izaiah also has aspirations to learn "cold burning" traditional land management methods and to work with the Country Fire Authority to apply these skills.

# Actions

This chapter has been developed by BRV and the Aboriginal Culture and Healing Working Group, informed by the priorities of the Reference Group and in consultation with Victorian Government agencies.

Other chapters of this Plan also refer to actions to support Aboriginal recovery. This includes:

- Provide tailored psychosocial support for key population groups by working with partners to identify specific needs, referrals and support services for: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and impacted tourists from Victoria, Australia and overseas. (PW14.1)
- Provide targeted recovery support for Aboriginal businesses and the associated creation of employment pathways (BE2.6)
- Support for Gippsland Aboriginal Economic Strategy undertaken by the GunaiKurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation (BE5.2)
- Support for Traditional Owner reading and healing activities to identify culturally significant species and habitats (EVB 5.1 and EVB5.2)

This Plan provides an overview of the recovery activities planned to commence in the short and medium term within the next 12-18 months. Funding details are in Appendix A.



Local businesses in Cann River

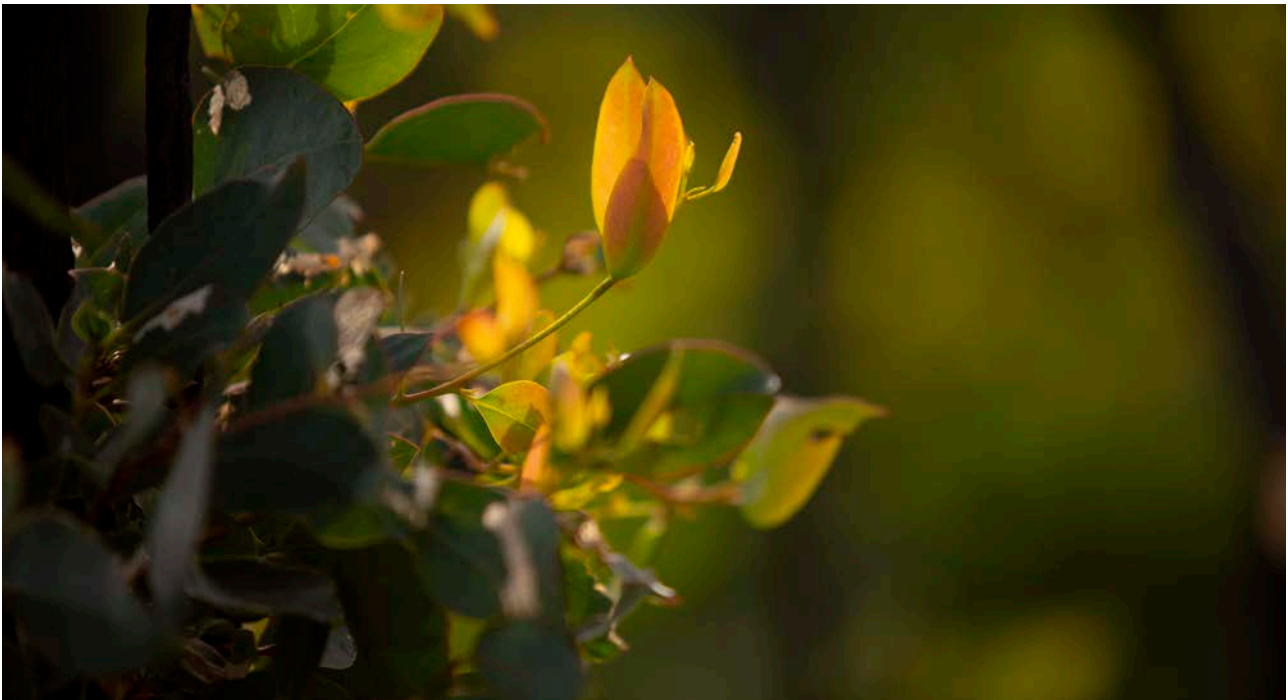
## Cultural heritage

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<p>Previously unknown cultural heritage sites have potentially been exposed due to the removal of vegetation from the landscape by the bushfire.</p> <p>Damage to Aboriginal cultural heritage from the fire</p> <p>Aboriginal cultural heritage is valued and respected</p>	<p>Led by Traditional Owners, identify culturally significant species and heritage areas, and the impact of fire and fire management on these through "Reading Country" assessments in the Hume region (e.g. Burrowa Pine Mountain) and Gippsland (priority sites to be identified) (ACH1.1)</p>	<p>Previously unidentified Aboriginal cultural heritage identified, assessed rehabilitated and protected.</p>	<p>Medium term</p>	<p>ACH1</p>
<p>Processes have impacted upon Traditional Owners being meaningfully engaged in fire recovery.</p>	<p>Leverage off existing Traditional Owner engagement frameworks to ensure all Traditional Owners are involved in the assessment, rehabilitation and ongoing management of land - particularly the cultural values.</p> <p>The Framework will include a coordination point between government and the Aboriginal community to ensure seamless engagement in fire recovery, and to minimise duplication, particularly from community perspective. (ACH2.1)</p>	<p>Traditional Owners meaningfully engaged in bushfire recovery.</p> <p>Empowering Aboriginal communities to self-determine and lead appropriate responses.</p> <p>Stronger and more resilient Aboriginal communities</p> <p>Building cultural capability of the Victorian Government to respond to the needs of Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>Aboriginal participation and ownership is promoted</p>	<p>Medium term</p>	<p>ACH2</p>
<p>Loss of information about unknown Aboriginal places throughout fire-affected area; loss of traditional knowledge and a missed opportunity to improve understanding of the Aboriginal history of the fire-affected area.</p>	<p>Led by Traditional Owners, undertake "Healing Country" activities across Victoria to design and implement Country mapping projects. (ACH3.1)</p>	<p>Traditional Owners meaningfully engaged in bushfire recovery.</p> <p>Strengthening relationships between land management agencies and Traditional Owners, including knowledge and skills sharing.</p>	<p>Medium term</p>	<p>ACH3</p>
<p>Cultural sites have been significantly impacted by the fires, particularly while emergency stabilisation and rehabilitation works are being undertaken and there is limited data, funded capacity and protection processes impacting Traditional Owners ability to immediately respond</p>	<p>Provide resourcing to support Aboriginal communities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and lead Country mapping projects (ACH4.1)</li> <li>Collect data and information (ACH4.2)</li> <li>Process and interpret data (ACH4.3)</li> <li>Protect Ancestral Remains (ACH4.4)</li> <li>Build the capacity of Traditional Owner organisations and groups and strengthened relationships with public land managers. (ACH4.5)</li> <li>Ensure information collected is recorded and reported in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. (ACH4.6)</li> </ul>		<p>Medium term</p>	<p>ACH4</p>

## Aboriginal community support

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living in affected areas.</b>	Provide funding to the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to coordinate the establishment of additional Social and Emotional Wellbeing teams at ACCOs in bushfire-affected regions. (ACH5.1)	The Social and Emotional Wellbeing teams in each ACCO will provide supports to Aboriginal people in bushfire affected communities through a range of delivery modes including face-to-face (post COVID-19), telephone and internet-based programs.	Medium term	ACH5
<b>Processes have impacted upon Aboriginal community being meaningfully engaged in fire recovery activities.</b>	Ensure all bushfire recovery activities promote meaningful and long-term employment and business opportunities to Aboriginal Victorians. (ACH6.1)	Promote long term Aboriginal workforce participation.	Medium term	ACH6
<b>Recovery efforts require culturally appropriate and community-led responses to support Aboriginal communities to recover.</b>	Embed the Bushfire Recovery Aboriginal Recovery Reference Group into BRV's formal structure and support the Reference Group to gradually move to state-wide focus. (ACH7.1)	This will embed an Aboriginal focused lens to respond to bushfires in the future	Short-medium term	ACH7
<b>Recovery efforts require culturally appropriate and community-led response to support Aboriginal communities to recover.</b>	Support Aboriginal Community Strengthening and Healing Initiatives through development and delivery of a culturally appropriate and community-led response to support the psychosocial well-being of individuals, families and communities who have experienced trauma as a result of bushfire. (ACH8.1)	Embedding self-determination in bushfire recovery for Aboriginal communities.	Medium term	ACH8
<b>Lack of clarity in relation to funding available for bushfire impacted Aboriginal communities</b>	Co-ordinate funding opportunities across all agencies. (ACH9.1)	Funding sourced to support bushfire affected Aboriginal communities and reduced administrative burden with increased coordination between all agencies.	Short-medium term	ACH9
<b>Delays in ensuring adequate and timely response to support Aboriginal communities through crisis.</b>  <b>The Aboriginal community sector was heavily impacted throughout the bushfire crisis and continues to shoulder a disproportionate burden through increased access to services.</b>	Support and develop the capacity of the ACCO sector to create a crisis management plan to support Aboriginal communities and ensure culturally appropriate responses to crises and particularly to enhance future mitigation and planning for bushfires. (ACH10.1)  Support loss of revenue, reimbursement for disproportionately increased pressures on the Aboriginal community sector and their staff. (ACH10.2)	Aboriginal community are prioritised, and immediate response is community led and culturally safe.  Aboriginal specific funding supports for bushfire mitigation and ensure Aboriginal voices are leading bushfire management solutions for the future.  Building resilience of the sector to continue to support Aboriginal communities and ensure ongoing access to services.	TBC	ACH10
<b>Aboriginal infrastructure and housing stock require funding to better prepare for future emergency situations, particularly bushfire mitigation.</b>	Establish Aboriginal specific funding supports for bushfire mitigation and ensure Aboriginal voices are leading bushfire management solutions for the future. (ACH11.1)	This will deliver support to plan and build infrastructure working towards future bushfire mitigation.	TBC	ACH11





*Regrowth after bushfire*

## Environment and Biodiversity Recovery

### State lead department: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

The 2019/20 fires were exceptional in size and impact, with significant impacts on wildlife and the natural environment. This chapter recognises that under climate change we are entering a new phase in terms of the scale and complexity of managing fire impacts on biodiversity. We have seen multiple large-scale active fires since 2000, with increasing proportions of areas burnt – in many cases multiple times in the same area. This increasing

risk necessarily expands the context in which resilience building and mitigation must be framed. For the environment and biodiversity, recovery is therefore understood as recovery from the impacts of the fires, as well as adaptation and resilience-building to mitigate the impacts of future fires.

This Plan contributes to the long-term recovery of the environment and biodiversity. The long-term outcomes reflect that environment and biodiversity recovery takes time. The challenge for custodians and managers of land and waterways is to use the best available science and knowledge to take the right actions, in the right places to the right scale to best assist recovery.

### The long-term environment and biodiversity outcomes seek to ensure:

Natural environments are **healthy, resilient** and **biodiverse**

Natural environments have **high levels of amenity**

Natural environments are **productive** and **accessible**

## Recovery priorities

To focus efforts over the next 12-18 months recovery priorities have been developed, structured around two environment and biodiversity areas. These priorities were developed to align with municipal and departmental recovery plans. Implementation of the actions will include further consultation with the community. This will ensure actions are aligned to community needs and priorities, as well as state and Local Council environment and biodiversity priorities.

These priorities will guide actions over the next 12-18 months of recovery to support achievement of long-term outcomes

### Biodiversity and wildlife

- Traditional Owners lead healing and recovery.
- Priority species and habitats have reduced immediate risks to survival.
- A strong understanding of the full biodiversity impacts of the fire is developed, to identify strategic priority areas for action and future work.
- Threats to species and habitats are managed in a way that increases resilience of species and habitats.
- Biodiversity preparedness and response functions are improved through deeper knowledge and enhanced integration.
- Coordination of wildlife recovery activities are improved across government, non-government organisations and the community.
- Climate-ready restoration methods are used to restore and/or ecologically renovate natural habitats.
- Increased capacity to collect, store and grow threatened flora.
- Translocation programs are enhanced to increase the resilience of threatened wildlife.

### Natural environment, land and waterways

- Priority waterways and catchment assets are repaired to protect water quality and the natural environment.
- Community knowledge is incorporated and communities are resourced to deliver environment and biodiversity recovery.
- Timely re-establishment of nature-based visitor experiences and sites, in consultation with community and Traditional Owners.
- The community can access firewood.
- The community has confidence that the impacts of the bushfires on economic, environmental, social and Traditional Owner values have been appropriately assessed and incorporated into future forest management.

## Case study: Southern Brown Bandicoot Rescue

Many species were heavily impacted by these fires and will require ongoing actions to prevent their loss from the ecosystem. In particular, those species with small, isolated and declining populations. It is important to build the long-term resilience (i.e. ability to recover) of species and ecological communities across the state.

The Southern Brown Bandicoot lives in southern South Australia, southern Victoria and eastern New South Wales. They occur in

Victoria in small, isolated and declining populations. East Gippsland is a stronghold in Victoria and many were heavily impacted by the fires. Through the Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery program, funding has been received for the first phase of a project to establish the population in an open-range predator-free site. This will also improve the genetic fitness and resilience of the species by spreading the mix of the gene-pool across more locations.



*A Southern Brown Bandicoot*

# Actions

The Victorian Government has worked with partners from local government and state government agencies, species experts, academics and land managers to prioritise and commence recovery. In particular, work is underway with communities to identify and action early priorities (e.g. access to Buchan Caves) or staged openings informed by community expectations (e.g. Cape Conran). Longer term activities such as considering how best to manage the landscape to reduce the risk and intensity of fires is recognised but not included in this initial recovery plan.

This Plan provides an overview of the recovery activities planned to commence in the short and medium term within the next 12-18 months. Funding details are in Appendix A.

## Biodiversity and wildlife

The following actions are part of the \$25.5 million Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery Program (BBRR). Funding for this has been provided through the Victorian Government (\$22.5 million) and complimented by funding through the Federal Government's Wildlife and Habitat package (\$3 million). The \$0.9 million Victorian Government Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants will support further community and Traditional Owner projects. Continuation of this initial recovery work will require additional funding.

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Biodiversity has been impacted and is at further risk by loss of habitat.</b>	Undertake the immediate reconnaissance of critical fauna, flora and key habitats to support recovery actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key unburnt areas for conservation protection (EVB1.1)</li> <li>Create off-stream temporary ponds to support large brown tree frog recovery (EVB1.2)</li> <li>Create artificial habitats for hollow-using birds and mammals in East Gippsland (EVB1.3)</li> </ul>	A strong understanding of the full biodiversity impacts of the fire is developed to identify strategic priority areas for future work.  Priority species and habitats have reduced immediate risks to survival.	Short term	EVB1
<b>Displaced and injured wildlife need care to reduce biodiversity loss.</b>	Support wildlife welfare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a Wildlife Welfare Roundtable (EVB2.1)</li> <li>Improve systems for intelligence gathering, reporting and monitoring of injured wildlife in real time (EVB2.2)</li> <li>Enhance systems for the deployment and coordination of wildlife responders and volunteers (EVB2.3)</li> <li>Develop Wildlife Rehabilitation Guidelines (EVB2.4)</li> </ul>	Coordination of wildlife recovery activities are improved across government, non-government organisations and the community.  Biodiversity preparedness and response functions are improved through deeper knowledge and enhanced integration.	Medium term	EVB2
<b>Vulnerable plants and animals need specific protection measures to survive.</b>	Undertake emergency extraction to prevent extinction and limit species decline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake prioritisation and emergency extraction, housing or seed banking and other actions to protect animal and plant populations. (EVB3.1)</li> <li>Establish infrastructure to support emergency extraction activities. (EVB3.2)</li> </ul>	Priority species and habitats have reduced immediate risks to survival.	Short to medium term	EVB3
<b>Non-native flora and fauna are a threat to the survival and recovery of native species.</b>	Provide intensified and sustained threat management through predator, herbivore and weed control. (EVB4.1)	Threats to species and habitats are managed in a way that increases resilience of species and habitats.	Medium term	EVB4

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Traditional Owners feel the damage to Country deeply.</b>	<p>Maximise long term resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate Traditional Owner Reading of Country to identify culturally significant species and habitats and understand impacts. (EVB5.1)</li> <li>Facilitate Traditional Owner Healing of Country. (EVB5.2)</li> </ul>	Traditional Owners lead healing and recovery.	Medium term	EVB5
<b>Vulnerable plants and animals need specific measures to increase resilience to future events.</b>	<p>Maximise long term resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a safe haven network of ecological refuges across the state. (EVB6.1)</li> <li>Establish revegetation and reseedling programs. (EVB6.2)</li> <li>Spread risk by establishing new plant and animal populations and improved fitness of existing populations. (EVB6.3)</li> </ul>	<p>Climate ready restoration methods are used to restore and/or ecologically renovate habitats.</p> <p>Increased capacity to collect, store and grow threatened flora.</p> <p>Translocation programs are enhanced to increase the resilience of threatened wildlife.</p>	Medium term	EVB6
<b>Biodiversity knowledge is critical to improving species' resilience to future events.</b>	<p>Commence a program of scientific knowledge, data and program management that aligns with the Biodiversity 2037 Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide strategic guidance for direct interventions in critical fauna populations. (EVB7.1)</li> <li>Improve systems and data management. (EVB7.2)</li> </ul>	<p>A strong understanding of the full biodiversity impacts of the fire is developed to identify strategic priority areas for future work.</p> <p>Biodiversity preparedness and response functions are improved through deeper knowledge and enhanced integration.</p> <p>Community knowledge is incorporated and community are resourced to deliver environment and biodiversity recovery.</p>	Medium term	EVB7
<b>The fires significantly impacted biodiversity requiring protection targets to be revised.</b>	<p>Prepare and issue a State of the Environment biodiversity update report, in response to the Bushfires. (EVB8.1)</p>	<p>Biodiversity preparedness and response functions are improved through deeper knowledge and enhanced integration.</p> <p>The community has improved understanding and is actively contributing to flora, fauna and habitat recovery.</p>	Medium term	EVB8
<b>Community capacity to contribute to environment and biodiversity recovery is severely hampered by a lack of resources.</b>	<p>Facilitate people's recovery in fire affected communities, along with the broader Victorian community, by engaging in activities consistent with biodiversity conservation. (EVB9.1)</p>	<p>Community knowledge is incorporated and community are resourced to deliver environment and biodiversity recovery</p>	Medium term	EVB9

## Natural environment, land and waterways

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Community capacity to contribute to environment and biodiversity recovery is severely hampered by a lack of resources.</b>	Establish a Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants program for both public and private land: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$10,000 for eligible individuals (EVB10.1)</li> <li>\$30,000 for environmental volunteer organisations (EVB10.2)</li> <li>\$50,000 for volunteer-based environmental networks (EVB10.3)</li> </ul>	Community knowledge is incorporated and community are resourced to deliver environment and biodiversity recovery.  Climate ready restoration methods are used to restore and/or ecologically renovate natural habitats.	Short-medium term	EVB10
<b>Biodiversity has been impacted and is at further risk by loss of habitat.</b>	Restore bushfire affected waterways and catchments by repairing priority natural assets. (EVB11.1)	Priority waterways and catchment assets are repaired to protect water quality and the natural environment.	Medium-long term	EVB11
<b>The frequency and intensity of fires can impact the ability of mountain and alpine ash to recover naturally.</b>	Support the recovery of mountain and alpine ash forests through a mountain and alpine ash re-seeding and seedbank program. (EVB12.1)	Threats to species and habitats are managed in a way that increases resilience of species and habitats.  Climate-ready restoration methods are used to restore and/or ecologically renovate natural habitats.	Medium term	EVB12
<b>Community knowledge is not incorporated into recovery, reducing effectiveness.</b>	Tell the recovery story through a platform to share information and data concerning natural environment recovery (EVB13.1)	Community knowledge is incorporated and community are resourced to deliver environment and biodiversity recovery.	Medium term	EVB13
<b>Community has reduced access to nature-based tourism facilities</b>	Restore and promote access to nature-based tourism by making sites safe and improving the condition and fire resilience of facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove hazardous trees, demolishing / decontaminating destroyed structures/assets and reopening campgrounds and visitor areas. Priorities include Buchan Caves, Cape Conran, Sea to Summit Iconic Walk and Croajingolong Coast including Mallacoota inlet. (EVB14.1)</li> <li>Improve infrastructure to service roofed accommodation, Buchan Caves and Cape Conran Coastal Park, Sea to Summit Iconic Walk and installation of EcoPod or other modular accommodation at key locations. (EVB14.2)</li> <li>Clean and re-instate minor assets across visitor sites to support trade, tourism and restore natural environments. (EVB14.3)</li> </ul>	Nature-based visitor experiences and sites are re-established in consultation with community and Traditional Owners.	Medium term	EVB14
<b>The frequency and intensity of fires can impact the ability of native species to recover naturally.</b>	Re-establish key fish stocks in bushfire affected waterways. (EVB15.1)	Priority waterways and catchment assets are repaired.	Medium term	EVB15
<b>Fire affected communities are unable to use wood heating over winter</b>	Make firewood collection sites available using salvaged wood from clean-up and/or new or additional firewood collection sites. (EVB16.1)	The community can access firewood.	Medium term	EVB16
<b>The 2019-20 bushfires had a major impact on Victoria's forests and forest dependent industries, biodiversity and other community values.</b>	Undertake a Major Event Review to assess the impacts of the 2019-20 bushfires and to identify actions to ensure that Regional Forest Agreements achieve their objectives. The first priority will be to endorse a Scoping Agreement between the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments (EVB17.1).	The community has confidence that the impacts of the bushfires on economic, environmental, social and Traditional Owner values have been assessed and incorporated into future forest management	Medium term	EVB17

# Business and Economy Recovery

## State lead department: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

Businesses and local economies in bushfire affected regions are facing complex challenges, due to the compounding impacts of the bushfires, drought, industry decline and economic transition, and COVID-19. This context is critical in identifying realistic and achievable recovery outcomes and priorities.

### The long-term business and economy outcomes seek to ensure:

**Industries and businesses** recover and are stronger  
**Employment opportunities** are accessible  
**Local businesses and communities** are resilient

## Recovery priorities

To focus efforts over the next 12-18 months recovery priorities have been developed around both business and economy. These priorities will guide actions over the next 12-18 months of recovery to support achievement of long-term outcomes.

### Business

- Regional businesses, including Aboriginal businesses, and primary producers affected by the bushfires:
  - have resumed operations, where feasible
  - are recovering without ongoing financial support
  - are gaining confidence to invest and grow
  - are better prepared for challenges and economic shocks.

### Economy

- Regional visitor numbers and tourism expenditure have, where feasible, returned to pre-bushfire levels or better
- Unemployment, underemployment and workforce participation have improved at the same rate as other regional areas
- Regional economies are becoming stronger and more resilient:
  - local industries are more competitive and starting to attract talent
  - declining sectors are identified and transition is supported
- Strategic and transformative economic infrastructure investments are made in regions affected by bushfires
- Local community and business networks are becoming more connected, organised and collaborative.



*Waterside in Mallacoota*

## Case study: Mallacoota Abalone Co-op Refit

Mallacoota Abalone Co-op is the town's largest employer, with 21 divers and their crews, eight full time staff and a contingent of 40 casuals. When two of the three sheds were destroyed during the bushfires, they were forced to cease processing because the remaining, undamaged shed was not at food-grade standard.

When the bushfires occurred, Regional Development Victoria reached out to the company to ask what they needed, and then worked with them to identify the planning, fisheries and export approvals necessary to refit its third shed to the required standard to receive and handle abalone.

The works needed to be done by early April so they could be ready to process by the busy winter months. This is when most

casual work is available and these jobs are often filled by workers who also have tourism jobs during the busy summer months, but who have less work available in tourism during the quieter winter period.

In the meantime, while the road into Mallacoota was closed the Co-op had been shipping their catch to other processors in Victoria who are now processing the abalone on their behalf. This support from other processors has allowed them to at least commence operations again and send divers back into the water. This has been the difference in being able to retain existing customers, as closing completely would mean customers hungry for their abalone – including the international market – go elsewhere, and once they leave, they may not come back.



# Actions

This Plan will work closely with local communities, industry and all levels of government to drive inclusive and sustainable economic recovery for bushfire affected regions, aligned to local strengths and leveraging local resources. It has and will continue to draw on Community, Municipal and Regional Plans and feedback from bushfire-affected communities to understand needs and identify the appropriate responses. It also recognises that other bushfire recovery activities are being delivered through on-the-ground services by agencies, such as local councils, Agriculture Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, Rural Financial Counselling Service and other community providers.

The support to date, and the initiatives outlined in the list of actions below, focus largely on stabilisation to ensure that businesses and workers can continue operating despite challenges and disruptions. This is due to the impacts of COVID-19, which have compounded the economic effects of the bushfires and significantly delayed initial recovery activities. Over time, this focus will shift to growth and resilience, building the foundations for more competitive and sustainable economies in bushfire-affected regions.

This Plan provides an overview of the recovery activities planned to commence in the short and medium term within the next 12-18 months. Funding details are in Appendix A.

## Business

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Financial performance declined for small businesses and primary producers as a direct result of the bushfires.</b>	<p>Stabilise impacted small businesses and primary producers with financial support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide Small Business Bushfire Recovery Grants (\$50,000) for businesses that suffered direct bushfire damage (BE1.1)</li> <li>Provide Small Business Bushfire Support Grants (\$10,000) for businesses impacted by the bushfires in seven heavily fire impacted LGAs (BE1.2)</li> <li>Provide Victorian Bushfire Concessional Loans (up to \$500,000 per loan) to assist small businesses, primary producers, and non-profit organisations impacted by the bushfires (BE1.3)</li> <li>Provide Emergency Bushfire Primary Industries Grants (up to \$75,000 per grant) for primary producers that suffered direct bushfire damage (BE1.4)</li> <li>Establish the Victorian Bushfire Emergency Transport Support Program (up to \$15,000 per grant) to support impacted primary producers struggling to transport their goods (BE1.5)</li> <li>Provide Agriculture Victoria's Wine Grape Testing Rebate (\$12 million) to support growers accessing smoke exposure tests from specialist labs (BE1.6)</li> <li>Provide a range of tax relief measures, including payroll tax relief in State of Disaster Areas, stamp duty concessions and waiving water rates for businesses destroyed or significantly damaged by fire for 12 months following the fires. (BE1.7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional businesses and primary producers have resumed operations, where feasible</li> <li>Regional businesses and primary producers are recovering without ongoing financial support</li> </ul>	Short-medium term	BE1
<b>Businesses and primary producers lack confidence in the future business climate and fear further economic shocks.</b>	<p>Support businesses and primary producers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide expert advice and support to small business owners in impacted areas through Business Recovery Advisors. Advisers assist with business impact assessments, developing recovery plans and resilience mentoring. These strategies help businesses develop sustainable business models to strengthen and grow through the recovery period and beyond. (BE2.1)</li> <li>Ensure that businesses that were directly or indirectly impacted are aware of the government support and financial assistance available to them through the Bushfire Recovery Victoria small business and primary producer outreach program. (BE2.2)</li> <li>Provide agricultural and technical advice to primary producers, including farm management and recovery, animal welfare and biosecurity management, smoke taint technical advice for growers whose crops may have been smoke affected and other industry specific support as required. (BE2.3)</li> <li>Provide free, confidential financial and business advice through the Rural Financial Counselling Service and financial counsellors. (BE2.4)</li> <li>Provide support services to farmers, including activities such as regional agriculture industry coordination, consultations, farm visits, workshops, information sessions, field days and impact assessments (BE2.5)</li> <li>Provide targeted support for Aboriginal businesses to recover and associated creation of employment pathways. This includes funding provided to GunaiKurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) to recruit a Business Development Manager. (BE2.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional businesses, including Aboriginal businesses, and primary producers are gaining confidence to invest and grow</li> <li>Regional businesses, including Aboriginal businesses, and primary producers are better prepared for challenges and economic shocks</li> </ul>	Ongoing	BE2

## Economy

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priority	Timing	Action ID
<b>Visitor numbers have declined as a result of the bushfires, leading to low tourism revenues.</b>	<p>Stabilise the visitor economy with initiatives and funding support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage visits to the impacted areas through a Visit Victoria destination marketing campaign (BE3.1)</li> <li>Business and Sport for Bushfire Recovery program to encourage businesses to hold events in bushfire impacted areas once COVID-19 restrictions lift (BE3.2)</li> <li>Regional events funding grants of up to \$20,000 for events in bushfire affected towns (BE3.3)</li> <li>Grants to bushfire-affected Regional Tourism Boards including \$350,000 for Tourism North East and \$500,000 for Destination Gippsland to support marketing and networking (BE3.4)</li> </ul>	Regional visitor numbers and tourism expenditure have, where feasible, returned to pre-bushfire levels or better	Medium term	BE3
<b>Unemployment and underemployment is higher in regional towns (further impacted by COVID-19).</b>	<p>Boost jobs by linking businesses, job seekers and providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a \$10 million Bushfire Tourism and Business Fund for projects that will attract visitors and support local jobs (expected to create over 260 jobs). (BE4.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployment, underemployment and workforce participation have improved at the same rate as other regional areas</li> <li>Unemployment, underemployment and workforce participation have improved at the same rate as other regional areas</li> </ul>	Medium term	BE4
<b>Fragility and rigidity of regional economies highlighted by bushfires and pandemic.</b>	<p>Develop plans, strategies and programs to make local economies resilient to shocks, such as droughts, bushfires and pandemics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Regional Business and Economic Recovery Plans for Hume and Gippsland regions (BE5.1)</li> <li>Support a Gippsland Aboriginal Economic Strategy undertaken by the Gunaikurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation (GlaWAC). (BE5.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional economies are becoming stronger and more resilient</li> <li>Declining sectors are identified early and transition is supported</li> </ul>	Medium term	BE5
<b>Businesses/communities face longer term economic pressures, including declining sectors, demographic pressures.</b>	<p>Support sectors in transition to grow and be resilient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a timber industry support package for the harvesting and recovery of timber and to support timber salvage in fire affected areas (BE6.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Declining sectors are being identified and transition is being supported</li> </ul>	Medium term	BE6
<b>Local infrastructure is damaged or now insufficient to meet regions' social and economic needs.</b>	<p>Target infrastructure spending to meet local needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in strategic and transformative infrastructure to support critical industries, including training infrastructure to continue local talent development (BE7.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic and transformative infrastructure investments are made in regions affected by bushfires</li> </ul>	Medium term	BE7
<b>The business community is disconnected and overwhelmed.</b>	<p>Strengthen business networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate networking events, tourism opportunities and pro-bono business partnerships, including through the \$500,000 Regional Industry Groups and Chambers of Commerce Grant Program (BE8.1)</li> <li>Provide Community Recovery and Resilience Grants to support locally-led programs for community connection, engagement and resilience (BE8.2)</li> <li>Support councils to deliver workshops to help local enterprises in bushfire-affected areas plan for growth and share ideas. (BE8.3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local community and business networks are connected, organised and collaborative</li> </ul>	Medium term	BE8



*BlazeAid volunteers work on fencing (photo used with permission)*

## Buildings and Infrastructure Recovery

### State lead department: Department of Transport/ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

This line of recovery seeks to repair and rebuild residential, commercial and agricultural buildings, and to restore essential community infrastructure safely and quickly. This includes the review and development of planning and building specifications for rebuilding private housing.

Improvement and sustainability are an integral part of this line to consider how property, buildings and infrastructure can be rebuilt to be stronger, more efficient and resilient in the face of future impacts.

### The long-term building and infrastructure outcomes seek to ensure:

**Utilities and transport routes** are restored and resilient  
**Commercial and agricultural infrastructure** is rebuilt and improved  
**Residential property** is rebuilt and improved  
**Public infrastructure** is relevant and of high quality

## Recovery priorities

To focus efforts over the next 12-18 months BRV has developed recovery priorities structured around six building and infrastructure areas. These priorities will guide actions over the next 12-18 months of recovery to support achievement of long-term outcomes. The priorities are:

### Enabling planning and rebuilding

- Communities have permanent planning provisions (temporary dwellings, streamlined planning controls and building regulations) in place to assist communities rebuild and to improve resilience to future fires.
- Communities can navigate the approvals process, reducing the stress of rebuilding.
- Landowners are supported, informed and aware of rebuilding costs in bushfire-impacted communities.
- Local councils have the resources to effectively lead local recovery planning.
- A reduction in time and cost from engaging community in design / rebuild with industry.

### Restoration and resilience of transport infrastructure

- Transport infrastructure and networks are fully restored to at least the state they were before the bushfires.
- The transport network is more resilient to bushfires in the future.

### Drinking water and sewage

- Restoration and improvement of water services and infrastructure.
- Improvement to septic systems and water tanks is integrated into the rebuilding of infrastructure.
- Communities feel supported when responsible for their own water management.
- Water Corporations build the resilience of their systems to future bushfire impacts.

### Support the restoration and resilience of telecommunications and energy services

- Restoration of energy and telecommunications services are supported.
- NBN Co is supported to connect Mallacoota to the NBN.
- Coverage and resilience of Victoria's telecommunications network in bushfire and disaster-prone areas is supported.
- Restoration and improvement of damaged and dangerous overground electricity lines is supported.

### Building and assets

- Debris is cleaned up to enable rebuilding.
- Community Recovery Committees are supported to identify and prioritise the restoration of community /public buildings and further infrastructure investment.
- Critical infrastructure is assessed and rebuilt.
- Victorian Heritage Register sites impacted by bushfire are managed.

### Fencing

- Fencing advice and assistance is effectively communicated to impacted individuals.
- Funding support received by property owners who share a boundary with national park, state park and state forest.
- Fencing program for national park, state park and state forest boundary fencing successfully implemented.



Courtesy of Visit Victoria

## Case study: Road infrastructure

The geographic scale and longevity of the 2019-20 fires had an unprecedented impact on the Victorian road network. At the height of the bushfires over 1,600km of arterial roads and 5,000km of local roads closed throughout the east and north-east of the state. While fires damaged road infrastructure (including signage, safety barriers, culverts and bridges), the most significant impacts resulted from the creation of potential hazards from trees along the road reserves. Fire-affected trees are at higher risk of falling, and a thorough process of assessment and removal of dangerous trees must be completed before safe public access to a road is allowed.

Roads and the transport network are critical to assist community resilience and support evacuation during an emergency, as well as an essential enabler for other agencies to undertake works during bushfires. Emergency services (CFA, police and ambulance) all rely on road access to carry out their vital roles, and safe and efficient roads are a foundation for water, energy and telecommunications providers to undertake

emergency repairs and other activities. With no arterial road connections to NSW east of Omeo, freight was forced to make extended detours in some cases. The huge scale of the disaster, meant that it took a significant time to assess the full length of impacted roads and remove hazardous trees, after which works began to restore line marking and reinstate essential infrastructure such as guide posts, signage and crash barriers.

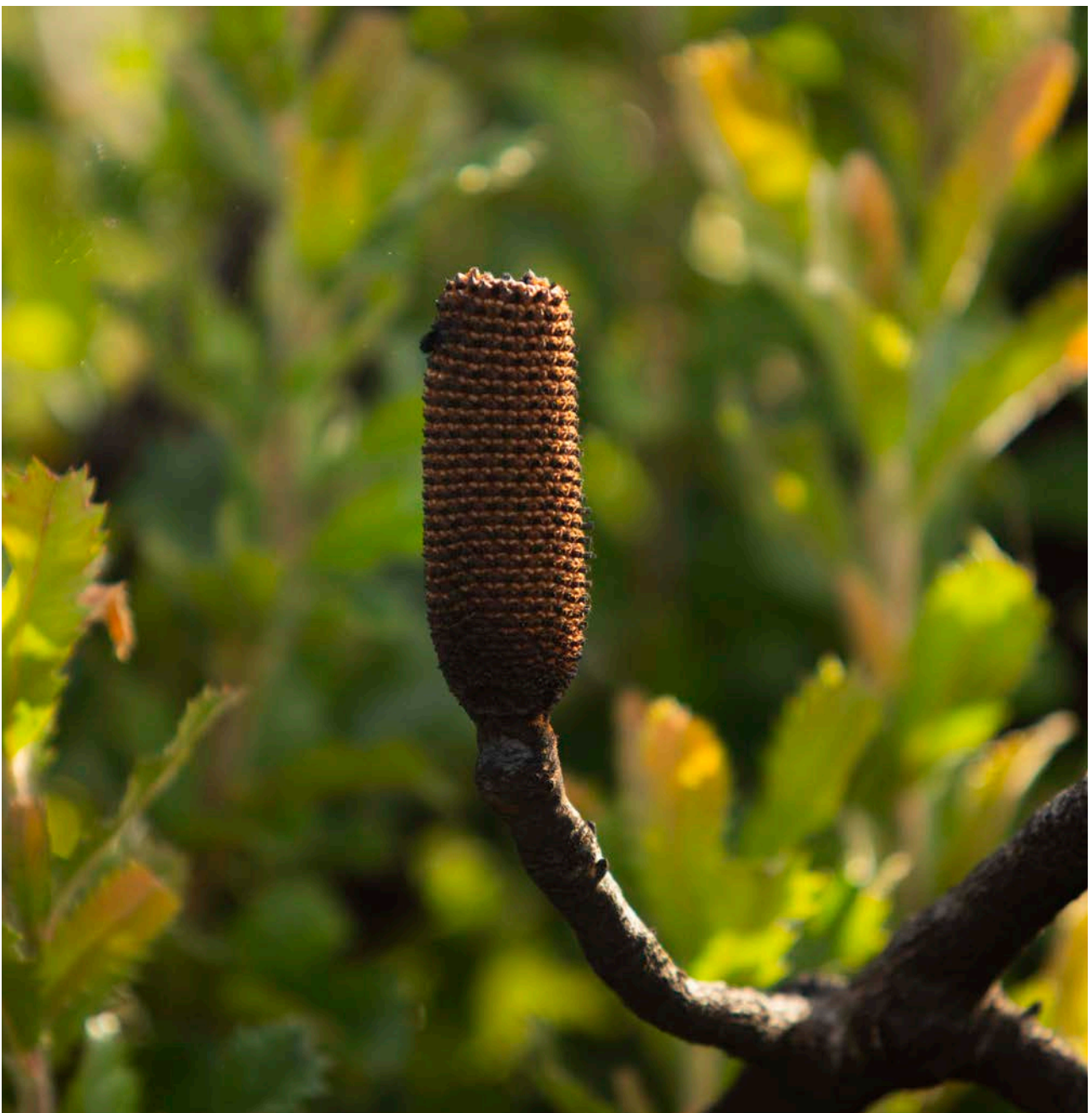
Many roads were closed from the end of December, and took some time to reopen. All residents in fire-affected areas had access to their properties by the end of February, most arterial roads were open to the general public by mid-March, and the final arterial road was reopened on 29 May. The 2019-20 fires underlined the critical importance of the road network in the preservation of human life, protection of infrastructure and the environment, as well as the challenges in ensuring the resilience of that network during an event of unprecedented scale.

## Actions

Recovery actions for the buildings and Infrastructure line of recovery include a focus on the restoration of services and infrastructure to manage the immediate impacts of the bushfire event, enable the reconnection of communities, and support communities as they recover.

Restoration of public buildings and assets will be prioritised within available budgets and delivered over the medium to long term. Appropriate consideration is also given to the resilience of buildings and infrastructure to 'build back better' where appropriate, as well as address future resilience needs to protect infrastructure from future natural hazards. Government will prepare for future bushfires by adapting to a more fire-prone climate through accelerated fuel management, improved suppression/response strategies, and new community and asset protection strategies.

This Plan provides an overview of the recovery activities planned to commence in the short and medium term within the next 12-18 months. Funding details are in Funding details are in Appendix A.



*Regrowth after bushfire*

## Facilitating planning and rebuilding

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priorities	Timing	Action ID
<b>Significant numbers of people need short and medium-term accommodation.</b>	<p>Assist with interim accommodation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate accommodation coordinators to manage accommodation response plans and coordinate accommodation options across government and non-government stakeholders. (BAI1.1)</li> <li>• Work with local bushfire case support providers to identify households whose current accommodation isn't available or suitable for the duration of the rebuild. (BAI1.2)</li> <li>• Provide interim modular accommodation for those households for a period of up to three years. (BAI1.3)</li> </ul>	<p>Communities have permanent planning provisions (temporary dwellings, streamlined planning controls and building regulations) are in place to assist communities rebuild and to improve resilience to future fires. In particular, People have timely access to accommodation in appropriate and affordable housing.</p>	Short-medium term	BAI1
<b>Rebuilding will require a bushfire management plan, a planning permit and a building permit</b>	<p>Make rebuilding easier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with local government to establish a rebuilding support service within community recovery hubs to assist impacted residents in rebuilding. (BAI2.1)</li> <li>• Partner with industry groups to develop a register of local builders and home designers (focusing on affordable bushfire prone house designs) for bushfire affected residents. (BAI2.2)</li> <li>• Fact sheets provide guidance to communities. (BAI2.3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebuilding support service within hubs is fully operational, assisting communities to navigate the approvals process, reducing the stress of rebuilding.</li> <li>• A reduction in time and cost from engaging community in design / rebuild with industry</li> </ul>	Short term	BAI2
<b>Landowners and communities need to engage with planning processes to rebuild</b>	<p>Make rebuilding easier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake preliminary Bushfire hazard (BAL ratings) and landscape assessments on behalf of community, and on behalf of residents who lost a residence in the bushfires. (BAI3.1)</li> <li>• Assistance with geotechnical assessments for properties in high risk erosion and landslip areas. (BAI3.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners are supported, informed and aware of rebuilding costs in bushfire-impacted communities.</li> </ul>	Short - medium term	BAI3
<b>Many buildings that were damaged in the fires require assessments before rebuilding can commence</b>	<p>Conduct building impact assessments to determine the extent of damage and safety and structural requirements (subject to funding). (BAI4.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling community members to cost-effectively rebuild to current safety, structural, environmental, bushfire and energy standards</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI4
<b>Local councils may require support to lead local recovery planning</b>	<p>Support Local Councils to deliver community-led recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and advice to councils. (BAI5.1)</li> <li>• Fact sheets to inform fire impacted communities. (BAI5.2)</li> <li>• Council Assistance Fund providing rate relief. (BAI5.3)</li> <li>• Financial support provided to local government for additional resources to fulfil regulatory authority responsibilities and waive fees. (BAI5.4)</li> <li>• Government Recovery Fund, and Intensified Municipal Emergency Resource Program to allow impacted councils to hire and retain additional staff for emergency management and recovery planning. (BAI5.5)</li> <li>• A register of designers and builders resourced to service local communities is available. (BAI5.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local councils have the resources to effectively lead local recovery planning</li> </ul>	Short-medium term	BAI5

## Restoration and resilience of transport infrastructure

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priorities	Timing	Action ID
<p><b>Significant road closures prevent travel and complicate recovery activities</b></p>	<p>Manage and resolve road closures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support communities to manage transport while roads are closed. (BAI6.1)</li> <li>Mobilise resources to provide coordinated and integrated (tenure blind) delivery of bushfire recovery activities. (BAI6.2)</li> <li>Repair/rebuild damaged/destroyed infrastructure and consider opportunities for improving function and resilience through changes to infrastructure, processes and systems, preparedness, emergency support services and resilient employees who have the support needed to work effectively during times of disaster. (BAI6.3)</li> <li>Roads are assessed and treated to manage increased risk of secondary impacts such as hazardous trees, landslips and flooding. (BAI6.4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport infrastructure and networks are fully restored to at least the state they were before the bushfires</li> </ul>	<p>Short-medium term</p>	<p>BAI6</p>
<p><b>The transport network is at risk from future bushfires</b></p>	<p>Reduce the risk to the transport network from future bushfires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update fire risk management approach for arterial road corridors, including allowing roads to act as fire breaks where appropriate and improving bushfire resilience. (BAI7.1)</li> <li>Identify, review and implement changes to improve bushfire response and recovery in the future, including provision of road status information to the public, management of school bus services, and integrated processes with other agencies. (BAI7.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The transport network is more resilient to bushfires in the future.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium term</p>	<p>BAI7</p>



## Drinking water and sewage

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priorities	Timing	Action ID
<b>Some communities have had access to drinking water and sewerage systems impacted or restricted</b>	<p>Ensure water supply and infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local councils and DELWP in the recovery of essential non-reticulated domestic water supplies. (BAI8.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration and improvement of water services and infrastructure</li> <li>Community feel supported when responsible for their own water management</li> </ul>	Short-medium term	BAI8
<b>Critical residential water infrastructure has been damaged</b>	<p>Restore and improve critical water infrastructure, including rainwater tanks and septic tanks for households not on reticulated systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with Land Capability Assessments and Septic Tank Condition reports for properties where reticulated water and sewerage is unavailable. (BAI9.1)</li> <li>Assist with installation of septic systems and water tank replacement. (BAI9.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration and improvement of water services and infrastructure</li> <li>Replacement of septic systems and water tanks are integrated into the rebuilding of infrastructure</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI9
<b>Essential water infrastructure has been damaged</b>	<p>Repair and replacement of essential water infrastructure, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>damaged water monitoring assets. (BAI10.1)</li> <li>damage to emergency water supply point network. (BAI10.2)</li> <li>flood warning gauge network improvements. (BAI10.3)</li> <li>water asset repair and upgrades for East Gippsland Water. (BAI10.4)</li> <li>Water treatment plant energy resilience for North East Water at high bushfire risk sites. (BAI10.5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration and improvement of water services and infrastructure</li> <li>Water Corporations build resilience of their systems to future bushfires</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI10

## Support the restoration and resilience of telecommunications and energy services

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priorities	Timing	Action ID
<b>Telecommunication and NBN services were impacted or unavailable for some communities</b>	<p>Assist NBN Co with restoration of NBN cable to Mallacoota. (BAI11.1)</p> <p>Provide a conduit / escalation role for local government and residents of fire affected communities to escalate and resolve with utility providers any issues related to NBN services and telecommunications. (BAI11.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration of energy and telecommunications services are supported.</li> <li>Landowners are assisted as required to resolve any connection issues with providers.</li> <li>NBN Co is supported to connect Mallacoota to the NBN.</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI11
<b>Telecommunications network vulnerabilities were exposed</b>	<p>Engage with the Commonwealth Government's \$371 million telecommunications resilience package to target funding towards Victorian priorities and implement initiatives that will increase communications resiliency in future emergencies. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade alternative power sources for mobile base stations (limited to Commonwealth MBSP funded base stations). (BAI12.1)</li> <li>Purchase portable communications facilities such as cells on wheels (COWs), mobile exchanges on wheels (MEOWs) and NBN Road Muster trucks. (BAI12.2)</li> <li>Deploy approximately 2,000 NBN Co satellite services to rural and country fire services and designated evacuation centres. (BAI12.3)</li> <li>Deliver improved community awareness programs. (BAI12.4)</li> <li>Commonwealth also has additional funding committed for further blackspots rounds and its Regional Connectivity Program relevant to telecommunications resiliency. (BAI12.5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration of telecommunications services are supported</li> <li>Coverage and resilience of Victoria's telecommunications network in bushfire and disaster-prone areas is supported.</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI12
<b>Residents have not been able to repair damages to energy lines, or have lines that represent fire hazards</b>	<p>Reduce fire hazards and support restoration and resilience efforts for residents in high bushfire risk areas through a Private Overhead Electric Lines grants program to underground them in affected areas. This will underground up to 50km of dangerous overhead electricity lines. (BAI13.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration and improvement of damaged and dangerous overground electricity lines is supported.</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI13

## Building and assets

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priorities	Timing	Action ID
<b>Buildings and Infrastructure were impacted by the fires</b>	<p>Guide repair and rebuilding efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake secondary impact assessments to determine the scale and extent of impact on buildings and infrastructure when it safe to do so. (BAI14.1)</li> <li>Provide guidance for repairs or rebuilding resilient infrastructure. (BAI14.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical infrastructure is assessed and rebuilt</li> <li>Community Recovery Committees are supported to identify and prioritise the restoration of community / public buildings and further infrastructure investment</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI14
<b>Clifton Creek Primary School was damaged by bushfire</b>	<p>Rebuild education infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relocate Clifton Creek Primary School students to temporary school accommodation in time for the start of the school year. (BAI15.1)</li> <li>Rebuild Clifton Creek Primary School. (BAI15.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical infrastructure is assessed and rebuilt</li> </ul>	Short-medium term	BAI15
<b>The bushfires created significant debris, which impedes recovery activities</b>	<p>Clear debris and build capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage contractors to remove debris from damaged or destroyed buildings. (BAI16.1)</li> <li>Upskill regional areas to respond or be prepared for further emergency recovery. (BAI16.2)</li> <li>Remove bushfire debris from around 750 registered residential and business sites. All registered properties to be cleaned-up by end of August, subject to weather conditions. (BAI16.3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debris is cleaned up to enable rebuilding</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI16
<b>Over 70 Heritage Sites were damaged and are now at further risk</b>	<p>Manage heritage sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess damage to heritage sites and develop strategy to minimise impacts (including risk of looting). (BAI17.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victorian Heritage Register sites impacted by bushfire are managed</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI17

## Fencing

Challenge	Recovery actions	Priorities	Timing	Action ID
<b>An estimated 6,350km of fencing has been impacted by the bushfires</b>	<p>Restore fencing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop consistent communication of Fencing advice and provide assistance to communities as required. (BAI18.1)</li> <li>Implement a fencing program (50% funding of materials for National Park / State Park / State Forest boundary fencing). (BAI18.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fencing advice and assistance is effectively communicated to impacted individuals</li> <li>Funding support received by rural communities</li> <li>Fencing program successfully implemented</li> </ul>	Medium term	BAI18

# Appendix A

The table below sets out the list of new funding commitments for bushfire recovery in Victoria since the fires, the lines of recovery covered by these commitments and the recovery actions they support, using each action’s unique ID (e.g. EVB8.1) as a reference.

This table includes both Victorian Government-funded initiatives and initiatives jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). For DRFA initiatives, the relevant DRFA Category is included. The table also includes separate sections for recovery actions that are internally resourced by departments, funded out of COVID-19 support initiatives or funded by the Commonwealth.

The amount noted in the “Funding committed” column refers to the amount committed when the initiative was first announced, except in the case of specific grants and payments (such as the Primary Industry Grants Program), in which the amount paid to date (at 3 July 2020) is included instead.

The figure of \$360 million, which represents the total Victorian Government investment into bushfire recovery since the fires, is the sum of all announced funding and the total paid in specific grants and payments to date (at 3 July). This figure includes Victoria’s contribution to jointly funded initiatives under the DRFA, which is estimated at 50 per cent (noting that while most initiatives under the DRFA are cost-shared 50:50 with the Commonwealth, the Small Business Bushfire Support grant is not).

Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	
<b>Victorian Government-led programs or projects</b>										
<b>Victorian Government funding</b>										
Aboriginal bushfire mitigation, infrastructure resilience and planning (\$2 million)		\$2,000,000		DPC		✓	✓			ACH11.1
Bushfire Tourism and Business Fund (\$10 million)		\$10,000,000		DJPR			✓	✓		BE4.1, EVB14.1, EVB14.2
Forest re-seeding and regeneration (\$7.7 million)		\$7,700,000		DELWP			✓			EVB12.1
Immediate Reconstruction and Rebuilding Program (\$8 million)	Temporary accommodation (Short Term Modular Housing)	\$8,000,000		BRV	✓				✓	PW.12 PW4.3 BAI1.3
Increased capacity to deliver housing and health support (\$880,000)		\$880,000		DHHS	✓					
Making Cape Conran compliant and sustainable (\$715 million)		\$7,150,000		PV				✓	✓	EVB14.1, EVB14.2
Manage immediate threats of pest and predators for species survival (\$5 million)		\$5,000,000		DELWP				✓		EVB4.1

Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	
Mental Health Funding Package (\$23.4 million)	Bolster local mental health services	\$8,750,000		DHHS	✓					PW12.2, PW12.3, PW12.4, PW12.5, PW23.1, PW23.3
	Community inclusion and support	\$6,600,000		DHHS	✓					PW12.1, PW16.1
	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations	\$3,000,000		DHHS	✓	✓				ACH5.1, PW14.1
	Planning and coordination	\$5,038,000		DHHS	✓					
Neighbourhood Houses support package (\$150,000)		\$150,000		DHHS	✓					
Regional Forest Agreements – Major event review (\$1.2 million)		\$1,200,000		DELWP			✓	✓		EVB17.1
Restoring road network safety (\$8 million)		\$8,000,000	B	DOT					✓	BAI6.1, BAI6.2, BAI6.3, BAI6.4
School support (\$13.45 million)	Extension of the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund	\$5,000,000		DET	✓					
	Mental health support for government and non-government schools	\$4,000,000		DET	✓					PW23.4
	Trauma Recovery Team	\$3,800,000		DET	✓					PW23.5
	Kindergarten fee subsidies	\$650,000		DET	✓					PW24.3
TAFE Community Service Funding (\$325,000)	TAFE Gippsland	\$150,000		DET	✓					
	Wodonga TAFE	\$100,000		DET	✓					
	GoTAFE	\$75,000		DET	✓					
Timber salvage operations (\$11.2 million)		\$11,200,000		DJPR				✓		BE6.1
Tourism campaigns (\$3 million)		\$3,000,000		DJPR				✓		BE3.1, EVB17.1
Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Donation (\$2 million)		\$2,000,000		BRV	✓				✓	

Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	
Wildlife and biodiversity package (\$17.5 million)		\$17,500,000		DELWP			✓			EVB11, EVB1.2, EVB1.3, EVB2.1, EVB2.2, EVB2.3, EVB2.4, EVB3.1, EVB3.2, EVB5.1, EVB5.2, EVB6.1, EVB6.2, EVB6.3, EVB7.1, EVB7.2, ACH3.1, ACH4.1
<b>Joint Victorian and Commonwealth Government funding</b>										
Case Support Program (\$14.4 million)		\$14,400,000	A	BRV	✓	✓				PW3.1, PW3.2, PW11.1, PW11.2, PW15.1, BAI1.2
Clean-up (\$75 million)		\$75,000,000	D	BRV					✓	BAI14.1, BAI16.1, BAI16.3
Community and Emergency Services Mental Health Program (\$10 million)	Boost to mental health service providers	\$5,000,000	C	DHHS	✓					
	Support for emergency services and agencies	\$2,500,000	C	DJCS	✓					
Community Recovery Hubs (\$15 million)	Establishment/operation of hubs including mobile	\$11,700,000	C	BRV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Business support officers	\$3,300,000	C	DJPR				✓		BE2.1
Disaster Legal Aid (\$5.1 million)		\$5,100,000	C	DJCS	✓					PW8.1
Family violence support and recovery (\$1.88 million)		\$1,880,000	C	DHHS/DPC	✓					PW22.1, PW22.2, PW22.3, PW22.4, PW22.5, PW22.6
Financial counselling (personal) (\$2 million)		\$2,000,000	C	DJCS	✓					PW7.1
Immediate Reconstruction and Rebuilding Program (\$28 million)	Temporary accommodation (Short Term Modular Housing program)	\$9,000,000	C	BRV	✓				✓	PW1.2, PW4.3, BAI1.3
	Critical water infrastructure	\$8,000,000	C	DELWP					✓	BAI9.1, BAI9.2
	Further impact assessments	\$500,000	C	BRV					✓	BAI14.1
	Planning and building assessments to inform rapid resettlement and rebuilding	\$2,500,000	C	DELWP					✓	BAI3.1, BAI3.2, BAI4.1, BAI7.1
Planning support to fast-track re-building (\$4.4 million)		\$4,400,000	C	DELWP					✓	BAI5.1, BAI5.4

Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	
Roads, fixed assets and hazardous tree removal on public land (\$10 million)		\$10,000,000	C	DELWP					✓	BAI6.3, BAI6.4, EVB16.1
Strengthening the resilience capability and capacity of schools (\$1.95 million)		\$1,950,000	C	DET	✓					PW25.1, PW25.2
Targeted support for Aboriginal businesses and workers (\$1 million)		\$1,000,000	C	DJPR		✓		✓		BE2.6
Visitor Assets (Parks Victoria and DELWP, including committees of management) (\$6.4 million)		\$6,400,000	C	DELWP					✓	EVB14.1, EVB14.3
<b>Local government or community support</b>										
<b>Victorian Government funding</b>										
Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants (\$900,000)		\$900,000		DELWP			✓			EVB10.1, EVB10.2, EVB10.3
Bushfire Recovery Round of the Regional Events Fund (\$300,000)		\$300,000		DJPR				✓		BE3.3
Business and Sport for Bushfire Recovery		N/A		DJPR				✓		BE3.2
Council Support (\$7,312,142)		\$7,312,142		BRV	✓					
Strengthen local government capacity for bushfire recovery (\$3.6 million)		\$3,600,000		BRV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BAI5.5
Tax Relief package (\$64 million) – Concession on stamp duty, payroll tax relief, waiving water rates				SRO	✓			✓		BE1.7
Tax Relief package (\$64 million) Council Assistance Fund (\$10 million)		\$10,000,000		BRV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BAI5.3
Tax Relief package (\$64 million) Regional industry groups and chambers of commerce grants (\$500,000)		\$500,000		DJPR				✓		BE8.1
Tax Relief package (\$64 million) Wine package (\$1.2 million)	Smoke exposure testing rebate	\$1,200,000		DJPR				✓		BE1.6
Tax Relief package (\$64 million) Wine package (\$1 million)	Grants to growers with smoke affected grapes	\$1,000,000		DJPR				✓		BE2.3
Tax Relief package (\$64 million) Wine package (\$300,000)	Research into smoke impact testing	\$300,000		DJPR				✓		BE2.3
Tourism grants (\$850,000)		\$850,000		DJPR				✓		BE3.4

Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	
<b>Victorian Government grants and payments</b>										
Fencing OPEN - landholders have 12 months to lodge a claim from when the damage occurred		\$4,413,054		DELWP					✓	BAI18.1, BAI18.2
Grants for wildlife shelters CLOSED		\$41,150		DELWP			✓			
Solar Homes hardship provisions OPEN - contact Solar Victoria (1300 376 393) for details		\$24,054		DELWP	✓					
Various tax and levy relief measures – including land tax, vehicle and stamp duty and landfill levy		\$389,828		SRO	✓			✓		BE1.7
<b>Joint Victorian and Commonwealth Government funding</b>										
Community and Emergency Services Mental Health Program (\$10 million)	Getting Kids Back to School – State Schools’ Relief (Government Schools)	\$2,000,000	C	DET	✓					
	Getting Kids Back to School – Bushfire Hardship Grant (Non-Government Schools)	\$500,000	C	DET	✓					
Community Recovery and Resilience Grants (\$35 million)	Aboriginal Community Recovery Grants	\$3,500,000	C	BRV		✓				ACH4.1, ACH4.2, ACH4.3, ACH4.4, ACH4.5, ACH7.1
	Arts Initiatives	\$700,000	C	DJPR	✓			✓		BE8.2
	Bushfire Recovery Grants for Community Facilities	\$5,000,000	C	BRV	✓				✓	
	Community Events	\$1,650,000	C	DJPR	✓			✓		BE8.2
	Community Events Grants	\$1,000,000	C	BRV	✓					
	Community Leadership Workshops	\$500,000	C	DJPR	✓			✓		BE8.2
	Community Recovery Grants	\$15,000,000	C	BRV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Flexible funding	\$150,000	C	DJPR	✓			✓		BE8.2
	Local Government Authorities & Community Service Organisations	\$7,500,000	C	BRV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	
Community Recovery Committees (\$6 million)	Community Recovery Committees	\$6,000,000	C	BRV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Local Economic Recovery funding program (\$68.6 million)		\$68,600,000	D		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BE71
Sector support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) (\$1.8 million)		\$1,800,000	C	DPC		✓				ACH10.1, ACH10.2
<b>Joint Victorian and Commonwealth Government grants and payments</b>										
Emergency Re-establishment Payments OPEN - contact BRV (1800 560 760) for details		\$2,327,341	A	DHHS	✓					
Emergency Relief Assistance Payments CLOSED		\$14,598,524	A	DHHS	✓					
Freight subsidy for primary producers CLOSED		\$408,165	C	DJPR				✓		BE15
Low interest loans OPEN - closes 31/08/2020		\$220,000	D	DJPR				✓		BE13
Primary Industry Grants Program OPEN - closes 31 December 2020		\$22,912,536	C	DJPR				✓		BE14
Small business and non-profit grants OPEN - closes 31 December 2020		\$1,671,199	C/D	DJPR				✓		BE11
Small Business Bushfire Support Grant OPEN - closes 31 December 2020		\$14,570,000	C/D	DJPR				✓		BE12

## Victorian Government activities – internally resourced by departments and agencies

BRV	PW1.3, PW1.4, PW3.1, PW4.1, PW4.2, PW5.2, PW6.1, PW6.2, PW6.3, PW9.1, PW24.1, PW24.2, PW24.3, PW24.4, ACH6.1, ACH7.1, ACH9.1, BAI2.2, BAI2.3, BAI14.2, BAI5.2, BAI5.6, BAI16.2, BE2.2
CESV	EVB8.1
DELWP	BAI7.2, ACH1.1, BAI8.1, EVB9.1, EVB13.1
DET	PW23.1, PW23.2, PW23.3, PW24.5, BAI15.1
DHHS	PW1.1, PW2.1, PW3.1, PW4.1, PW5.1, PW5.2, PW5.3, PW6.1, PW6.2, PW6.3, PW9.1, PW10.1, PW13.1, PW19.1, PW20.1, PW21.1, PW21.2, PW23.1, PW23.2, PW23.3, BAI1.1
DJPR	BE2.5, BE5.1, BE5.2, BE5.4, BE8.2, BAI12.1, BAI12.2, BE8.3
DOT	BAI7.1, BAI7.2
DPC	ACH2.1, ACH4.6
EPA	PW17.1, PW18.1, PW19.1
VFA	EVB15.1

Initiative	Program	Funding committed	DRFA category (if relevant)	Department	Line of recovery					Action ID/s
					People & wellbeing	Aboriginal culture & healing	Environment & biodiversity	Business & economy	Buildings & infrastructure	

## Other Victorian Government funding sources, including COVID-19 support packages

Building Works package (\$2.7 billion)	Maintenance boost for Victoria's roads (in bushfire-affected areas)	\$22,780,000		DOT					✓	BAI6.1, BAI6.2, BAI6.3, BAI6.4
	Rebuild Clifton Creek Primary School	\$4,245,000		DET					✓	BAI15.2
	Restoring Waterways and Catchments	\$10,800,000		DELWP			✓		✓	EVB11.1, BAI10.1, BAI10.2, BAI10.3, BAI10.4, BAI10.5
	Funding for economic recovery of bushfire-affected visitor sites	\$8,030,000		DELWP			✓			EVB14.3
	Private Overhead Electric Lines grants program	\$5,000,000		DELWP					✓	BAI13.1

## Other Commonwealth Government funding sources

Mobile Blackspots (\$380m)				DJPR					✓	BAI15.5
Regional Connectivity Program (\$53m)				DJPR					✓	BAI15.5
Strengthening Telecommunications Emergency Resilience (\$371m)				DJPR					✓	BAI15.1, BAI15.2, BAI15.3, BAI15.4
Bushfire recovery for wildlife and their habitat (\$200m)				DELWP			✓			EVB1.1, EVB1.2, EVB1.3, EVB3.1
Drought package (\$1.76m)				DJPR				✓		BE2.4

Further information about available grants can be accessed from the BRV website [brv.vic.gov.au](http://brv.vic.gov.au)

## List of Departments and Agencies

Below is a list of Departments and Agencies referenced in the document, and their associated acronyms.

Department	Acronym
Bushfire Recovery Victoria	BRV
Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria	CESV
Department of Education and Training	DET
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	DELWP
Department of Health and Human Services	DHHS
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions	DJPR
Department of Justice and Community Safety	DJCS
Department of Premier and Cabinet	DPC
Department of Transport	DoT
Department of Treasury and Finance	DTF
Emergency Management Victoria	EMV
Environment Protection Authority	EPA
Parks Victoria	PV
State Revenue Office	SRO
Victorian Fishing Authority	VFA

# Appendix B

Sources for impacts data in impacts section.

Impact	Source
5 people lost their lives	2019-20 Bushfires Quick Guide, Research Note No. 1, February 2020, Department of Parliamentary Services
120+ communities directly impacted	State Control Centre, 2020
313 homes destroyed or damaged	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
2,687 calls to the BRV bushfire hotline	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
1,408 case support cases	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
1,371 evacuees by sea from Mallacoota; 551 by air	Internal EMV analysis
3 LGAs were directly affected, and 5 adjacent LGAs were indirectly affected	Internal BRV analysis
Over 1,000 registered Aboriginal heritage places within the fire affected areas	DELWP, 2020
248 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people impacted	Bushfire Case Support Program data, July 2020
42 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had their homes destroyed or unliveable	Bushfire Case Support Program data, July 2020
14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander run businesses affected	Bushfire Case Support Program data, July 2020
170 rare or threatened species have had more than 50% of their habitat impacted by fires	DELWP, 2020
1.5m ha + burnt	DELWP, 2020
463,000 ha of National Parks and other Parks Victoria managed land impacted by the fires	DELWP, 2020
57% of state forest burnt in the three most directly hit LGAs	Internal BRV analysis
At least \$30m in damage to buildings and infrastructure managed by Parks Victoria	Parks Victoria, 2020
\$114-\$199m estimated decline in Gross Value Added across all industries in Alpine, East Gippsland and Towong	Internal BRV analysis
\$79-\$181m estimated decline in Gross Value Added across Indigo, Mansfield, Wangaratta, Wellington and Wodonga	Internal BRV analysis
\$325m economic impact on farms in Victoria through loss of assets and production (as at February 2020)	Agriculture Victoria, 2020
\$391m in cumulative expected production losses by end 2022	Agriculture Victoria, 2020
656 farm infrastructure damaged or destroyed	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
10,000 livestock lost	Agriculture Victoria 2020
22% of agricultural land in the fire affected area was burnt	Agriculture Victoria 2020

Impact	Source
\$330-\$350m in lost tourism revenue in bushfire affected regions between December 2019 and March 2020	Internal BRV analysis
80-100 fishing and aquaculture businesses impacted	Victorian Fisheries Authority
Around 8,600 businesses were within 5km of the fires	Internal BRV analysis
458 residences damaged or destroyed	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
51 business buildings and community facilities destroyed or damaged	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
\$40m in damage to agriculture buildings	Internal BRV analysis
6,350km fencing destroyed	Agriculture Victoria 2020
\$69m of fencing lost	Agriculture Victoria 2020
1 school destroyed (Clifton Creek Primary School)	DET, 2020
1,162 buildings destroyed, damaged or closed as a result of the fires	Internal BRV analysis
A third of homes destroyed in the fires are believed to be uninsured, or underinsured	Internal BRV analysis
742 properties requiring clean up, as at 26 June	BRV State Recovery Report, 3 July
1,400km of arterial roads closed	DOT, 2020
1,500 road signs and over 14,000 guide posts damaged or destroyed	DOT, 2020
324 telecommunications facilities in Victoria impacted by fire	ACMA report on Impacts of the 2019-20 bushfires on the telecommunications network



The Cann River Hotel





GPO Box 4912,  
Melbourne, VIC 3001  
1800 560 760  
[connect@brv.vic.gov.au](mailto:connect@brv.vic.gov.au)  
[brv.vic.gov.au](http://brv.vic.gov.au)



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