

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



Tuesday, 20 October 2020

BUSHFIRE GRANTS TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND HEALING

Aboriginal communities affected by the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires are sharing in over \$4 million to support the recovery of cultural heritage across Country and fund projects that can build community connection and resilience.

Bushfire Recovery Grants for Aboriginal Communities support Traditional Owner-led projects that value and respect Aboriginal culture, address trauma, support healing and promote cultural safety, ownership, resilience and participation. Projects also support Aboriginal employment, wellbeing and economic development.

Nindi Ngujarn Ngarigo Monero Aboriginal Corporation (NNNMAC) received more than \$800,000 to provide cultural healing programs, and preserve, record, protect and rebuild culturally significant areas affected by the fires.

Executive Officer of NNNMAC Aunty Doris Paton says “the elders feel for their Country from the bushfires because they’ve lived on it, and when it comes to this funding, they’re thrilled to bits for the mob. We have a lot of skilled people and until now, we’ve not been able to really have those skills and that knowledge recognised as a group. The grant money will get everything moving.”

Another project will resource and equip Taungurung people in Victoria’s North East to inspect landforms for cultural heritage and fire management activities.

Taungurung Land and Waters Council CEO Matthew Burns said the grants for this project and others would help Aboriginal people reconnect with their Country and their people: “Inevitably, when bushfire strips the ground cover and the leaf litter, it uncovers a huge number of cultural heritage artefacts. After 2009, we found tens and thousands of artefacts strewn across the landscape indicating a heavy occupation of Country over just as many years. It helps us as Traditional Owners understand how our people used to live.”

Other organisations receiving grants include, Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland Inc, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative, Lake Tyers Health and Children’s Services, Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association and the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

Aboriginal Victorians are disproportionately affected by bushfires due to population, structural and financial inequalities, historical and intergenerational trauma, and the impacts bushfire and fire suppression can have on Country and cultural heritage.

The *Bushfire Recovery Grants for Aboriginal Communities* program is part of the \$35 million Community Recovery and Resilience Grants Initiative jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. Aboriginal Victoria works in close partnership with Bushfire Recovery Victoria, who administer the grants.

Quote attributable to Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville

“Bushfire recovery must be community led, and Aboriginal communities who were disproportionately affected by these fires will get the support they need to develop and lead their own recovery journey.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

“We’re working together with Aboriginal communities to make sure Country is protected and that starts with ensuring projects are Aboriginal community-led.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Jane Garrett

“This is about meeting both immediate and long-term needs, from mapping Country impacted by bushfire and fire suppression, to funding events down the track that can bring people together when safe to do so.”

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