

Australian Bushfires Update

the power of humanity



January – September 2020



“It was the most simple process out of all of them. It ran smoothly, and people who were already suffering trauma didn’t have to get thrown into the wringer to get the help they needed.”

Jack helped his dad Swampy to apply for Red Cross grants shortly after their home in Cobargo (NSW) burnt down. Swampy and the family are living on their land while they rebuild slowly.

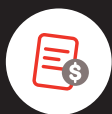
Photo: Australian Red Cross/Aysha Leo

NINE MONTHS INTO OUR GRANTS AND RECOVERY PROGRAM

\$173m has been disbursed or spent



5,380 people have received grants



722 people applied for a grant for the first time between July and September



12,635 people in **47 local government areas** have been supported by our recovery program

At a cost so far of less than 4c in the dollar for each dollar donated.

TOTAL \$239M DONATED REMAINING FUNDS

\$21m

is being distributed to people as they come forward

\$27m

is for further support for people to recover

\$2m

is for temporary housing pods

\$16m

is powering our ongoing recovery program

Any further administrative costs will come from the remaining funds.

Grant payments

As at 30 September, \$157m has been provided in grants to 5,380 people. Many people received more than one grant, depending on their circumstances.



Bereavement grant

For the senior next-of-kin of those who died in the fires.

Grant amount: **Up to \$50,000**

Grants paid: **36 grants**



Emergency grant

To support people whose primary place of residence was destroyed.

Grant amount: **\$20,000**

Grants paid: **2,864 grants**



Re-establishment grant

To help people who lost their primary place of residence to re-establish a safe place to live.

Grant amount: **\$40,000 (owner occupiers)
\$10,000 (renters or mobile home owners)**

Grants paid: **2,316 grants**



Primary residence repair grant

For home owner occupiers whose primary residence was structurally damaged.

Grant amount: **\$10,000**

Grants paid: **1,982 grants**



Injury grant

For people hospitalised for injuries sustained as a direct result of the bushfires.

Grant amount: **\$7,500 or \$15,000**

Grants paid: **518 grants**

Average time to process a grant and make payment: 3-5 days

What's new?

More people coming forward

Since July, 722 people have applied for a bushfire grant for the first time.

Some of these people had been living off the grid in remote locations, without a fixed address and with little access to the internet. Others felt there were people 'more deserving' of the money than they were. Others said they didn't yet feel ready to start rebuilding, so held off applying for funds.

Since COVID-19 restrictions eased in regional areas, our recovery officers have been working hard to help people apply for the support they are entitled to. We continue to work with state and territory governments and other partners to find people who have not yet applied. We have also extended closing dates for all grants to 31 December 2020.

Accommodation pods

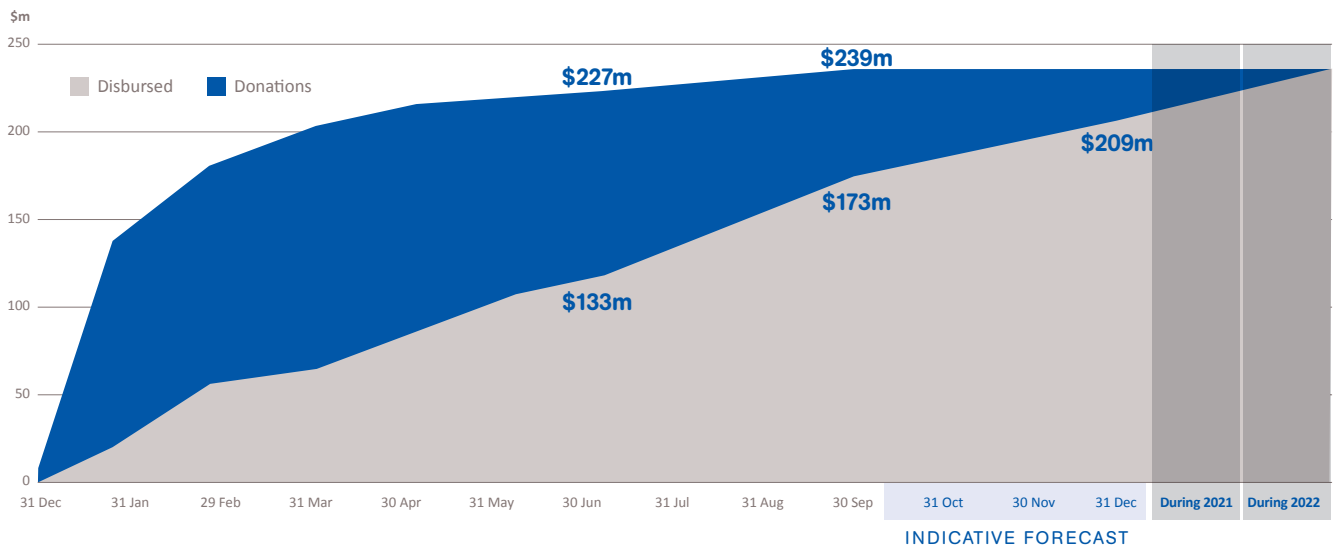
We've partnered with the NSW Government, the Minderoo Foundation and the Salvation Army to expand the successful accommodation pod program for people in NSW who lost their homes in the bushfires.

Red Cross is contributing \$2m to provide around 40-50 additional pods. These pods come with power, bathroom and cooking facilities and bunk beds, and enable people to stay on their properties while they rebuild their homes.

A new grant

A new grant will be available from late October for people who are still in ongoing financial hardship and face additional challenges with their recovery. Some of these people will have received existing grants but are still struggling financially. Individual payments will differ, based on assessments and each person's needs.

The Disaster Relief and Recovery fund



The graph above provides an indicative timeframe for the full disbursement of funds donated to Disaster Relief and Recovery in FY19/20.

- A further \$12m was received into the Disaster Relief and Recovery fund since June 2020, taking the total to **\$239m**. This reflects the global support for the bushfire response, coming from both corporate organisations and Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies that had pledged funds during the fires and provided them after the financial year had ended. These funds have been gratefully received and allocated for emerging needs and people experiencing ongoing hardship.
- An estimated \$30m will be disbursed or spent in the 2021 and 2022 calendar years. Of this, \$15m will be the community recovery program and \$15m for unmet needs within bushfire-affected communities.
- The audit of the Disaster Relief and Recovery fund will be released with our FY19/20 annual report at the end of the month.

For our full allocation plan and disbursement updates, see redcross.org.au/bushfirefunds.



“It makes you feel a lot better you’ve got somewhere, the light turns on and you’ve got cold food and the roof doesn’t leak anymore. Every day is another day and you get a bit closer to getting things to the way it was.”

– Richard, Mogo

Richard’s home was badly damaged in what he calls ‘a hurricane of fire’. A Red Cross grant helped with repairs, but he says that financial support is just one expression of the generosity he has seen in his community since the bushfires. He continues to encourage people to come forward and get the support that’s waiting for them.

What grant recipients said

In September, we sent an email survey to 4,681 people who had received a bushfire grant from Red Cross, asking about their experience and what we could improve.

460 people responded to the survey. Here's what they said.

Was it easy to apply for a grant?

90% reported they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the grant application process.



Where we did well:

- **91%** understood the reasons for the application requirements
- **89%** found Red Cross staff and volunteers supportive and helpful
- **88%** were satisfied with the time it took to receive their grant
- **84%** found the grants process easy
- **81%** said they knew how to contact Red Cross if they had questions



Where we could improve:

- Only **67%** felt they knew where their application was up to
- Only **63%** were clear on who to go to for financial support

Since our grants program commenced in January, we've made continuous improvements to keep people updated and make the process as easy as possible.

We have also advocated for data sharing arrangements that can make it easier for people to get support without having to approach multiple agencies.



What impact did the grant make?

89% of respondents said that the amount received from Red Cross, combined with support from government and other agencies, was sufficient to make a positive difference.

"We are so incredibly grateful for the financial assistance from Red Cross. It is a humbling experience reaching out for help, but the people who processed our application were kind and understanding. The money we received from Red Cross has made a huge difference, not just in helping us to replace what was fire damaged, but will help prevent an ongoing financial cascade and further grief. Thank you."

– Survey participant, September 2020

What else did people tell us?

- Word of mouth was the most effective way to reach people. The majority heard about grants via a recovery centre or from a friend or neighbour.
- COVID-19 had a significant impact. The pandemic has delayed rebuilding, increased financial uncertainty and left people feeling more isolated.
- Most respondents said they were able to complete the form in one go, and it took less than 30 minutes. Some said they really appreciated the 1:1 support they received either in person or over the phone.
- People appreciated the check-in calls and visits from Red Cross, and wanted them to continue.



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera

"We have been shown so much good fortune, through the kindness of others. It changes everything."

– Marilyn, Runnyford (NSW)

Marilyn woke her children and fled the fires that threatened Runnyford in the early hours of the morning. Grants from Red Cross, made possible by our donors, helped them first make ends meet and then build temporary but comfortable accommodation on their property while they rebuild.

Recovery continues

Recovery snapshot



We're active in **47 local government areas** (NSW, SA, Vic, Qld)



Helped **12,635+ people** to access information and support



Trained **1,101 people** from local government and communities



Run webinars that over **1,800 people** attended



Sit on **67 recovery committees** at local, regional and state levels

Leading their own recovery

Our training workshops and webinars equip communities to manage their own recovery. Topics range from psychological first aid and communicating in recovery to disaster memorials, supporting children, and community activism after disasters.

Our Disaster Recovery Mentors are volunteers with professional and lived experience of disaster recovery. We've connected them with 20 community leaders in bushfire-affected areas, as well as six virtual forums which supported 150 people. They act as a sounding board for leaders who face the immense challenge of supporting their communities through the recovery process.

Connecting kids

Children in the Adelaide Hills have been through a lot: first the bushfires, then the closure of schools and recreational activities because of COVID-19. So they came up with their own initiative, 'Bushfire Kids Connect'. They chat online regularly and met face-to-face at a cartoon workshop we supported. They're now planning to connect with children from other bushfire-affected areas in South Australia.



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera

"You can heal yourself, but there's no point in being healed if those around you are still broken. That's why we all need to walk it together and at the end of it we're all going to be healed."

– Sherrie, Mogo

Walbunja Yuin woman and artist Sherrie kept her family safe while fires raged through Mogo (NSW). She and others in the community rallied to help each other through the long weeks and months that followed. Grants made possible by Red Cross donors helped them replace household items lost to the fire, and even a special family dinner for her son's birthday.

Our respect and gratitude to:

All those who endured the fires. All those who stood with them. All those who gave their time, skill, labour, kindness and hard-earned money to the relief and recovery effort.

You continue to show the power of humanity.

A list of top financial donors and the National Societies who supported our response to the bushfires is available at redcross.org.au/bushfirereport.

1800 RED CROSS | contactus@redcross.org.au | redcross.org.au

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