

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Water
Minister for Police and Emergency Services



Wednesday, 1 April 2020

MORE RELIEF FOR BUSHFIRE-AFFECTED VICTORIANS

Victorians who lost their homes in the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires will receive more support, thanks to the generosity of people across Victoria.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has today announced that Housing Assistance Payments of up to \$25,000 will be immediately made to owner/occupiers and renters whose principal place of residence was either destroyed or severely damaged by bushfire. Payments will be made available through Windermere.

More than \$16 million has now been allocated by Fund to help individuals and families recover.

Immediate relief payments to people affected by the bushfires are being expanded, with three Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to start delivering payments to people who have experienced property loss or damage to their primary residence.

The payments of between \$1,000 and \$4,500 have been available since late January through the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund and The Salvation Army.

Payments are also now available through the Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative, the Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.

On the recommendation of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel, the Community Enterprise Foundation, has also recommended the remaining funds be used for medium to long-term community-led recovery initiatives.

The distribution of this funding will be assisted by a community consultation process. The consultation will help the Advisory Panel to identify community recovery priorities that are eligible for funding.

To date, more than \$33 million has been donated to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal, thanks to the generosity of people across Victoria and beyond. Money raised through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will help provide immediate and long-term relief for people and communities impacted by this summer's devastating bushfires.

People seeking to access payments can find out more information by visiting vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal. To access the Housing Assistance Payment, phone Windermere on 1300 946 337 or email bushfirerecovery@windermere.org.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville

"This is about providing both immediate relief and medium and long-term tools for bushfire affected communities to rebuild and move forward in this very difficult recovery phase."

"Money donated to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal is helping the individuals and communities who need it most. My thoughts continue to be with those who were affected this fire season and I thank them for their ongoing resilience."

Quotes attributable VBA Advisory Panel Chair, the Honourable Pat McNamara

"Each community is unique in the way in which it recovers. This funding ensures that individuals can get back on their feet address their immediate needs."

"The funding also provides a mechanism for communities to identify their priorities for recovery and lead the pace at which they recover."

Media contact: Stephanie Jones 0448 359 507 | stephanie.jones@minstaff.vic.gov.au

The appeal is conducted by the Bendigo Bank's charitable arm, Community Enterprise Foundation. The Victorian Bushfire Disaster Appeal is a management account of Community Enterprise Foundation™ ABN 69 694 230 518, The Bendigo Centre, PO Box 480, Bendigo, Vic 3552. The Foundation will make distributions by way of grants, following receipt of applications from organisations endorsed with item 1 Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.