

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for the Coordination of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning – COVID-19
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Water



Thursday, 17 September 2020

MORE BUSHFIRE APPEAL FUNDS TO HELP COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

Locals will help direct \$14 million in funding for various recovery and rebuilding projects and programs in fire-affected areas, thanks to the generosity of Victorian Bushfire Appeal donors across our state and beyond.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal's \$4 million *Community Grants Program* addresses short to medium-term recovery needs endorsed by Community Recovery Committees across the Alpine, Towong and East Gippsland shires.

Community Recovery Committees are comprised of diverse groups of locals from bushfire affected areas who come together to guide councils and government on funding priorities. This community-led approach ensures projects and programs are the right fit for each community.

Applications can be submitted at any time and provisions will be in place to ensure no eligible community misses out. A closing date has not been set for the grants so all communities have the opportunity to apply for funding.

The Program has been designed to support community priorities. One project that has so far received a \$50,000 grant under the program will support bushfire-impacted families in the Mallacoota district to attend respite camps.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal also announced \$10 million for community foundations to support local recovery over the long-term. Existing foundations will be funded to support the Alpine and Towong local government areas and a new community foundation will be established to support East Gippsland, with a public Expression of Interest process to be undertaken to identify board members.

Foundations will be entirely community owned and led, and will ensure that funding is provided to address local community recovery priorities. They will be able to operate in-perpetuity, for the benefit of their communities.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal also announced a further \$800,000 in funding for family violence services, supporting community-based agencies to roll out new prevention and intervention programs in bushfire-affected areas. With this funding, Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, Gateway Health and Centre Against Violence will be able to expand and enhance their existing programs, which are aimed at reducing the instances and impacts of family violence.

Over \$36.7 million has been raised by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal to date, with \$36.6 million now allocated to support people who lost their homes, families who lost loved ones, immediate relief payments, community grants, family violence services and fence rebuilding.

Organisations wishing to access *the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Community Grants Program* can contact their local council or Community Recovery Committee, with more information at vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal. More information about Community Recovery Committees can be found at brv.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville

"Money donated to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal is helping the individuals and communities who need it most, both in the immediate aftermath of this disaster and over the long-term recovery journey beyond it."

"We've always said that recovery needs to be led by the community, and these grants give a real say to Community Recovery Committees in shaping the future of their local areas."

Quote attributable VBA Advisory Panel Chair the Honourable Pat McNamara

"Each community is unique in the way in which it recovers. This funding ensures that communities can get back on their feet and determine their short - medium and long-term needs."

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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.