



Rebuilding Together

A Statewide Plan for Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery

October 2009



Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority



From the Prime Minister

During my visits to the areas affected by the devastating Victorian bushfires in February 2009, I have seen firsthand the personal and material devastation left in the wake of the fires. However, I have also witnessed the generous community response and heard amazing stories of survival and courage. I know that the resilience, fortitude and community spirit demonstrated then has continued over the last nine months as communities have embarked on the road to recovery.

The Australian Government has worked alongside the Victorian Government to share the costs of helping individuals, families, communities, small businesses and primary producers get back on their feet. So far, the Australian Government has provided almost \$400 million for repair, restoration and recovery of the fire affected areas; for the emotional and social wellbeing of communities; physical infrastructure; the economy and the environment. In addition, the Australian Government has provided a range of non-financial assistance to individuals through case management, counselling and mental health services.

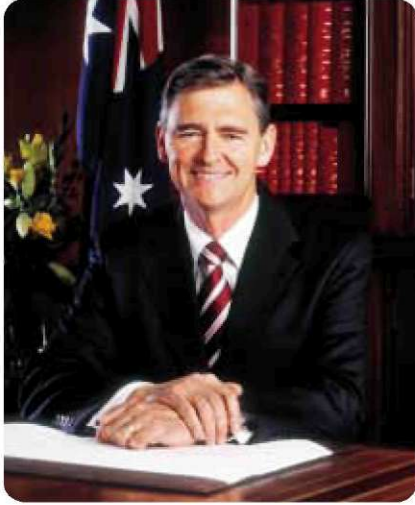
The effects of the bushfires are far reaching and the recovery and reconstruction effort is the largest Australia has ever faced. The Rebuilding Together Plan sets out the next steps in the reconstruction effort. As part of the Rebuilding Together Plan, the Australian and Victorian governments will jointly provide an additional \$117 million towards the cost of further reconstruction and recovery measures.

Through the Plan we will rebuild schools, community facilities and other vital infrastructure lost in the fires. We will regenerate the natural environment, stimulate local economic recovery and continue to support individuals and families as they rebuild their homes and businesses.

The people of Victoria have demonstrated time and time again since the fires that there is no challenge they cannot overcome. I wish the people of Victoria every success in rebuilding their homes and communities devastated by the 2009 bushfires.



The Honourable Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister of Australia



From the Premier

While the rebuilding of homes, businesses and towns devastated by the Black Saturday bushfires is an enormous task, assisting the survivors and helping them rebuild their lives is an even bigger one.

Many of these survivors have lost family, friends and, in many cases, everything they own. And while the healing process will take time, we will continue to support individuals and communities rebuild.

People from across Victoria, Australia and the world have donated more than \$386 million to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund. This extraordinary show of generosity and compassion has been inspiring.

The Australian and Victorian Governments established the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (the Authority) to lead the recovery and reconstruction efforts and the organisation has already achieved a great deal.

Under the leadership of Christine Nixon, the Authority has overseen a range of responses: including the initial clean up of properties; construction of temporary housing; distribution of donated goods; allocation of dedicated case managers for survivors; and providing advice and support for people rebuilding their homes.

So far:

- 3048 property clean-ups, or 99 per cent of all properties that registered, have been completed;
- Nearly 1000 building permits have been issued by bushfire-affected councils for the rebuilding of houses, sheds, verandahs and commercial buildings;

- 30 Community Recovery Committees have been established; and
- Temporary villages are up-and-running at Marysville, Kinglake, Flowerdale, and temporary accommodation has been opened at Whittlesea.

However, there is still much more to do.

This Plan is the culmination of hours of careful thought and discussion right across fire-devastated communities about what it is they need – not only to recover – but to secure stable, sustainable and bright futures for themselves and their townships.

This next step in our recovery and reconstruction efforts will focus on supporting and helping communities achieve their goals. This will include rebuilding what was lost and, in many cases, improving the infrastructure and services in these towns. And it is being delivered in a unique way – with all levels of Government, community, corporate and philanthropic donors; and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund working together to achieve our goals.

Together we will rebuild.

John Brumby
Premier of Victoria



From the Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority

Rebuilding after fires of such size, ferocity and destruction is a challenging task – and one that is unprecedented in Australia.

In overseeing the task, the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority has been very conscious of our duty to the individuals and communities affected by the fires.

We understand that people are choosing different paths and moving on with their lives at different paces.

While some have been keen to rebuild as soon as possible, others have yet to make the decision to return to the places where their homes, and in many cases their communities, were destroyed.

Many people remain deeply traumatised by their experiences and by the loss of their family and friends. In delivering the reconstruction and recovery program set out in the Rebuilding Together Plan, we recognise the need to strike the right balance between supporting those who are ready to move ahead and those who require more time and further support.

We also understand the importance of ensuring individuals make decisions about their own future and the future of their communities.

We have been working closely with 30 Community Recovery Committees on their Recovery Plans.

These plans enable communities to identify the projects and initiatives that are important to them in their recovery and reconstruction over the coming months and years. The Rebuilding Together Plan focuses on delivering the first phase of projects identified in the Community Recovery Plans – projects that are critical to the social and economic recovery of communities after the fires.

The Authority will also continue to work with governments at all levels, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and corporate and philanthropic donors on funding other projects identified by communities as being important to their future development.

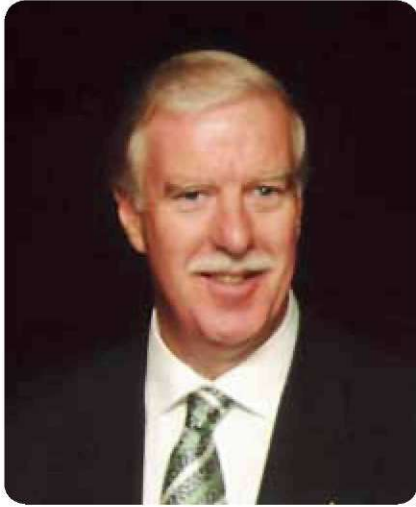
We will continue to support and consult with communities to ensure that their views are respected and that projects that are important to their recovery are delivered.

While many challenges still lie ahead, it is important to recognise that strong progress has been made in very difficult conditions and in a relatively short time.

Rebuilding Together marks the next steps in the reconstruction and recovery process, and confirms that we can look forward to the time when fire-affected communities can again face the future with confidence and optimism.

Christine Nixon APM

Chair, Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction
and Recovery Authority



From the Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund

Many communities in Victoria were changed by the bushfires in 2009.

For some towns it meant whole infrastructures being wiped out: shops, schools, community halls, police stations and sporting clubs. To walk down the main street of Marysville is to be reminded of how the bushfires swept away everything in their path.

Towns and houses can be rebuilt, but it will take time and support from many to re-establish these communities.

In the days after the fires the Victorian Government, in partnership with Australian Red Cross and the Australian Government, established the Victorian Bushfire Appeal. When the Appeal officially closed in April, \$379 million had been raised. To the end of September 2009 this had increased to \$386 million due to interest and final committed donations.

Initially, funding from the Appeal Fund was allocated to individuals and families to assist with their urgent needs, and thousands of survivors have received support, with more still flowing.

But the Appeal Fund Advisory Panel also set aside about 25 per cent of the total funds raised for community projects in the bushfire-affected areas.

The Fund's goal is to deliver projects that contribute to the re-establishment of those towns and communities affected by the tragedy of the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The Fund has worked closely with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority to identify community-generated projects the Fund can assist that will both help those communities most in need and are a priority for that community. These projects need to reflect the original intent of the Appeal, the wishes of the donors and the needs of communities. That is what donors to the Appeal would expect.

It could take a long time for these communities to rebuild. And it is the responsibility of every person and agency involved in the recovery and rebuilding effort to provide as much support as possible.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, on behalf of its donors, is proud to be able to contribute to the statewide reconstruction and recovery effort.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat McNamara'.

Hon. Pat McNamara
Chair, Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund

Highlights of the Rebuilding Together Plan

So far, some \$867 million has been spent on the reconstruction and recovery effort to date. The Rebuilding Together Plan provides a further \$193 million to deliver the next steps in the reconstruction and recovery process for fire-affected communities. It is being financed with:

- \$117 million from the Australian and Victorian governments;
- \$56 million from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund; and
- \$20 million in donor contributions.

Highlights of the Plan are:

Funding of \$93.4 million to support people and communities as they rebuild, including:

- The ongoing provision of temporary housing and accommodation support for two years
- Additional personal support and counselling services and new services to support children and young people affected by the fires
- New initiatives to strengthen and connect communities
- Restoring and rebuilding community assets and building new ones in fire-affected communities, including upgrading more than 20 community halls, building new community centres, and restoring sports and recreation facilities, parks and gardens
- Building and repairing walking and cycling trails

A further \$60.5 million to actively support and drive the reconstruction task, including:

- New co-located and multipurpose facilities that will improve education and recreation services to communities, including a Middle Kinglake education and community recreation precinct, a new early years centre in Flowerdale, a community centre in Callignee, and a community hub including a primary school, a children's centre and community health centre in Marysville
- Rebuilding key infrastructure and re-establishing core services, including a new primary school in Strathewen and a new Marysville Police Station

More than \$21.6 million allocated to help stimulate economic recovery in fire-affected communities, including:

- Services and support to assist small businesses to return to pre-fire operating levels
- Tourism marketing campaigns, infrastructure projects and new facilities in National and State Parks to attract visitors to areas where the decline in tourism is having an impact on local economies
- The development of the former Marysville Motor Museum building as an interim small business hub
- The restoration of Lake Mountain Alpine Resort as a major summer and winter tourist destination

In addition the Plan includes a Bushfire Business Investment Fund to help kick-start business investment in fire-affected areas.

New funding of \$17.5 million to rehabilitate the environment and address environmental problems caused by the fires, including:

- Preventing weeds and pests from becoming established in fire-affected public land and spreading to adjacent private land
- Urgent action to protect threatened species and habitats, and to regenerate State forests
- Helping farmers and landholders to stabilise and restore their land
- Supporting volunteers to repair burnt boundary fences on rural properties
- Repairing and restoring critical waterways and catchments in fire-affected areas



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The 2009 Bushfires

The 2009 Victorian bushfires were the worst in Australia's history. The fires devastated nearly 80 communities across the state, destroyed more than 2000 homes and damaged around 430,000 hectares of land. By the time the fires were contained, 173 people had lost their lives and many others were seriously injured. While disaster and emergency relief services were activated immediately, the task of responding to a tragedy of this scale is massive, unprecedented and challenging.

The fires devastated families and communities, destroyed homes and livelihoods and left a trail of grief, trauma and devastation across Victoria. While rebuilding will repair much of the physical damage, these personal losses can never be replaced.

Fighting the fires

From the outbreak of the Gippsland bushfires in January through to mid-March, Victoria's emergency services carried out a continuous fire fighting effort.

More than 1300 fire incidents were reported on or immediately prior to Black Saturday. Of the fires that were not contained, 14 became 'major fires', including the Kilmore East, Murrindindi, Churchill, Delburn, Bunyip, Narre Warren, Beechworth-Mudgegonga, Bendigo, Redesdale, Coleraine, Horsham and Pomorneit-Weerite fires. These fires are being examined in detail by Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

On 7 February, around 12,000 Country Fire Authority personnel were actively engaged in fighting the fires, while over 1000 Department of Sustainability and Environment firefighters were on active duty in the weeks before and after 7 February. The Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board also contributed crews, as did interstate and international fire fighting services and the State Emergency Service. The Australian Defence Force were also involved in the effort and worked to create fire breaks and clear roads. Up to 46 aircraft were used to fight the fires, as well as hundreds of tanks, trucks and other equipment.

The aftermath

The Australian Government Disaster Response Plan was activated on 8 February. The Australian and Victorian governments, community organisations and volunteer groups swung into action to provide emergency relief, temporary accommodation, financial assistance, health care, food aid and urgent repair work.

Immediate financial assistance was provided through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment, which commenced on 9 February.

Emergency relief centres were set up near affected areas, while temporary accommodation was established in Yea, Whittlesea and Alexandra. Temporary housing was found for thousands of residents who could not return home.



Fighting the Upwey Fire
(Picture courtesy of CFA Corporate Affairs)

Emergency work was quickly undertaken to reduce public safety risks, including carrying out urgent repairs to power and telecommunications networks damaged in the fires, and addressing risks related to hazardous materials (such as asbestos), damaged septic tanks and unstable structures. Thousands of 'fossicker kits', including face masks, gloves and disposable overalls, were distributed to allow people to return to their properties to salvage possessions. Access to drinking water was provided through temporary standpipes and community water tanks.

The size and scope of the policing operation associated with the fires was the largest ever undertaken by Victoria Police and the Australian Federal Police. Working together, they assessed the devastation and the immediate action that needed to be taken, set up and staffed roadblocks and road closures, and – with support from other agencies – conducted comprehensive searches of more than 5700 properties.

Victoria's health services also responded quickly. Public hospitals provided emergency care to more than 800 people and admitted around 130 patients with a fire-related injury or illness, while the Red Cross administered more than 5200 first aid treatments. Medical assistance teams were deployed to regional and rural hospitals and field clinics were set up in a number of communities. A number of public and private services provided personal counselling to individuals and families. Centrelink social workers were also on hand to provide support in the relief centres.

Teams were mobilised to assist farmers manage the welfare of livestock, provide emergency fodder, replenish water supplies and repair fences.

Destruction, damage and loss

A total of 173 people lost their lives in the fires. Of these, 23 were children. A further 20 children under 18 lost one or both parents.

Around 800 people were treated in public hospital emergency wards during the fires, with 130 people admitted to hospitals. Of these, around 20 people had serious burns.

The fire destroyed or damaged:

- Around 430,000 hectares of forests, crops and pasture
- More than 3400 properties, with 2000 homes and hundreds of businesses lost
- More than 5000 rural properties along with sheds, farm equipment and infrastructure
- 70 National Parks and reserves
- More than 200 historic places and more than 200 indigenous heritage sites
- More than 820 kilometres of streams, rivers and creeks
- Three primary schools and three children's services, with 47 primary schools partially damaged
- Over 8200 kilometres of boundary fencing
- Over 11,000 farm animals killed or injured
- Over 3500 agricultural facilities such as dairies, woolsheds and hay sheds
- The habitats of more than 40 species of endangered animals

More than 10,100 insurance claims have been made, totalling \$1.09 billion.

The aftermath (*continued*)

The unprecedented volume of donations offered within days of the bushfires posed a major challenge for emergency relief operations. A donations coordination system, including a warehousing and distribution service, was put in place quickly to manage donations, from toiletries and clothes to white goods and furniture.

In the days immediately after the fires, the Australian and Victorian governments also acted quickly to:

- Set up the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund
- Establish the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority
- The Victorian Government established the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission to look at the causes of the fires and make recommendations about improving fire preparedness

In addition, the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service, comprising over 360 case managers from the Australian and Victorian governments and other agencies, was quickly set up to offer personalised support, information and advice to those affected by the bushfires.

The Australian and Victorian governments also held a National Day of Mourning on 22 February to honour the victims of the fires and acknowledge the courage and efforts of emergency service workers.

Full details of the immediate support provided after the fires are set out in Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority's 100 Day Report and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund's 6 Month Report.

Bushfire memorials will mark Australia's worst disaster

Across Victoria, memorials are being created to mark the devastation and loss of the February bushfires.

Nineteen Victorian communities are sharing in \$2.5 million through the Community Recovery Fund to create memorials to remember those who lost their lives in the bushfires, recognise the hard work going into the recovery and rebuilding effort, and celebrate the community spirit that has endured despite the hardship and trauma caused by the fires.

Memorials will take different forms, including physical monuments, gardens, sculptures and commemorative events. Local councils will work together with Community Recovery Committees and those who lost loved ones in the fires to determine what sort of memorials are appropriate and where they should be located.

Funding for memorials has been made available to the councils of Murrindindi, Latrobe, Mitchell, Nillumbik, Yarra Ranges, Alpine, Baw Baw, Greater Bendigo, Wellington, Whittlesea, Cardinia, Corangamite, Hepburn, Horsham, Indigo, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, South Gippsland and Southern Grampians.



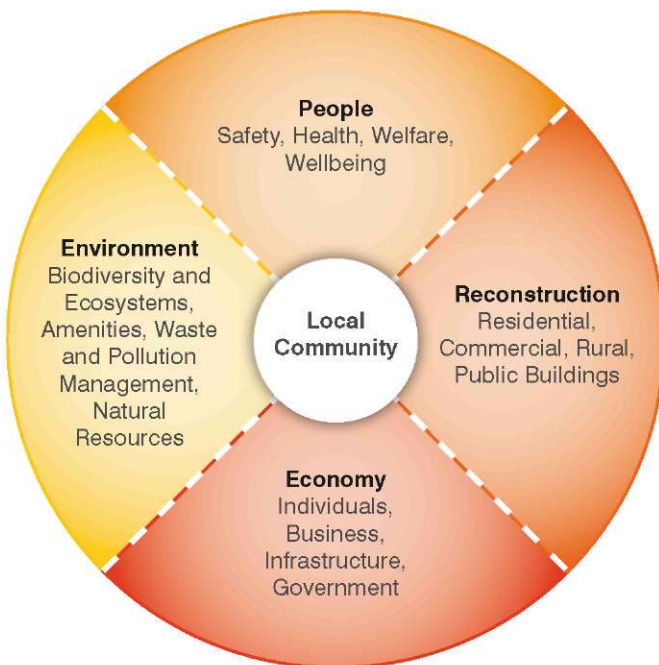
One of the temporary accommodation and recovery centres set up immediately after the fires



Snapshot of progress

The road to recovery from the 2009 bushfires will be long and hard. Much is being achieved, but many tough challenges lie ahead and the scale of the disaster means that reconstruction and recovery will take years, rather than months. However, the response by the Australian and Victorian governments, local councils and community groups, the generous donations from individuals and corporations, and the hard work of many people in fire-affected areas has enabled strong progress to be made towards rebuilding fire-affected communities.

At the end of September 2009, some \$867 million had been invested in the reconstruction and recovery effort, with significant progress made against the four key areas of disaster recovery - people; reconstruction; economy; and environment, including:



PEOPLE

- \$308 million has been allocated to individuals from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, providing financial and other help to people affected by the fires
- Almost \$80 million has been paid to individuals through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment, the Income Recovery Subsidy and Funeral/Memorial Assistance
- The Australian Government has also committed \$79 million on bushfire recovery projects
- More than \$20 million in Personal Hardship Grants have been provided to people for immediate emergency assistance and for those whose homes were lost or damaged in the fires.
- 366 households and families have been directly assisted with housing and up to 500 households and families have been assisted into the private rental market
- 363 case managers have been assisting more than 5000 households to address issues such as accommodation, finance, employment, education, counselling, health care and legal advice. This assistance is ongoing for two years for those who need it
- More than 21,000 pallets of donated essential items are being distributed to people in need
- 30 Community Recovery Committees are developing plans for the reconstruction and recovery of fire-affected towns and communities
- 10 Community Service Hubs continue to provide 'one stop shops' where people can receive information and advice about the full range of government services available to assist them
- A \$10 million Community Recovery Fund is providing funding for community sports clubs, community development officers, memorials and local projects

RECONSTRUCTION

- More than 3000 properties have been cleared, some two months ahead of schedule
- Insurance assessments have been completed for 99 per cent of damaged residential properties and commercial properties. Claims have been settled for 80 per cent of destroyed homes and 85 per cent of homes that were damaged, but still liveable
- Almost 1000 building permits have been issued to rebuild or repair homes, shops, sheds and other buildings in fire-affected communities
- More than 6000 kilometres of fire-damaged fences on farms have been repaired or replaced on more than 2000 properties
- Work on Rebuilding Advisory Centres for Kinglake and Marysville is underway

ECONOMY

- A \$51 million Business Support Package has been set up and is providing grants of between \$5000 and \$25,000 to small businesses and primary producers
- A \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package is supporting marketing campaigns to encourage visitors to return to fire-affected areas
- A \$7 million package from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for gifts of up to \$10,000 to primary producers and up to \$5000 for rural properties of two hectares or more
- Free business counselling, mentoring and advice services are being provided to affected businesses
- Farmers have been assisted with donated fodder, stock containment, loss assessments, recovery advice and field days
- Interim business hubs in Kinglake and Marysville are being established

ENVIRONMENT

- Urgent recovery work to protect threatened species has been carried out in State forests, National Parks and reserves
- More than 200 properties have had their waterway frontages rehabilitated
- More than 2800 landholders have received individualised assistance and advice on bushfire recovery including pasture management, erosion prevention, feed planning and animal health
- Trout eggs have been provided to farmers to assist recovery and fingerlings released into rivers in Murrindindi Shire
- Work has been carried out to reduce ash and sediment in waterways and catchments and to rehabilitate private land damaged during fire suppression activities
- More than \$10.8 million has been provided over two years for the Caring for Our Country Bushfire Recovery program
- Bushfire-affected households can access a solar hot water rebate, with \$5.4 million provided for this initiative

Further highlights of the recovery effort are set out in the Rebuilding Together Plan. A full account of reconstruction and recovery activities to the end of July 2009 is set out in the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority's Six Month Report, which can be viewed at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund

On 8 February 2009 the Victorian Government, in partnership with the Australian Government and the Australian Red Cross, established the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund. Through the generosity of Australian and international donors, the Appeal Fund raised more than \$386 million.

As of 30 September 2009, \$321 million had been allocated to survivors of the bushfires.

Gifts provided by the Appeal Fund fall into four main categories:

- Initial emergency payments – including payments to families that lost loved ones in the fires, tools of trade payments and immediate assistance for people who lost their principal place of residence
- Rebuilding and recovery payments – including payments to people whose homes or farms were destroyed or damaged and to tenants who lost the contents of rental properties
- Community payments – including relief payments to assist fire-affected councils to deliver disaster-related services and community events
- Support payments – including payments to people who were severely injured in the fires and psychological support services for people and small businesses facing immediate hardship, distress or misfortune

Forty-eight children and young adults who lost one or both their parents are sharing in \$7 million from the Appeal Fund, with the Fund making a commitment to provide support through to early adulthood.

Working in partnership with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, which is leading the community recovery process, the Advisory Panel is identifying community-generated projects the Fund can assist.

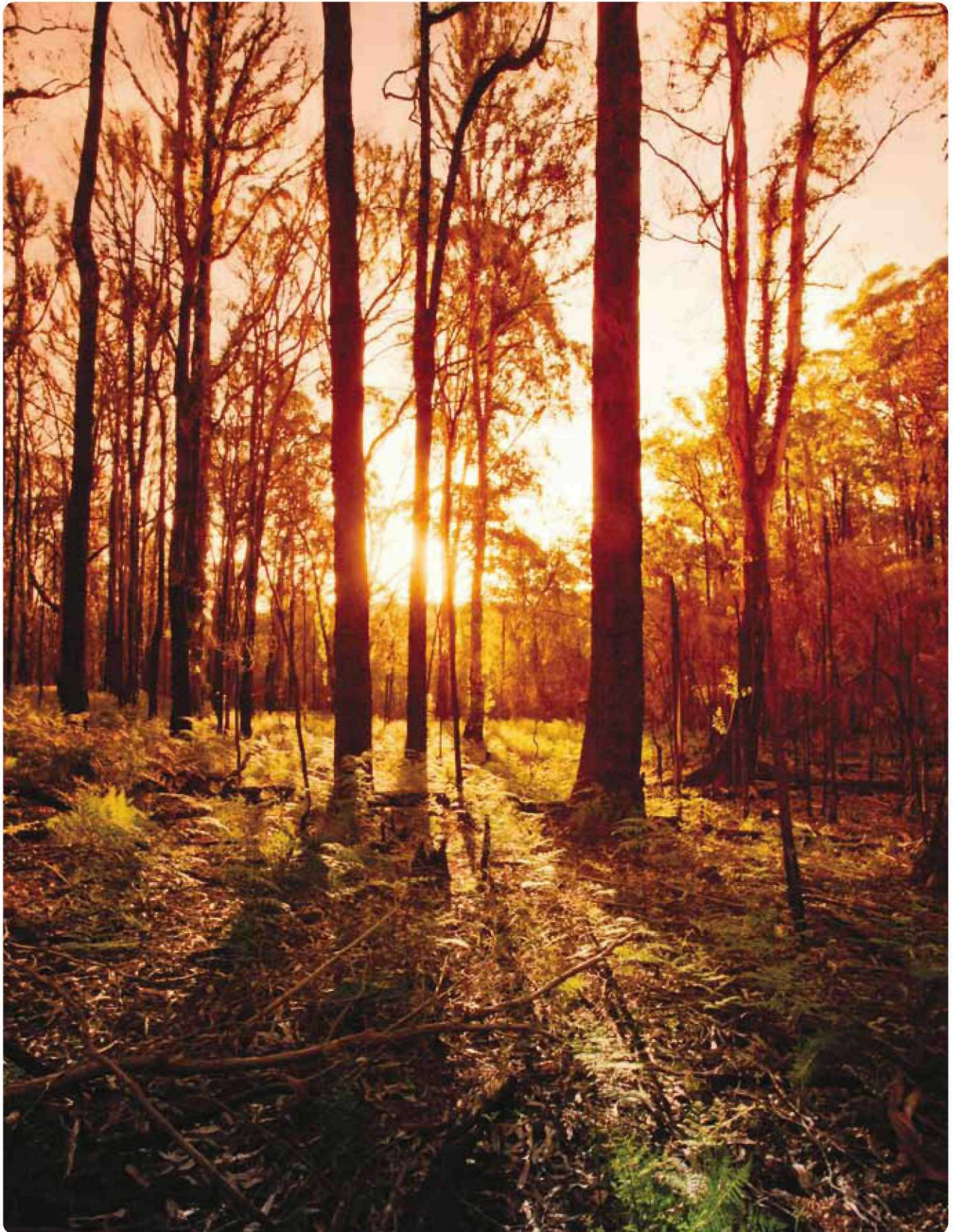
The Appeal Fund set aside up to 25 per cent of total money raised to rebuild communities. At the end of September, \$13 million of this had been allocated. The Fund is directing the remainder of this allocation to rebuilding projects that have been identified by communities as priorities for their reconstruction and recovery in Community Recovery Plans. The Rebuilding Together Plan includes \$56 million from this allocation for a range of community rebuilding projects.

The Australian Government recently announced changes to Australian Taxation legislation to allow monies under the Appeal Fund to be disbursed more flexibly. These changes are a one-off measure that recognises the unprecedented circumstances of the bushfires and allow the Fund to make payments to assist orphaned minors, households, farmers and assistance for community benefit projects.

Money from the Appeal Fund is distributed through the Victorian Department of Human Services, under the oversight of an independent Advisory Panel. The panel was chaired by the former Governor of Victoria, John Landy AC CVO MBE, until 8 September when he was succeeded by former Deputy Premier of Victoria, the Hon Pat McNamara.

Other members of the panel are: Professor Glyn Davis AC (Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne), Cr Lyn Gunter (Mayor of Murrindindi Shire Council), the Hon Robert Tickner (Chief Executive of Australian Red Cross and former Australian Government Minister), Christine Nixon, APM (Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority), Kerry Murphy, PSM, AFSM (Chairman, Country Fire Authority) and Pam White (Executive Director, Bushfire Recovery, Department of Human Services).

Full details of how the funds raised by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal have been allocated and distributed is available at the Fund's website: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal>



The Rebuilding Together Plan

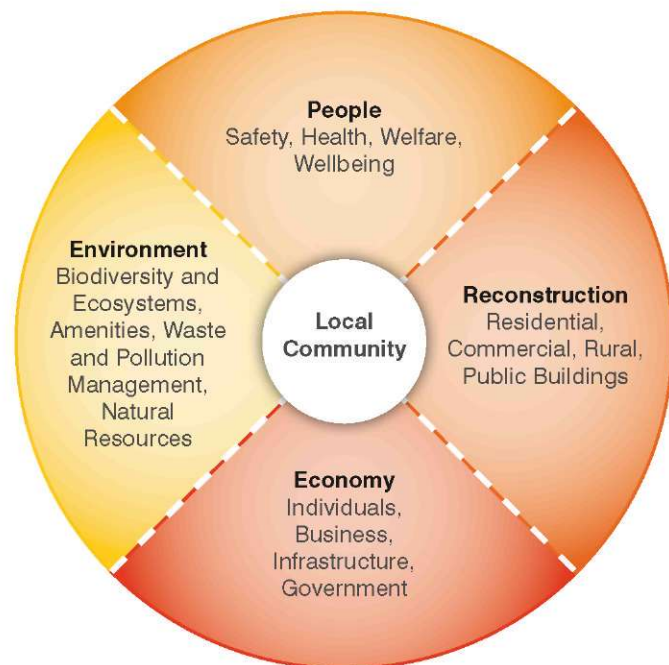
The Rebuilding Together Plan sets out the next steps for the recovery and rebuilding of fire-affected communities. It will deliver initiatives and projects to support people as they rebuild their homes, replace and redevelop vital community facilities and infrastructure, and actively drive the rebuilding of communities over the next two years.

The Plan has been funded by the Australian and Victorian governments (\$117 million), the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (\$56 million) and corporate, community and philanthropic donors (\$20 million).

It will be delivered by Australian and Victorian government departments and agencies, local councils, private firms and community organisations. The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority will oversee the implementation of the Plan, ensuring that the work program is carried out, that timelines and budgets are met, and that fire-affected communities receive regular progress reports.

Framework for the Plan

The Rebuilding Together Plan is based on the disaster recovery framework being used by the Authority to guide its activities. This framework acknowledges that communities and individuals recover best when they are supported to manage their own recovery. This principle underpins the framework and the Authority's work. The Plan follows this framework and will be delivered across four recognised 'pillars' of disaster recovery – people, reconstruction, economy and environment – with local communities at the centre.





Redesdale Community Recovery Committee meeting

Community engagement with the Plan

The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority is strongly committed to a recovery process that engages communities in deciding their own needs and priorities. The Plan aims to reflect the views of bushfire-affected communities; deliver projects that these communities have identified as priorities and that will aid their social and economic recovery following the fires; and coordinate and support recovery efforts.

More than 900 projects have been identified by communities in Community Recovery Plans.

The Rebuilding Together Plan funds a range of these projects, focussing on those that will contribute to the economic and social recovery of communities following the bushfires. The Authority will work with communities as these projects are developed, assist in resolving problems and help to ensure that projects are delivered on time and in accordance with community expectations. The Authority will continue to work with communities to explore other options for developing, funding and delivering projects that are not supported through the Plan, where appropriate.

Local Councils and the Plan

With around one third of Victoria's 79 municipalities affected by the 2009 bushfires, Local Government Councils are playing a crucial part in reconstruction and recovery.

Councils across Victoria are working with emergency services, Australian and Victorian government departments, community organisations and others to rebuild community facilities and infrastructure, restore townships, support residents and create new economic opportunities. Councils also have important responsibilities in improving the bushfire preparedness of their communities, including implementing the new building standards introduced by the Victorian Government.

The Plan acknowledges that Councils are particularly important in providing the local leadership, vision and drive that are essential to effective, long-term community recovery. In delivering initiatives and projects, the Plan identifies that Councils understand the needs of their communities, are able to draw disparate groups together and are best placed to harness a community's expertise and energy for different tasks at various times.

The Plan does not specifically identify the significant financial contribution Councils are making across bushfire-affected communities.

However, the Plan also takes into account the significant additional demands placed on Councils as a result of the bushfires. The Authority has worked closely with Councils since the fires and recognises that some – especially those in the most severely affected areas – will need additional support and assistance during the reconstruction and recovery process. The Authority will continue to work alongside Councils as they lead their communities in the recovery effort to ensure that the priority projects identified by communities are delivered.

Private donors and the Plan

As well as the generous donations made through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, corporate Australia, community service organisations and philanthropic bodies have contributed goods, services and funding to the value of some \$20 million for use on community projects.

The Authority's donations team is working with donors to match their pledges to suitable projects identified in Community Recovery and Municipal Plans. These projects have been identified as priorities by communities, are not being funded by another means (eg Australian or Victorian government or Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund), and will contribute towards the social and economic recovery of communities.

The Authority is continuing to meet with organisations across Victoria and Australia to encourage them to support rebuilding projects.

The Authority, in conjunction with the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, has also played a coordinating role with the philanthropic sector to focus their funding on projects identified through the Community Recovery and Municipal Plans. The philanthropic sector is committed to supporting medium to long term recovery and rebuilding projects in bushfire affected communities. The Authority will continue to work with these organisations to ensure their funds are distributed equitably across Victoria.

Some of the donors that have contributed or pledged more than \$500,000 in support as part of the bushfire reconstruction and recovery effort are:

- Australand
- Australian Children's Trust
- Bendigo Bank – Community Enterprise Foundation
- Bluescope Steel
- David Jones
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)
- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- Ikea
- LinFox
- Lions Club
- McDonalds
- Myer Foundation
- Rete Italia
- Rotary
- The Salvation Army
- Tupperware
- Discretionary funding for Berry Street bushfire case management service (Bendigo Bank - Community Enterprise Foundation, Salvation Army)
- Adopt-a-container project in the Yarra Ranges (Bendigo Bank - Community Enterprise Foundation)
- Kinglake Business Network Centre (Salvation Army)
- Marysville Market fit-out (Rotary)
- Sheds for kitchens, dining areas and storage at Kinglake, Flowerdale and Marysville temporary villages (Bluescope Steel)
- Kitchens and dining furniture at Kinglake, Flowerdale and Marysville temporary villages (Ikea)
- Kitchen appliances at the Kinglake, Flowerdale and Marysville temporary villages (Bosch)
- Pergola and BBQ area at Kinglake temporary village (Monash University)
- Funding and volunteer support for community events in Marysville and Kinglake (Ultradata)

Successful funding matches to date include:

- Gym Equipment for the Buxton Hall (Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal)
- Circus Oz tour of Kinglake, Flowerdale and Marysville (Bendigo Bank - Community Enterprise Foundation, Myer Foundation, FRRR)
- Ultralight firefighting tanker for Daylesford CFA (Bendigo Bank - Community Enterprise Foundation)

Each bushfire-affected community is unique and has very specific rebuilding needs. The Rebuilding Together Plan delivers the next steps to address the needs and priorities of communities as identified in their Community Recovery Plans. This ensures tailored, localised responses, including targeted economic incentives and infrastructure to ensure that rebuilding leads to local jobs, successful businesses, attractive communities and sustainable futures.

One donor project that is already underway is the redevelopment of the Strathewen Recreation Reserve into a top-quality sports hub. This project – which is considered a high priority by the local community – is being delivered with the support of more than \$500,000 in donated materials and labour from commercial developer Australand.

The Australian and Victorian governments are providing a further \$200,000 for the project from the \$10 million Community Recovery Fund.

The Authority is in the process of matching the remaining donations to suitable community projects and will continue to work with local councils and communities through this process.

The Scope of the Plan

The Plan focuses on reconstruction, rebuilding and long-term recovery. This means that it does not include:

- Initiatives that are not related directly to fire-affected communities
- Disaster response activities undertaken at the time of the fires
- Initiatives that duplicate services being provided by the private sector
- Services that are part of the Australian and Victorian government's 'normal business' and would be provided regardless of whether the fires occurred

While some initiatives in the Plan relate to community capacity building in the event of future fires and other emergencies, in general, the development of longer term fire-preparedness activities will be considered following the final recommendations of the Royal Commission, due to be delivered in mid-2010. Actions being taken now to prepare Victoria for the next bushfire season can be found on the Country Fire Authority's website: www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Community Recovery Plans

Community Recovery Plans are a way of ensuring that the needs and priorities identified by fire-affected communities direct and drive the rebuilding effort.

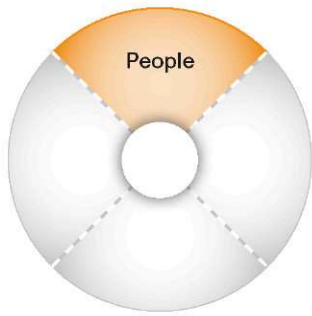
Under Victoria's *Emergency Management Act 1986*, Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) can be set up after a disaster to support and coordinate community recovery activities. Almost immediately after the fire, many communities came together to form CRCs, which began to develop long term Community Recovery Plans.

These plans incorporate the views of local residents and businesses in identifying community priorities for reconstruction and recovery. The plans list specific needs, identify priority projects and initiatives, and set out a vision for the future for each community. Priorities identified by communities include restoring facilities such as local halls, community centres and sportsgrounds, rebuilding infrastructure such as roads and bridges, and initiatives to help small businesses to recover. The priorities identified in the plans have guided the development of the work program in the Rebuilding Together Plan and will continue to guide reconstruction and rebuilding into the future.

The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (the Authority) has been working with local councils and communities to establish CRCs and to develop Community Recovery Plans. Committees have been established in 30 regions across Victoria.

The steps involved in developing and implementing Community Recovery Plans are set out below:

- Step 1** Community Recovery Committee (CRC) consults with community to develop a Community Recovery Plan. This may include hosting a community planning session or other forms of community participation and engagement.
- Step 2** Community Recovery Plan is drafted in consultation with the community and endorsed by the CRC.
- Step 3** Community Recovery Plan is submitted to the Authority and the relevant local council. Local councils are given the opportunity to view and comment on the plans.
- Step 4** The Authority identifies elements within the plan that may be funded through the Rebuilding Together Plan.
- Step 5** CRCs are requested to provide the Authority with additional information relating to project priorities. While it is up to each CRC to decide how to best prioritise their projects, guidelines are available from the Authority to provide assistance.
- Step 6** Rebuilding Together Plan is released. A number of priority projects that are critical to the social and economic recovery of communities will be funded through this Plan. This is the next stage of funded projects in bushfire-affected areas.
- Step 7** The Authority continues to work with CRCs to assess remaining projects not delivered through the Rebuilding Together Plan and to consider the best ways of funding these projects. This may involve continuing to develop the project for government support and/or seeking the support of corporate and philanthropic donors, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and other organisations.
- Step 8** The Authority continues to provide feedback on the funding status of projects to CRCs.
- Step 9** Where there is interest in funding a project, the Authority brokers discussions between CRCs and interested parties, and helps CRCs to develop plans and governance arrangements for projects.
- Step 10** Where projects are funded, formal agreements are drawn up between the funding agency and the owner of the project setting out terms and conditions.
- Step 11** Project delivery proceeds, including ongoing project monitoring and reporting between the relevant parties, including CRCs, local councils and the Authority.
- Step 12** For projects that are not funded by any sources, the Authority assists CRCs to develop alternative strategies.



People – The Snapshot

Across the many fire-affected communities, the recovery and rebuilding process will take years rather than months. That's why the Rebuilding Together Plan delivers additional assistance and support services to help individuals and families get back on their feet and start rebuilding their homes and lives

In communities across Victoria, Australian and Victorian government agencies, community organisations and many volunteers are providing support to individuals, households and communities as they recover from personal and financial losses caused by the fires. This includes providing temporary accommodation and financial assistance, distributing donations of clothing and other goods, and offering personalised case management and counselling services.

The Plan builds on this support, as well as supporting new projects and initiatives identified by communities as being important to their recovery.

The challenges ahead

While personal, financial and other support continues to be provided in fire-affected communities, further assistance will be needed as people move forward with their lives. In particular, many people will need help with difficult decisions and issues. The challenges they face include:

- Ongoing grief and trauma as people struggle to deal with the loss of loved ones, serious injuries, the loss of their homes and major changes in their lives
- Dislocation from community, friends and family due to people's temporary accommodation being in a different location from where they originally lived
- Loss of property and personal belongings, requiring people to face the daunting task of 'starting again'

Additional support delivered through the Plan will help people to deal with these issues as they recover from the losses and damage suffered in the fires.



What's in the Plan

The Plan provides \$93.4 million for ongoing support to people and communities as they rebuild including:

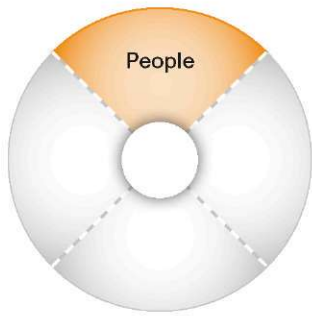
- \$43 million from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund to rebuild local community assets, such as halls and recreational facilities, as well as for projects that will strengthen and connect communities and build their capacity
- \$17.5 million for ongoing housing, accommodation and support services
- \$13 million from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for:
 - Additional personal support and counselling services
 - Grants to community groups to better support young people affected by the fires
 - Projects to support parents and other family members with their recovery
 - Health and wellbeing projects for older bushfire-affected people
- \$4.9 million for additional support for children, teachers, school staff and parents
- \$9.2 million for the continued operation of bushfire recovery services, including ten Community Service Hubs
- A further \$4 million to help people with accommodation or re-establishment expenses
- \$1.8 million for a Red Cross Outreach Program to bushfire-affected people who are reluctant to access services through other means

People – What's been done already

A wide range of services and staff have been mobilised to deliver support to people, households and communities affected by the 2009 bushfires.

Health and support services

- To date, the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service has provided around 360 case managers to give personalised support, information and advice to more than 5000 people and households. Case management support is continuing for those people who need it, with funding provided until February 2011. For people who have ongoing needs beyond two years, we will work to ensure that they are linked into the specialist or ongoing services they require.
- Health services have been restored in fire-affected areas, including opening a temporary Kinglake Ranges Health Centre, upgrading facilities in the Buxton clinic to assist Marysville residents and opening the new Yarra Glen medical practice as scheduled in June.
- Arrangements for responding to medical emergencies in the Kinglake area are in place with a day shift paramedic crew based at Kinglake and the Whittlesea ambulance branch extended to operate as a 24-hour service.
- Counselling and support has been offered to assist people deal with psychological stress, including providing 20 community information sessions and more than 230 individual counselling services. More than 300 health professionals have been given training to assist in providing psychological support.
- Additional family support services have been provided in fire-affected communities, including an extension of child and family counselling and crisis support services, special School Holiday Programs, extra playgroups and a Special Child Care Benefit.
- As well as Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund payments, more than \$20 million in Personal Hardship Grants have been provided to people for immediate emergency assistance and for those whose homes were lost or damaged in the fires.



- Increased funding has been provided to bushfire-affected Divisions of General Practice for people experiencing persistent psychological symptoms as a result of the tragedy.
- There has been more support to aid the psychological recovery of communities over the longer term by encouraging appropriate mental health promotion activities with a focus on children and people isolated as a result of the bushfires.
- More support has been provided for telephone based counselling and callback services.
- Mental health professionals have been provided with more training and support.
- Additional funding has been provided for the Schools Chaplaincy Program.

Distribution of donations

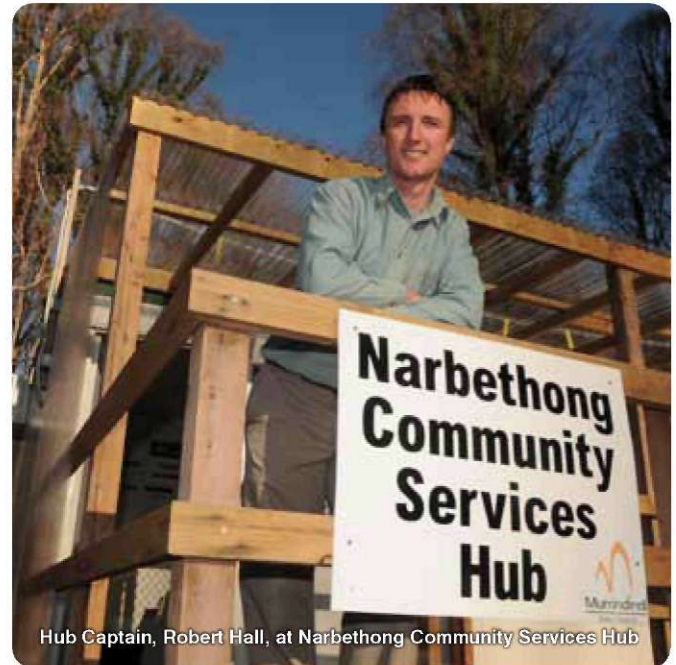
- More than \$308 million has been allocated to people by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund through a number of different gifts, including initial emergency payments to help people whose homes were destroyed or damaged, psychological support, bereavement payments, payments for people who were severely injured, and payments to replace tools of trade lost in the fires.
- Goods and services pledged by corporate donors are going where they are most needed, with the Authority coordinating the approach.
- A system for distributing 21,000 pallets of everyday items (such as clothing, toiletries and toys) donated by the community has been established and is being managed by Toll. Around 1000 families have been accessing these items every week since the fires.
- More than 6000 referral cards have been distributed to people needing to access material aid.

Community programs, consultation and engagement

- The \$10 million Community Recovery Fund has been set up to assist with community recovery, aid community development and strengthen community capacity building for the future. It includes \$3 million for community sports clubs; \$1.75 million for Community Development Officers; \$2.5 million for memorials in affected communities; and \$2.75 million for community grants and local community projects.
- Community Recovery Committees have been formed in 30 communities. As well as preparing Community Recovery Plans (see page 22), these committees have organised activities and events designed to bring people together and retain a sense of community throughout the recovery process.
- Bushfire Legal Help has delivered free legal services to bushfire-affected people and communities. For the first seven months after the fires it was resourced by partner agencies from the legal profession. The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is funding a bushfire referral lawyer for the next eight months who will coordinate pro bono referrals to lawyers and barristers on a diverse range of legal issues.
- The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority has held meetings in fire-affected communities across the state to listen to the views and concerns of survivors and to provide information about the recovery effort.
- The Chair of the Authority, Christine Nixon, has visited towns in all fire-affected areas and attended many community events. The Prime Minister, the Premier of Victoria and Australian Government and Victorian Government Ministers have also travelled widely throughout fire-affected areas.
- Minister Jenny Macklin, as the Australian Government Coordinating Minister for Victorian Bushfire Recovery, is supported by Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction, who has visited bushfire-affected communities and spoken directly to many people affected by the bushfires.
- The Australian Government held a Community Cabinet meeting in Emerald and the Victorian Government held Community Cabinet meetings in the Yarra Valley, Gippsland, Eaglehawk and Redesdale.



Pheasant Creek material aid distribution point



Hub Captain, Robert Hall, at Narbethong Community Services Hub

Community Service Hubs

Many people affected by the bushfires need multiple services to get back on their feet.

Ten Community Service Hubs have been established in areas most affected by the fires, providing 'one stop shops' where people can receive information and advice about the full range of Australian and Victorian government services available to assist them.

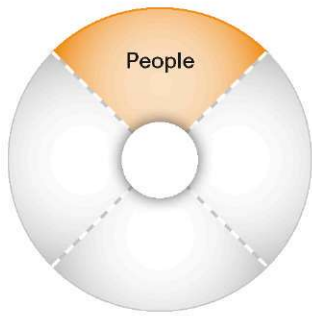
The Hubs also serve as drop-in centres, giving people a place to meet, talk about their experiences and develop support networks.

Hubs have been established in Traralgon South, Marysville, Kinglake, Kinglake West, Buxton, Narbethong, Whittlesea, Alexandra, Hurstbridge and Flowerdale.

The Hubs have progressed from temporary facilities, established immediately after the fires, to more permanent centres. They have adjusted their services and operating hours to meet changing demands as communities move from needing emergency help to requiring assistance with rebuilding.

Services provided by the Hubs continue to be reviewed to make sure they meet changing community circumstances. In most places, the Hubs will eventually be scaled down as services return to normal. However, in some places where there is an ongoing service gap, there may be an opportunity for the Hub to remain open for a longer period.

The plan includes an additional \$9.2 million for the continued operation of bushfire recovery services, including ten Community Service Hubs.



People – The Rebuilding Together Plan

The Plan provides \$93.4 million for ongoing support to people and communities as they rebuild

Recovering and rebuilding community assets

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is providing support for a range of community projects identified as priorities in Community Recovery Plans with funding of \$43 million allocated under the plan.

Some \$12 million of this has already been allocated to projects that are ready to progress, including rebuilding community halls and multipurpose centres, building new community facilities, restoring recreational facilities, and repairing or building walking and cycling paths.

These projects are being funded through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, subject to advice from the Australian Taxation Office being finalised and the Authority receiving robust project plans and final costings.

Other funding has been set aside for projects aimed at strengthening and supporting communities through their recovery.

Additional funding is available from the Fund for other community projects identified in Community Recovery Plans. It will be allocated to specific projects once they are ready to progress and meet the Fund's guidelines for allocating donor money. The projects must align with the expectations of affected individuals and communities and not necessarily duplicate other funding and not be a core responsibility of government.

Community halls and multipurpose centres

Many communities are particularly eager to rebuild community halls and centres as these provide a venue for public events and recovery activities, as well as a place for people to gather as they rebuild.

More than 20 community halls in fire-affected communities will be upgraded, while new facilities will be built in other communities.

Recreation facilities and parks

Communities are also eager to restore facilities such as picnic areas, skate parks and community gardens. These facilities assist the recovery process by providing open public spaces for people to meet, socialise and relax, and by providing facilities that will re-engage people in sporting and recreational activities.

As part of the Plan, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is also supporting projects to regenerate and redevelop recreational and sporting facilities in fire-affected communities, in line with Community Recovery Plan priorities.

Building and repairing walking and cycling trails

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will support the building, repair and upgrade of walking and cycling trails within and between fire-affected communities.

These trails are important assets for local communities, as well as visitor attractions. Initial projects to be funded include:

- A Triangle walking and cycling trail connecting communities in the Marysville area
- A walking path between the school and community hall in Strathewen
- An all-purpose walking, cycling and horse riding track at Toolangi



Community strengthening projects

Many communities have identified initiatives within their Community Recovery Plans that aim to promote and strengthen a sense of community, reduce social isolation and create closer ties between fire-affected communities.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will support a range of initiatives designed to strengthen and connect communities, such as the Redesdale farmers market and arts show.

Building community capacity for future disasters

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will also support activities that will help communities to prepare for future fire seasons and other emergencies as part of the Plan.

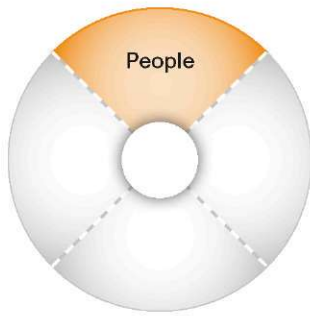
An important part of the recovery process is for communities to feel prepared for future fires and other potential emergencies. The Fund will support a range of community-run activities in fire-affected communities aimed at raising awareness about potential household and community risks, and ensuring that communities are better prepared for emergencies.

Reconnecting with the natural environment

Many fire-affected communities have identified the need for activities that encourage local communities to reconnect with, and gain a better understanding of, their local natural environment. The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is providing support to local environmental projects proposed by communities in their Community Recovery Plans.

Key government agencies and the People and Parks Foundation will work with local councils and communities to deliver these projects.

For the full list of community projects that have been allocated funding to date see page 62.



Housing, accommodation and support services

Since the bushfires, people who lost their homes have been assisted to move into temporary accommodation. Through the Department of Human Services, more than 860 households and families have been helped with temporary accommodation. This service has expanded to include the creation of temporary villages; the management of tenancies in temporary accommodation (including repairing properties); the provision of caravans to accommodate people as they rebuild on their blocks; assistance with paying rent and bonds to enable people to access the private rental market; and managing donations of accommodation.

The Plan will provide an additional \$17.5 million to continue this vital service for two years, supporting people in fire-affected communities as they rebuild or move from temporary accommodation into permanent housing.

Additional personal support services

Many fire-affected people are still experiencing difficulty in coming to terms with the personal losses they suffered in the fires and need extra support to move forward with their lives.

The Plan includes \$13 million from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for additional personal support services.

Personal support and counselling

This includes funding of \$4.2 million for personal support and counselling services in fire-affected communities.

This funding will provide:

- Vouchers for people to access up to six one-hour counselling sessions (valued at \$100 per session).
- Support groups for people who have been bereaved due to the bushfires. Some six support groups have been established so far.

Support for children and young people

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will provide \$4.6 million to support two new initiatives to deliver targeted support to children, young people and their families:

- A Youth Bushfire Response Gift program will see grants distributed to community groups to support young people affected by the fires. The program will fund Youth Participation/Development Workers (to support young people aged 10 to 19 in participating in community events and fire recovery activities) and Youth Outreach Workers (to support young people aged 20 to 26).
- An online mental health information and support service to assist young people affected by the fires.

Targeted programs for families

This \$2.9 million suite of projects funded by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will support parents and other family members with their recovery.

The projects include:

- Parent information and support groups – to provide parents with information and strategies to help them deal with stress and trauma being experienced by their children
- 'Bush to Beach' Women's Leadership and Men's Support retreats – the aim of the retreats is to assist individuals to relieve psychological distress and connect with each other
- 'Women Gathering after the Fire' – this program aims to bring women together for friendship, fun and support. They will receive leadership training to better cope with stresses after the bushfires and will have the opportunity reconnect in a safe environment
- 'Men Building Bridges' – using community facilities such as Men's Sheds, this program will facilitate workshops and working bees as a way for men to begin talking and sharing their bushfire experiences. The program will seek to provide opportunities for men to learn skills and knowledge about rebuilding after the bushfires, which will be linked to the community rebuilding process



The first Bush to Beach Women's Retreat held in Lorne this year. The Plan provides funding for a second retreat.

Targeted programs for older people

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is providing \$1.3 million towards health and wellbeing projects for older bushfire-affected people.

This program will deliver locally based opportunities for older people to maintain their physical, nutritional and emotional health, such as yoga and tai chi classes, gardening projects, educational classes and other activities.

Additional support for children & teachers

As well as the additional support from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for young people, **the Plan includes \$4.9 million for additional support staff for schools in bushfire-affected areas**, including additional relief teachers to allow for permanent staff to attend training courses.

Community Service Hubs

The Plan provides \$9.2 million to support bushfire recovery services, including the ongoing operation of **ten Community Service Hubs in fire-affected communities until 2011**.

Community Service Hubs are playing a vital role in helping people in fire-affected areas to receive support, assistance, advice and information that are relevant to their needs and to their community's circumstances. The support provided by the Hubs has shifted from initially offering emergency

assistance to providing advice and information about returning to community life and accessing regular services. The Plan provides ongoing support for the operation of the Hubs as people and communities rebuild. Some hubs will continue operation into 2011, where needed.

Personal hardship grants

People in fire-affected areas have received financial assistance from a variety of sources, including the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, Australian and Victorian government programs, and private and corporate donors. In addition, more than \$20 million has been provided in Personal Hardship Grants to people for immediate emergency assistance and for those whose homes were lost or damaged in the fires.

In addition to the \$20 million already distributed through Personal Hardship Grants, **the Rebuilding Together Plan allocates a further \$4 million in 2009/10 to provide grants to people needing help with temporary accommodation or re-establishment expenses**.

Red Cross outreach program

This \$1.8 million program over three years allows for **important outreach support services to continue to bushfire-affected people who are reluctant to access them through other means**. The Red Cross program will also develop processes and resources building on learnings from the February 2009 fires.





The Plan includes funding from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for community strengthening projects like the recent St Andrews Celebration Day

CASE STUDY

Artists helping communities to recover

The arts have a powerful capacity to help people recover from disasters and move forward.

As communities across Victoria recover from the fires, local artists are playing an important part in recording the impact of the fires, helping people to express themselves and creating meaningful memorials and experiences. More than 20 arts projects have been undertaken in fire-affected communities, ranging from photography exhibitions and filmmaking to theatrical performances and songwriting.

In Strathewen, a local artist is working with the community to create special letterboxes for a survivor group of around 60 households.

In Kinglake, the Kinglake Phoenix Singers are providing musical entertainment to fire-affected communities, while the Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House has created *Renewal*, an exhibition showcasing the work of local visual artists, poets and songwriters affected by the fires.

Andrew Follows (a legally blind photographer) held a three day *Journey of Changes* photographic exhibition in Narbethong, featuring photos of the Narbethong/

Marysville area before and after the fires, with 20 per cent of the proceeds from sales going to the Narbethong CFA. Another photographer, Sue Clisby, is working with students in Flowerdale to use photographs and words to tell their stories about the fires.

In Kyneton, local mosaic artist Kathryn Portelli has created 295 metal leaves to be given to fire survivors and other members of the community to paint as part of a commemorative public mural.

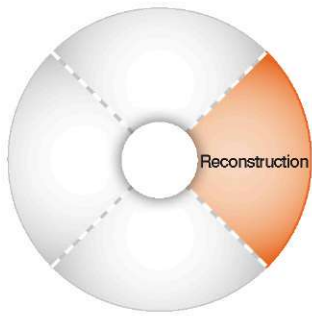
Renowned Archeron artist Marian Rennie has created a unique exhibition that uses the regeneration of nature to symbolise the manner in which affected communities are also renewing themselves.

In Marysville, proceeds from the book *Marysville in Loving Memory* were given to the CFA and Marysville Cultural Committee.

These and other projects are being supported through the \$100,000 Victorian Government's Arts Recovery Quick Response Program. Further community arts programs will be supported as part of the Plan.



In July 2009, artist Meg Viney started *A Stitch in Time*, to unite and heal women who were impacted by the fires in Boolarra, Gippsland. Once a week Meg has a quilt making group with 14 women, giving them a chance to come together to talk, share stories and problems, and support each other. *A Stitch in Time* is made possible through the Victorian Government's Arts Recovery Quick Response Program.



Reconstruction – The Snapshot

With the clean-up program completed, the reconstruction and recovery effort is focused on actively helping people to rebuild their homes and supporting communities to rebuild vital facilities and infrastructure

The Rebuilding Together Plan delivers the next steps in supporting people to rebuild homes, constructing essential community services and vital public infrastructure, while ensuring that these facilities are improved and better prepared for the future.

The Plan delivers a number of priority projects to restore or rebuild assets and facilities that have been identified by communities as being essential to their recovery.

The challenges ahead

The current issues facing fire-affected communities as they rebuild include:

- The number of people building a home for the first time with little prior knowledge of building processes or the issues that may be involved
- The emotional challenge of whether to rebuild in the area, move away or consider other options
- The need to rebuild core community facilities and infrastructure, such as schools, health services and roads, as quickly as possible
- The availability of tradespeople, especially in remote areas
- The importance of retaining community identity and character, and of involving communities in decisions about the future of their towns

The Plan aims to address these issues and provide the support people and communities need to rebuild the homes, facilities and infrastructure that are essential to their future prosperity and wellbeing.



What's in the Plan

The Rebuilding Together Plan provides \$60.5 million to drive reconstruction and rebuilding:

- \$20.4 million to replace community facilities destroyed in the fires and rebuild them as co-located, multipurpose facilities where possible
- \$20 million for community rebuilding projects from corporate and philanthropic donors
- \$6.5 million to replace and restore state-owned facilities in fire-affected towns
- \$6 million to restore core services and infrastructure
- \$4.6 million for rebuilding community and council buildings and other infrastructure
- \$2.5 million to provide advice and information to residents about rebuilding their homes
- \$500,000 to provide project management support to Murrindindi Shire Council through this rebuilding process



Whittlesea temporary accommodation was recently opened

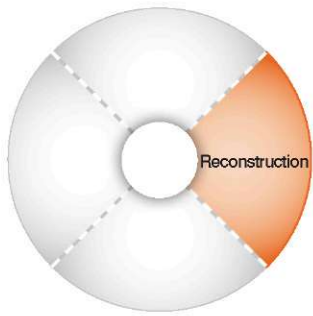
Reconstruction – What's been done already

Completion of clean-up project

- The bushfire clean-up project was officially completed two months ahead of schedule in July.
- More than 3000 properties have been cleared and more than 400,000 tonnes of bushfire affected material transported, while more than 950 properties have had their rainwater tanks cleaned.
- Some 1286 clean-up and restoration grants worth \$5000 each have been approved for farmers and small businesses, along with 627 supplementary clean-up and restoration grants worth \$20,000 each.

Providing temporary housing

- Temporary housing villages have been established in Kinglake, Flowerdale and Marysville – and temporary housing in Whittlesea – with the capacity to cater for more than 160 families and 120 singles.
- More than 1500 households have been helped to access temporary to medium-term housing, including public or community housing, caravans, temporary villages and private rental housing.
- Housing bushfire teams are working closely with case managers, families and households to make progress towards achieving permanent housing options for people in temporary accommodation.



Temporary toilets and showers are being delivered to people as they rebuild



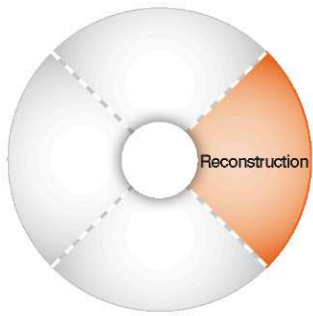
Building Advisers are helping people with rebuilding advice and information

Rebuilding homes and communities

- Almost 1000 building permits have been approved to rebuild houses, sheds, businesses and other structures lost or damaged in the fires.
- A Rebuilding Advisory Service is operating where people can get expert advice on all aspects of house building. The current mobile service will be complemented by two Rebuilding Advisory Centres to be constructed as part of the Plan in Marysville and Kinglake, with officers also 'roving' between communities as required.
- Free portable toilets and showers have been made available to more than 290 households living in temporary accommodation on their land while they rebuild.
- Through the Building Commission, more than 70 volunteer building practitioners and others have been trained to assess Bushfire Attack Levels - more than 440 home owners have been helped with these assessments.
- New building standards have been introduced to ensure that homes are better protected from bushfires. The Building Commission has conducted an education program to inform the building industry and consumers about these new regulations.

Restoring facilities and infrastructure

- The \$10 million Community Recovery Fund was established by the Australian and Victorian governments to provide grants to community groups and sporting clubs to help them rebuild. The Fund has assisted local groups to reconstruct clubrooms and infrastructure, and restore bowling greens, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools and other community facilities.
- \$16 million has been spent restoring damaged roads, including roadside clearing. The work has been completed in many areas, with the remainder to be done by the end of 2009.
- The restoration of rail infrastructure on metropolitan and regional lines is complete, including repairs to sleepers, bridges, retaining walls, signal masts and overhead structures.
- Work is underway with Marysville community to develop detailed strategic plans for rebuilding the town.
- Planning has commenced for rebuilding vital community facilities such as schools, kindergartens, police stations and CFA stations.
- The Marysville DSE office has been repaired and is now fully functioning. It is housing other Victorian Government agencies until their buildings are reinstated.
- Some \$1.5 million is being provided to support volunteers who are repairing fencing on rural properties. All up volunteer teams, contractors and private landholders have completed more than 6100 kilometres of boundary fencing on 1360 properties.



Reconstruction – The Rebuilding Together Plan

The Rebuilding Together Plan provides a further \$60.5 million to actively drive the next steps in the reconstruction and rebuilding process.



Ian Gilroy-Scott and his wife lost their Callignee house in the bushfires but a replacement is well under way

Building new community centres

The reconstruction program is not simply about rebuilding facilities such as schools and health services; it also offers the opportunity to improve the way in which services are delivered and to create new multipurpose centres that can be used by the entire community.

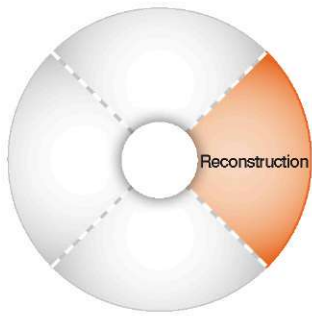
The Plan provides \$20.4 million to replace facilities destroyed in the fires, co-locate key services and build multipurpose centres that will provide a range of integrated community services.

Middle Kinglake Education and Community Recreation Precinct (\$8.6 million)

This new precinct will replace community facilities destroyed in the fires and will include a new primary school and an early childhood centre (comprising a kindergarten, child care centre and maternal and child health services). The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will contribute a further \$2 million to build a new community facility as part of the precinct, taking funding under the Plan for this important project to \$10.6 million. This comes on top of \$1.7 million already allocated.

The precinct will cluster these core community facilities to enhance the learning opportunities for young children, integrate community recreation facilities, include sustainable energy and water technologies, and provide greater fire safety.





The new community centre will provide spaces for performances, arts, meetings, functions, sports and recreation. It will be used by the school and kindergarten and by the community throughout the year.

The precinct will consolidate education, recreation and sporting facilities for all the communities of the Kinglake Ranges and help generate an even stronger community identity and spirit.

Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub (\$5.2 million)

The Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub will cluster core community facilities including the primary school, children's centre (childcare, maternal and child health, kindergarten and playgroup), multipurpose community meeting space, community health service and recreation centre.

The benefits of locating these services in close proximity to each other includes better energy and water efficiency, greater convenience for families accessing services and closer integration between services (eg health services provided to children in the preschool and school).

The community meeting space will replace a number of assets destroyed in the fires and will be used by community groups and education and health services, along with social and recreational clubs.

It is expected that a construction tender for the project will be awarded by the end of October 2009, with building expected to commence before the end of the year.

Funding in the Plan is on top of \$1.8 million already allocated for the primary school. Further support is also being sourced for the recreation centre.

Rebuilding Marysville

The once thriving resort town of Marysville was devastated in the bushfires, with 34 people losing their lives and the main street and town centre almost completely destroyed.

There were a further four fatalities in nearby Narbethong and some 529 properties destroyed in the region.

The task of rebuilding Marysville and surrounding communities is a formidable one, but one that is taking shape as the clean-up is completed, people return to the town and the community focuses on its future.

In September, following extensive community consultation, Premier John Brumby, Federal Parliamentary Secretary Bill Shorten, Murrindindi Mayor Lyn Gunter and Authority Chair Christine Nixon released the new Marysville and Triangle Urban Design Framework, which sets out a long-term vision for rebuilding the town.

The Framework provides design guidelines to develop Marysville as a safer, more sustainable town with a distinct character that complements the surrounding environment. The Framework includes plans for an iconic new town centre; a new community hub that incorporates a primary school, a children's centre, health services and recreation facilities; the rebuilding of the police station, petrol station and general store; better links with other Triangle communities; and the reinstatement and expansion of the oak tree landscape.

The Plan funds the next phase of this process, including detailed master plans for five key areas in the town (the 'heart of Marysville', the main street and business hub, the remainder of Marysville, Gallipoli Park and the community hub site); civil engineering and technical assessments for sites and projects; and detailed project briefs for reconstruction projects that will be managed by the Authority, the local council, government agencies and community groups.

While this planning and consultation process continues, work is proceeding on a number of rebuilding projects that conform to the Framework, including the redevelopment of the Marysville Motor Museum site, a new Rebuilding Advisory Centre and the restoration of community and visitor facilities.



Marysville Urban Design Framework - artist's impression



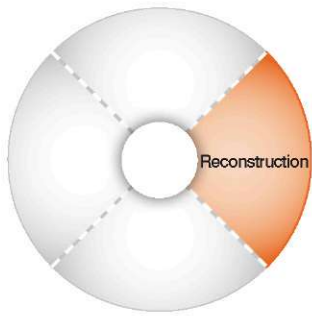
Marysville Urban Design Framework - artist's impression



Proposed plan - Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub



Proposed design Marysville Community Learning Centre



Marysville and Triangle Urban Design Framework (\$500,000)

An Urban Design Framework that provides community-approved guidelines for rebuilding Marysville and enhancing its links with other Triangle communities, including Buxton, Taggerty, Narbethong and Granton, has been completed. The Plan provides funding for a second phase of development including detailed planning for infrastructure and public works to regenerate Marysville.

Flowerdale Early Years Facility (\$2.2 million)

The kindergarten at Flowerdale was destroyed in the fires and will be replaced with an early childhood centre that incorporates kindergarten and maternal/child health services. The new centre will be co-located with the Flowerdale Primary School.

Co-location with the primary school provides for an enhanced learning environment for young children prior to going to school and for students in the prep and infant years. It will also enable the school and the community to use these facilities more effectively throughout the year providing a new centre for the Flowerdale community as a whole.

Flowerdale Community House and Memorial Garden

Funding of \$1.6 million has already been allocated for this key community project, which will replace the facility known as Jarara and will incorporate a memorial garden.

It will provide premises for training, community learning and social activities such as playgroups and classes. It will also provide facilities for visiting specialists providing physical and mental health services, and local government services. Exhibition space and online services will be provided to assist local residents rebuild their homes using sustainable approaches.

Kinglake Ranges and Flowerdale Strategic Land Use Planning (\$500,000)

This funding will allow for the development of detailed planning and design strategies for communities within Kinglake Ranges and Flowerdale. The strategies will be developed in close consultation with community members and other stakeholders and will guide the reconstruction and future development of these communities.

Callignee Community Centre (\$3 million)

This new centre will replace the Callignee Mechanics Hall, old Callignee school and Callignee CFA shed with a new multipurpose facility that incorporates a community hall, playschool, CFA station and sporting changing rooms.

All facilities will be planned through a community consultation process led by the Community Recovery Committee.

Long Gully Community Centre (\$400,000)

This new centre will house the Long Gully Legends Football Club, the Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre and Mens Shed at the Long Gully Recreation Reserve.

The facility will be a multipurpose community space comprising of male and female change rooms, office space, storeroom, disabled toilets, kitchen and youth area.

This project will assist the community to heal and recover from the trauma of Black Saturday.

All up, this is a more than \$1 million project, with funding also coming from the Bendigo Bank / Victorian Government Bushfire Recovery Community Infrastructure Program and Greater Bendigo City Council.

Donor rebuilding support

As well as the generous donations made through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, corporate Australia, community service organisations and philanthropic bodies have contributed funding to the value of some \$20 million for use on community projects.

The Authority's donations team is working with donors to match their pledges to suitable projects identified in Community Recovery and Municipal Plans. These projects have been identified as priorities by communities, are not being funded by another means (eg Australian or Victorian government or Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund), and will contribute towards the social and economic recovery of communities.

Restoring public assets in townships

Many community assets and visitor facilities on public land were destroyed or damaged in the fires. Restoring these facilities is vital to the future of local economies, helping to ensure visitors return to these areas. They are also important assets for the entire Victorian community.

The Plan includes \$6.5 million to replace and restore a number of public assets in fire-affected towns, including:

- Redeveloping and upgrading Steavensons Falls as well as infrastructure linking the Falls to Marysville, Keppels Lookout and Lady Talbot scenic drive (\$2.6 million)
- Repairing and restoring assets along the Grand Ridge Rail Trail (\$2 million)
- Rebuilding Kinglake Ranges Wilderness Camp (\$1 million)
- Undertaking works needed to re-open Marysville Caravan Park (\$500,000)
- Completing reconstruction works at the Pomborneit Sports Ground (\$40,000)

Funding of \$1 million has also been provided from the Jobs Fund to develop Bollygum Park for recreational purposes.

Rebuilding core infrastructure

The Plan includes a further \$6 million to restore, rebuild and redevelop core services in fire-affected areas.

While the damage to core services such as power lines and roads has been repaired, other services need to be restored and improved as part of the rebuilding effort.

Strathewen Primary School (\$3.1 million)

Strathewen Primary School was destroyed in the fires. While the school re-opened just days after the fires – in spare classrooms at Wattle Glen Primary School (some 20 kilometres away) – the local community has been eager to rebuild its school. The School Community Reference Team and the Strathewen Community Renewal Association will work with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority to develop design options and consult with the community about the rebuilding process. The new school will include a multipurpose hall that can be used by the community and will be rebuilt on the site of the previous school that was established in 1917.

Marysville Police Station (\$2.4 million)

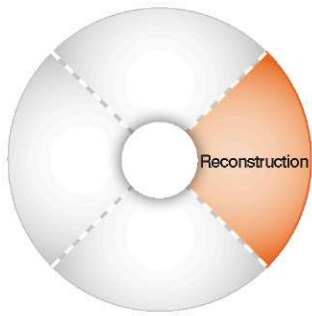
Like much of the town, the Marysville Police Station and police residence were destroyed in the fires and will need to be rebuilt.

As part of the Marysville and Triangle Urban Design Framework, the site of the former police station has been identified as a key community site and the 'iconic heart' of Marysville in the future. As such, a suitable alternative site will need to be found for the police station and residence. Work is underway to identify the best location as quickly as possible, with design work to begin in November 2009.

Marysville Skate Park

Already committed as part of the \$10 million Community Recovery Fund, a skate park will also be incorporated into the Urban Design Framework for Marysville. While a specific site is yet to be determined it will be located in Gallipoli Park and will provide an important recreational activity for young people.

The \$150,000 project will provide facilities for skate boarding, BMX riding and in-line skating.



Sewerage replacement (\$400,000)

The Plan is providing \$400,000 to improve water treatment at 12 houses in Bendigo destroyed in the fires that had on-site domestic wastewater systems.

Bunyip Ridge Bushfire Recovery Project

Funding for this \$850,000 project has already been announced. It will see farm and community infrastructure lost in the fires in Bunyip Ridge replaced and will create some 48 jobs locally.

Building volunteers (\$100,000)

The Plan also provides \$100,000 to support a Building and Construction Industry volunteer program, delivered through the Building Commission, which will recruit builders, labourers and other tradespeople to rebuild minor community assets that were damaged or destroyed in the fires.

Rebuilding community and council buildings

Under the Plan, \$4.6 million has been made available to assist councils with the rebuilding of community and council assets including community buildings and local infrastructure such as drainage.

Rebuilding homes

The Plan provides additional funding of \$4.4 million to construct Rebuilding Advisory Centres in Marysville and Kinglake and to continue the operation of the Rebuilding Advisory Service. This includes around \$1.9 million in building materials, goods and services provided by donors.

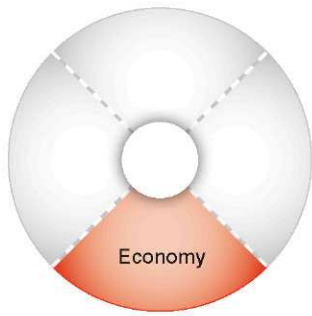
As households and businesses begin the task of rebuilding, they will need advice, information and support. Work is underway on Rebuilding Advisory Centres in Marysville and Kinglake that will provide a 'one-stop-shop' for people rebuilding in these communities. The new buildings will comply with bushfire building standards and incorporate sustainability features such as rainwater tanks, electric-boosted solar hot water heating and reclaimed timber. As well as accommodating the Rebuilding Advisory Service (which has already commenced operation), the buildings will be available for other community uses. The Rebuilding Advisory Centres will be handed over to the Marysville and Kinglake communities for their long-term use in 2011.

Project support for Murrindindi

As the worst-affected local government area, Murrindindi Shire Council has a major role to play in the reconstruction and recovery of local communities. **The Plan provides additional funding of \$500,000 to Murrindindi Council to enhance their capacity to project manage bushfire reconstruction projects.**



Dick and Rose Wilson at their new house in Narbethong



Economy – The Snapshot

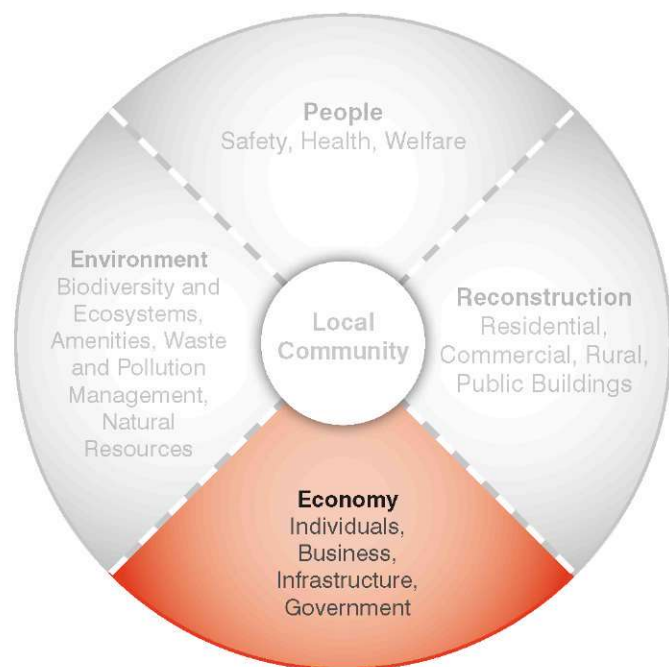
Rebuilding local economies is crucial to rebuilding local communities. Business recovery packages, an interim business hub for Marysville and the restoration of the Lake Mountain Alpine Resort will help to stimulate economic recovery, assist small businesses and boost jobs in fire-affected areas

The bushfires have had a significant impact on many business operators, with more than 800 businesses suffering direct physical damage and many others experiencing a loss of trade. Tourism numbers declined dramatically in some areas and livestock and feed losses have affected agricultural businesses, coming on top of an extended period of drought. Many people have lost their jobs.

Action is under way to support small businesses, regenerate local industries, open up new employment opportunities and attract visitors back to fire-affected regions.

The Australian Government is using its Jobs Fund Program to support and create jobs and increase skills through innovative projects that build community infrastructure and increase social capital in local communities, such as those affected by the bushfires. Some 23 projects outlined in this Plan have received funding through the Jobs Fund Program.

New measures being taken through the Plan will deliver further support for local economies and businesses, continue to promote tourism recovery and rebuild vital economic assets. The Plan includes initiatives identified by communities as being important to the recovery of their economies.



The challenges ahead

While many local economies are slowly recovering from the fires, a number of issues continue to hinder a full recovery, including:

- A shortage of suitable employment opportunities
- A decline in tourist numbers during and after the bushfires in some areas
- Difficulties for small business owners in recovering to pre-fire levels
- The stresses and difficulties facing farmers and primary producers, especially those who are also dealing with the extended drought

Actions taken under the Rebuilding Together Plan will help to address these issues, as well as encouraging new investment and generating new job opportunities as communities rebuild.



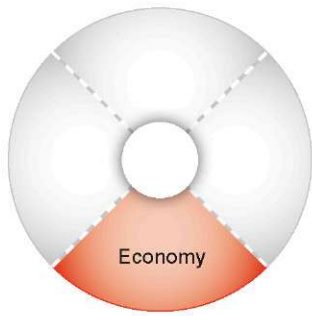
What's in the Plan

The Plan includes a Bushfire Business Investment Fund to help kick-start business investment in fire-affected areas.

It also allocates \$21.6 million to stimulate economic recovery and employment with:

- \$7.7 million to restore and enhance tourist facilities in fire-affected areas and reopen National Parks
- \$9.2 million to rebuild Lake Mountain Alpine Resort
- \$2.4 million to establish an interim small business hub on the site of the Marysville Motor Museum
- \$1.7 million to provide additional support to agri-businesses and farming families
- \$600,000 to assist small businesses to recover through a range of programs including individual business mentoring and recovery workshops

This comes on top of further allocations from the \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package to attract visitors back to regions where the decline in tourism is having a damaging impact.



Economy – What's been done already

Financial support and practical advice and assistance have been provided to support the rebuilding of local economies and to provide a firm base from which local businesses and industries can recover and grow.

Business regeneration

- A \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package (funded by the Australian and Victorian governments) has supported marketing campaigns to encourage visitors to return to fire-affected areas
- Free business counselling and mentoring services have been offered to affected businesses by the Small Business Mentoring Service and VECCL, and advice and information has been provided through Small Business Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and the Rural Finance Corporation
- Grants of up to \$5000 for Community Winter Events have been provided through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund to numerous local councils and community organisations to host community events and activities
- Facilitating financial assistance for the Kinglake Ranges Business Network to establish a portable office, supplied and fitted out by donors, as an interim Kinglake Business Hub for 100 local businesses

Support for small businesses and primary producers

- Financial support has been provided to eligible small businesses or primary producers as part of a \$51 million Business Support Package including:
 - grants of between \$5000 and \$25,000 to 1333 small businesses and primary producers to help with clean-up and restoration
 - 1099 assistance payments worth \$5000 each to rural property owners
 - other special circumstances grants
 - low interest loans through the Rural Finance Corporation
- assistance from the Business Emergency Relief Fund established by the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (to which the Victorian Government has contributed \$500,000)
- An additional \$7 million package has been made available from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for gifts of up to \$10,000 to Primary Producers and up to \$5000 for rural properties two hectares or more
- After the fires, farmers were assisted with the treatment or disposal of livestock and provided with donated fodder for one month.
- Stock containment areas programs have been delivered to farmers.
- Losses have been assessed and reported on more than 5000 rural properties, with urgent needs identified and recovery advice provided.
- Farm walks and field days have been held for farmers who had not experienced fire damage before.



Building Fences – Traralgon

Other Support and assistance

- More than 6700 people who lost their incomes as a direct result of the bushfires have been given financial assistance through the Income Recovery Subsidy
- Three “Skills Brokers” will be engaged for Kinglake, Marysville and Gippsland. The Brokers will provide a matching service for jobs and training during reconstruction, identify long term job opportunities and skills needs and refer people to scholarships or other training support. The brokers will be in place by the start of next year.
- A bushfire recovery scholarship program has been established to support bushfire affected individuals. The program will deliver 250 scholarships to help people undertake a Vocational Education and Training course at a TAFE or private college. The program will be rolled out in conjunction with the \$400,000 Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) scholarship program. The program will be in place before the end of the year.

CASE STUDY

Economic Reports guide planning

Attracting businesses back to Marysville and Kinglake is key to rebuilding local communities and providing jobs for local people.

The Authority has been working with experts, council and local business people to kick start business development in the town.

Boston Consulting Group - Marysville and Triangle Economic Recovery Report

Boston Consulting Group undertook an economic study, pro bono, of what needed to be done to rebuild the economy in Marysville and other Triangle communities.

The study outlines opportunities for expanding the range of activities and tourism opportunities in the region. It identifies the need to attract new conference and accommodation facilities to encourage more people to visit and to build the local tourism industry.

It suggests that Marysville should aim to relaunch itself within two to four years - using tourism and especially Lake Mountain as a key to success. It argues that Government and community support is needed to assist in the rebuilding of key assets and building confidence in the town, which has the potential to be a showcase environmentally sustainable place.

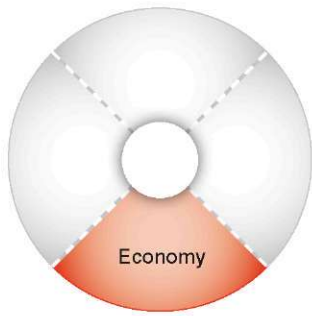
Deloitte Kinglake Ranges Economic Recovery Strategy

Similarly, Deloitte undertook an economic study of Kinglake, also providing their services pro bono.

The report recognises that the natural beauty of the Kinglake Ranges - and proximity to Melbourne - will drive economic growth into the future. The report recognises that targeted stimulus by Government, as well as restoring and enhancing infrastructure will help businesses return or establish in the area.

The Plan is acting on recommendations in both reports with initiatives like the Victorian Bushfires Business Investment Fund to encourage new jobs and investment, supporting small businesses and farmers to get back on their feet, restoring and improving tourist facilities, reopening national parks and working with the community to rebuild vital community assets.





Economy – The Rebuilding Together Plan

The Plan allocates \$21.6 million to help stimulate economic recovery and generate employment in fire-affected communities

The economic recovery of fire-affected communities will be crucial to their ongoing sustainability. The Rebuilding Together Plan provides incentives to encourage business investment in these areas and to help existing businesses get back on their feet.

Kick-starting investment and helping businesses recover

The Plan provides for a new Victorian Bushfires Business Investment Fund.

The Fund will target large-scale investment opportunities, encouraging new jobs and economic growth in bushfire-affected communities. Proposals will be considered through a competitive funding round. Such a Fund was recommended by both Deloitte and Boston Consulting Group in their economic recovery reports for the Kinglake Ranges and Marysville respectively.

Business Recovery Program (\$600,000)

Many small and medium-sized businesses, including agribusinesses, suffered substantial losses as a result of the fires, either through buildings, stock and vehicles being destroyed or damaged or through indirect losses from a decline in business. These losses have flow-on effects on local economies, other businesses and jobs.

Regional Development Victoria will deliver a Business Recovery Program to assist small and medium-sized businesses to return to pre-fire operating levels. The program will include business recovery workshops, funding for business events and 'buy local' advertising campaigns.

Promoting tourism recovery

There are further allocations to come from the \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package for new marketing campaigns and infrastructure projects aimed at attracting tourists back to fire-affected areas.

Tourism is an important industry in many fire-affected regions and the decline in visitors to these regions has had a significant impact on local economies, businesses and employment.

New marketing campaigns, activities and events will be undertaken in areas where the decline in tourism is having a damaging impact on local economies, including the Yarra Valley, High Country and Gippsland.

Infrastructure projects will include the creation of tourism and visitor facilities, such as the Alpine Wild Walk at Mt Hotham, Howqua Valley horse riding tracks, the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail and visitor facilities at the Great Walhalla Alpine Trail and Tarra Bulga National Park.

Restoring and improving tourist facilities and reopening National Parks

The Plan will provide funding of \$7.7 million to enhance tourist facilities and options in fire-affected areas, including:

- Repairing and replacing visitor facilities including picnic areas and amenities throughout bushfire-affected areas including Wilsons Promontory National Park and Bunyip State Park (\$3.7 million)
- Replacing the Kinglake National Park visitor centre and works depot and reopening icon sites to the public, with all icon sites to be opened by 2010 (\$1.4 million)
- Restoring visitor facilities at Yarra Ranges National Park (\$400,000)

- Encouraging recreational fishers to return to fire-damaged areas by re-stocking waterways, improving access for anglers and promoting fishing opportunities (\$370,000)
- Repairing key visitor infrastructure and addressing public safety issues to enable Cathedral Ranges State Park to be reopened for tourism and recreation (\$330,000)

A further \$1.5 million has been allocated to creating jobs for people to undertake this restoration work in National Parks and State forests.



Work underway at Marysville Motor Museum to turn it into an interim business hub

New life for Marysville Motor Museum site

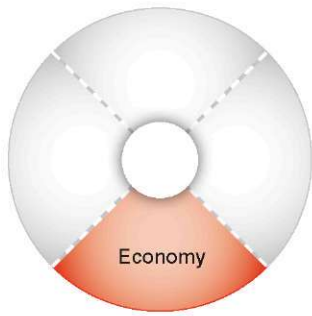
A \$2.4 million investment by the Australian and Victorian governments is transforming the Marysville Motor Museum building into an interim small business hub, giving a major boost to the economic recovery of the area.

The new hub will help the Marysville community get back on its feet by providing businesses with interim accommodation, as well providing retail services and a market precinct.

The Marysville Motor Museum was one of the few buildings in the town to survive the Black Saturday fires and using the site in a positive, high profile way will assist in the town's rebuilding and recovery.

The Victorian Government has invested \$1.15 million to purchase the former museum, while the Australian Government has pledged \$1.2 million to fit-out the building. An advisory committee, including representatives from the community, local council and Australian and Victorian governments, will oversee the operation, management and future use of the facility. The committee will be chaired by the Authority.

As well as helping to attract businesses back to Marysville by offering temporary accommodation, the site will also become an important, long-term community asset. The redeveloped museum will include a community open space, office space and potential for community and farmers' markets, displays, performances and visiting touring clubs.



Fire damage to Lake Mountain Alpine Resort

Rebuilding Lake Mountain Alpine Resort

The Plan allocates \$9.2 million for a package of projects to rebuild key winter infrastructure and develop new summer experiences at the Lake Mountain Alpine Resort.

Lake Mountain Alpine Resort is a key driver of the economy of Marysville. The resort suffered extensive damage during the February bushfires, with much of the forested area burnt and almost all buildings destroyed.

The New Lake Mountain Experience package will help to retain loyal winter visitors and encourage new summer visitors. It will enhance the resort's attractiveness as a year-round destination and add to the strong 'events' calendar being planned for the region for the longer term, contributing to the local economy and providing new jobs in the Marysville area.

In particular, the funding will support the redevelopment of Gerraghty's hub and the Gateway Entry precinct (including an improved visitor building) and the rebuilding of Keppells Hut, as well as enabling the restoration and improvement of tobogganing and ski facilities, walking trails and lookouts.

Supporting agribusinesses and farm families

Farming families were hit hard by the bushfires. Many lost loved ones, homes and their main means of earning a living. This has been made worse by the ongoing drought across Victoria.

Under the Plan, additional funding of \$1.7 million has been allocated to support fire-affected agribusinesses and farm families.

Some \$1.4 million will fund Community Liaison Officers and Rural Recovery Coordinators who will work with Community Recovery Committees and individual farmers, providing a single point of contact for government and other assistance and services.

The remaining \$300,000 is for a Sustainable Farm Families program, which will help farm families to address health, wellbeing and safety issues by providing health awareness and education workshops. Additional services will be established through this program in fire-affected regions to support farmers and their families.

CASE STUDY

Bringing visitors back

The bushfires saw 100 tourism businesses suffer direct fire damage, while regions that didn't have fires still suffered a downturn in visitor numbers. In response, Tourism Victoria activated its Crisis Response Plan.

Regional Tourism Response and Recovery Committees were established in the Yarra Valley, Gippsland, Daylesford, Macedon Ranges and High Country regions. Industry recovery strategies were coordinated and Tourism Victoria continues to provide ongoing support to the strategy implementation.

Supported by the Australian and Victorian governments' \$10 million Victorian Bushfire Tourism Industry Support Package, Tourism Victoria implemented a multi-pronged response and recovery plan including a *Victoria. Amazing as Always* consumer campaign targeting the intrastate market, public relations activities and a corporate *We're Open for Business Events* campaign.

In addition to this initial activity, funding was provided to the regions for campaign activity for Victoria's High Country, Gippsland, Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, Goldfields, Grampians and Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges.



In Gippsland, the new *Destination Gippsland* cooperative marketing campaign is focusing on seasonal themes and regional strengths such as parks, lakes and coasts to attract visitors and assist the region's economy to recover from the fires.

From May 2009, Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges Marketing rolled out the famous *Yarra Valley Run Rabbit Run* ad in metropolitan Melbourne and key interstate markets of Sydney and Brisbane. The \$400,000 campaign featured online, television and cinema activity. In addition the Yarra Valley also launched a winter campaign using press, radio and online mediums.

In each region, events, festivals and activities have been promoted strongly since the fires, with the aim of getting people from Melbourne and interstate to visit fire-affected areas and provide a boost to struggling local economies.

The industry is showing resilience and Tourism Victoria continues to assist the regions as they roll out their respective recovery plans.


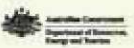

NOBODY'S BORED IN MT BAW BAW

THIS WEEKEND IT'S ALL HAPPENING AT MT BAW BAW.

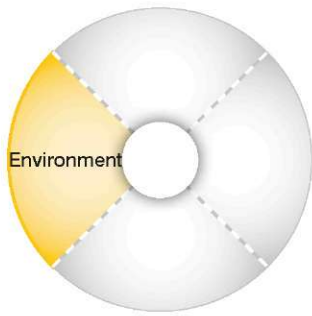
Take part in the Village Ski Race and then wow them at the Mt Baw Baw's Got Talent competition. Find out how to make delicious chocolates and spend all afternoon sampling local food and wines. There's plenty to keep the kids busy too and everyone can enjoy toasting marshmallows in the village square.

(03) 5165 1136
www.mountbawbaw.com.au

GIPPSLAND. AMAZING AS ALWAYS





Environment – The Snapshot

Rehabilitating and regenerating natural habitats, farmland, waterways and nature-based tourism is a key part of the Rebuilding Together Plan, not only to help the environment recover but to also assist fire-affected communities and economies to recover and for the future wellbeing of Victoria

Large areas of forest, parks and natural vegetation were damaged by the fires. Waterways and water catchments were also affected, as were the habitats of threatened species. The fires have caused a range of environmental problems for land managers: a greater risk of erosion, the potential for increased weeds to spread and reduced water quality. While the environment is undergoing a natural recovery, extensive work has been undertaken to regenerate and restore damaged areas and to protect native plants and animals.

This work will continue under the Plan. The Plan also includes new projects and initiatives identified by communities as being important to their recovery and to the restoration of the natural environment in their local areas.

The challenges ahead

The environmental problems caused by the fires will continue to confront communities across Victoria for years to come. Some of the most pressing problems include:

- Burned landscapes continue to be susceptible to erosion, rock falls and falling trees, and to being damaged by emergent weeds and pest animals
- Threatened species and their habitats continue to be at risk
- Important cultural heritage sites may suffer additional damage
- Nature-based tourism has been disrupted by the fires
- Water quality and agricultural productivity has been diminished by the degradation of catchments and farmland

These problems need to be addressed, while engaging communities in restoring, rehabilitating and reconnecting with the natural environment.



What's in the Plan

The Plan includes new funding of \$17.5 million to rehabilitate the environment, address environmental problems caused by the fires and support farmers and landholders:

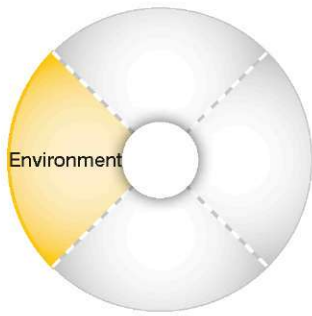
- \$5.8 million to ensure that all stabilisation works on public land are completed by June 2011
- \$5.8 million to help control weeds and pests in bushfire-affected areas
- \$2.9 million to regenerate severely burnt forests
- \$1.5 million to restore waterways and catchments affected by the fires
- \$500,000 to help farmers stabilise and restore their land
- \$1 million to protect threatened species

Environment – What's been done already

Since the fires, action has been taken to regenerate and rehabilitate forests, parks and reserves, natural habitats, farmland and waterways. Support has been provided to farmers and landholders to rehabilitate and repair fire control lines established during the fires and to repair damaged fencing.

Regeneration and rehabilitation

- \$10.7 million has been provided for immediate stabilisation works to remove risks to life, property and the environment, such as dangerous trees and potential erosion.
- Urgent recovery work to protect threatened species and establish trees has been undertaken in State forests and National Parks in the Kilmore-Murrindindi, Bunyip and Dargo areas.
- The rehabilitation of land damaged during fire suppression activities has been completed. Over 3000 kilometres of fire control line has been rehabilitated on private and public land.
- Work has been carried out to reduce ash and sediment in waterways and catchments, and repair work is being carried out along waterways by Catchment Management Authorities and Melbourne Water.
- More than 200 properties have participated in the Stream Frontage Management Program, which is working with private landholders to rehabilitate 150 kilometres of bushfire-affected waterway frontages.
- Financial assistance has been given to wildlife shelters, veterinarians and wildlife carers – including the Healesville Sanctuary's Australian Wildlife Health Centre – to treat and rehabilitate injured wildlife.
- Three Green Corp volunteer crews have been based at Kinglake National Park, Bunyip State Park and Foster in West Gippsland to assist park rangers with environmental rehabilitation.
- Trout eggs have been provided to farmers to assist recovery and fingerlings have been released in rivers in Murrindindi Shire.



Land management

- Individual assistance has been provided to more than 2800 landholders by the Department of Primary Industries in areas such as pasture management, erosion prevention, feed planning and animal health.
- Around \$1.5 million has been provided to support a volunteer program that has repaired or replaced 4600 kilometres of fire-damaged fences on more than 1200 farms.
- Nineteen field days have been held in fire-affected areas to provide information to 470 landholders about fencing, animal management and pest and weed control.
- Grants have been made available to landholders to establish stock containment areas to help minimise soil erosion and protect vegetation after the fires.
- More than 119 landholders have had up to \$400 of their claims excess refunded by the Victorian Government when claiming insurance for boundary fencing damaged by the fires.
- The Department of Primary Industries has produced and distributed a booklet – *Recovery after Fire: Practical Steps for Landholders* – to give primary producers and landholders advice about bushfire recovery

Cultural heritage

Preliminary heritage assessments have been carried in consultation with community and Traditional Owner groups in a number of fire-affected areas, identifying actions that will be taken under the 2009/10 DSE and Parks Victorian fire recovery program.

CASE STUDY

Rehabilitating the land

Assisting farmers to protect stressed and fire damaged native vegetation from grazing stock, and allowing ground cover and pastures to re-establish, was a high priority following the bushfires.

The Australian Government's \$10.8 million (over 2 years) Caring for Our Country Bushfire Recovery Program provides assistance to landholders to obtain funding for fencing of river reaches, riparian areas and wetlands to protect nationally significant remnant vegetation areas now under threat from animals such as wandering stock and deer.

Rotational grazing has also allowed farmers to manage the land according to its ability and reduce grazing in certain paddocks to reduce soil erosion.

The program also covers activities such as fencing to protect and conserve fragile soils or regrowth that are integral to implementing more sustainable management practices.



Inspecting protective fencing to encourage remnant vegetation

CASE STUDY

Uncovering hidden gems

Despite the destruction visited upon the environment by the February bushfires, there were some benefits, with the fires uncovering significant Indigenous and European cultural heritage sites which were previously hidden by thick undergrowth.

Uncovered sites ranged from old timber saw mills, mine shafts and equipment, tramways, huts, settlements and even plane crash sites.

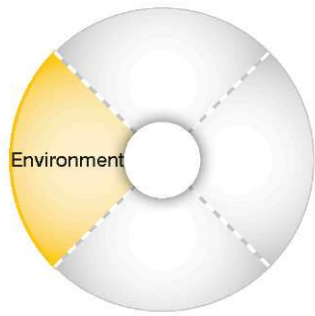
The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Parks Victoria undertook field surveys to determine damage to existing heritage sites, uncover new sites and identify risks associated with the impacts of the fire.

Around 100 listed cultural heritage sites within DSE's Murrindindi Fire District were heavily impacted by the fires.

DSE also worked with Parks Victoria and volunteers from the Light Rail Research Society of Australia to locate and document the sites.



A DSE officer assesses a burnt hut near Lake Mountain.



Environment – The Rebuilding Together Plan

Funding of \$17.5 million is provided under the Plan to rehabilitate the environment, address environmental problems caused by the fires and support farmers and landholders

Stabilisation works

Works are continuing to mitigate threats to life, property and the environment, with Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water undertaking the work. While the most serious, high risk problems have been addressed, further works are needed to ensure visitor safety ahead of parks and forests reopening to the public for recreation and tourism. Public safety will be improved through further assessment and removal of dangerous trees, maintenance of critical infrastructure and soil stabilisation to protect water catchments.

Work includes:

- Stabilisation and hazard control works on public land
- Catchment stabilisation and sediment removal to ensure water quality
- Tree hazard assessment and management
- Track maintenance to prevent further erosion
- Engineering and drainage works to provide access for management vehicles
- Installation of erosion mitigation structures to protect infrastructure

The Plan provides \$5.8 million to ensure that all stabilisation works are completed by June 2011, with funding coming from the Australian and Victorian governments. This comes on top of the \$10.7 million already provided for immediate stabilisation works.



Erosion control works

Controlling pests and weeds

Some pest plants and animals may take advantage of the disruption to the environment and agricultural production caused by the fires to become more widely established across fire-affected areas. As the environment recovers, an opportunity exists to make gains in controlling these pests, especially emergency plant pests that could have serious consequences for Victoria's horticultural industries and the natural environment on public and private land.

The Plan allocates \$5.8 million to control pest plants and animals in bushfire-affected areas that includes:

- A community surveillance program for high priority weeds in fire affected areas
- The restoration of emergency plant pest surveillance systems
- A community education and awareness campaign ahead of the next bushfire season on preventing the spread of emergency plant pests (such as Phylloxera) by heavy machinery
- A pest plant and animal program on private land
- Action to control weeds on roadsides and aquatic weeds

Protecting threatened species and forests

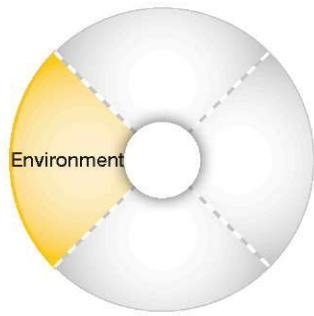
One of Victoria's most threatened species and the state's animal emblem – the Leadbeater's Possum – is in even greater danger following the 2009 bushfires.

Found only in small pockets of old growth mountain ash forests in Central Victoria – and with an estimated population of around 2000 to 2500 prior to the fires – the possums' habitat was extensively damaged in the fires. Just six animals have been confirmed as surviving the fires in the Lake Mountain area.

DSE ecologists and Parks Victoria rangers – assisted by community groups – have been working hard since the fires to save the Leadbeater's Possum from extinction. Under the Plan, further action will be taken to protect and monitor the possums and other threatened species in fire-affected areas.



The threatened Leadbeater's Possum
(Picture courtesy of Melbourne Zoo)



Regenerating burnt forests

Hundreds of hectares of forests were so badly burnt, they may never regenerate on their own.

The Plan is providing \$2.9 million over the next two years to regenerate severely burnt forests.

This will allow for the regeneration of around 2000 hectares of ash forest, with a particular emphasis on young forests (less than 20 years old), which are likely to be too young to have sufficient seed to regenerate naturally.

Additional eucalypt seed collection will also help to replenish seed stocks that were used for post-fire regeneration in 2008-09.

Restoring waterways and catchments

The fires have had a direct impact on water catchments by altering vegetation cover, soil properties and stream flows. The result is increased run-off and flood threat, greater erosion, a higher risk to roads, bridges and other infrastructure from debris and sediment, dramatically reduced water quality and a collapse in aquatic life. While action has been taken to restore water quality and repair waterway frontages, further action is needed to reduce the impact on communities and towns of debris and sediment in rivers, streams and creeks across the fire-affected areas.

The Plan provides an additional \$1 million to restore critical waterways and catchments, including the Goulburn River catchment, the Morwell River catchment and the Campaspe and Coliban Rivers. Works will include replacing fences, clearing burnt timber from hillsides, erosion control, sediment management, increased water quality monitoring and weed suppression.

A further \$500,000 will be provided to replant native vegetation in areas damaged by the fires.

Support for farmers and landholders

The fires have caused a range of problems for farmers, such as a greater risk of erosion, an increase in weeds, reduced water quality and reduced feed due to burnt pastures. In addition to assistance already provided to farmers and other rural landholders by the Australian and Victorian governments and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, the Plan includes \$500,000 to help farmers stabilise and restore their land. This support will include:

- Workshops for small landholders, providing information and advice on pasture recovery, fencing, water quality, stock management and natural resource management
- Reimbursements of up to \$400 for insurance excess on Crown land boundary fences damaged or destroyed in the fires
- Planning and establishing stock containment areas to protect vegetation, better manage undernourished or injured animals, ease stock feeding and watering, and reduce the stress on native flora and fauna.

Protecting threatened species

The fires destroyed or damaged the habitats of more than 40 species of endangered animals. The Plan includes an allocation of \$1 million to protect vulnerable species.

This includes the temporary relocation of 'at risk' native fish populations to protect them from ash and sediment in their natural habitat, as well as protect animal species from the risk of predation and grazing in the fire-altered and open habitats.

CASE STUDY

Natural values vital to recovery

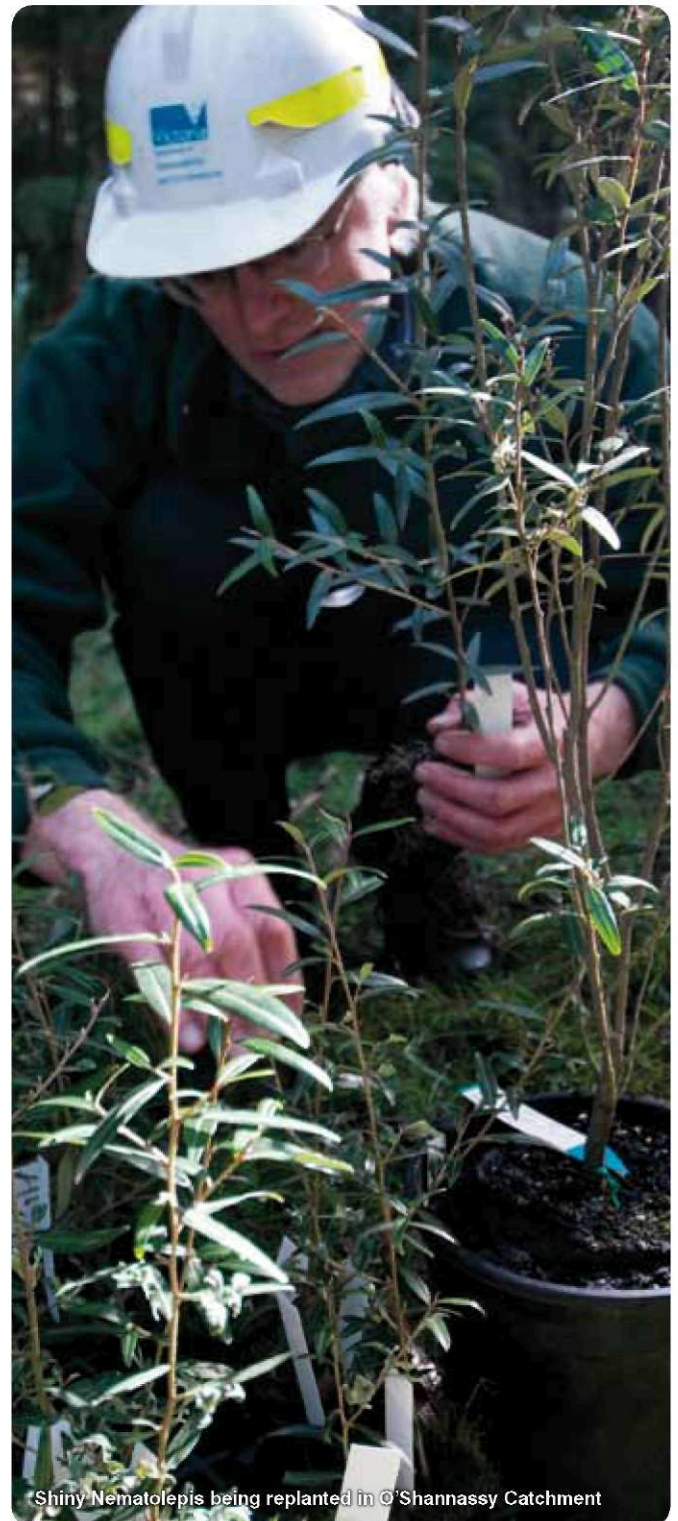
While fire is a common event in most wildlife habitats in Victoria – and many species have adaptations that enable them to recover after fire – some native plants, animals and ecosystems are at risk following a major bushfire.

The areas affected by the February fires are home to 27 species listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth). The area also includes a number of fragile ecological communities, including ash eucalypt forests and cool temperate rainforests. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has been leading efforts to protect and rehabilitate these species and habitats.

For example, the entire population of one of Victoria's rarest shrubs, the Shiny Nematolepis, was burnt in the fires and a replanting program is underway to save the species from extinction. Shiny Nematolepis is found only in a very small area in the wet forests of the O'Shannassy catchment and all 500 known mature plants were burnt in the fires. Fortunately, DSE, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water had prepared for such a disaster and organised cuttings to be collected and cultivated by staff from the Royal Botanic Gardens in 2008. During May, replanting took place at five locations in the Upper Yarra catchment, with 160 shrubs planted and fenced off to protect them from deer.

Alongside to these efforts – and the actions being taken to save the Leadbeater's Possum – projects are also underway to:

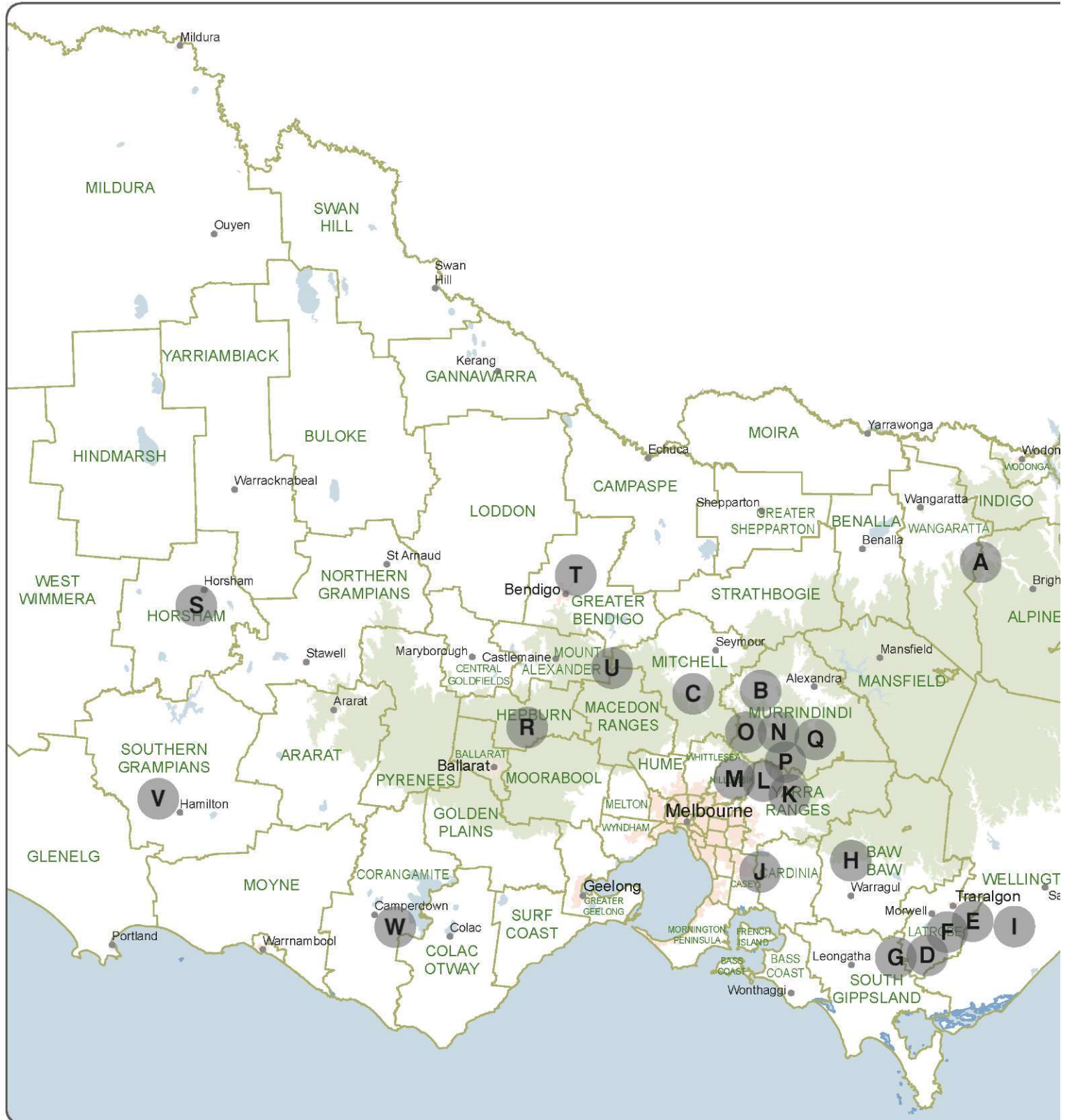
- Temporarily relocate threatened native fish species to safe refuges
- Control predators such as foxes and cats at key sites
- Replace protective fencing around threatened plants
- Support the welfare of fire-affected wildlife
- Monitor species and ecosystems affected by the fires over the longer term



Shiny Nematolepis being replanted in O'Shannassy Catchment



Rebuilding Together Plan – Project breakdown by location





A. North East Vic communities - Alpine, Indigo and Wangaratta Shires

- Mudgegonga Hall upgrade
- Mudgegonga Newsletter online
- Indigo Shire community emergency preparedness planning, including Bruarong and Stanley

B. Flowerdale, Hazeldene, Strath Creek

- Flowerdale Early Years Facility construction (\$2.2 million)
- Flowerdale Community House and Memorial Garden construction (\$1.6 million)
- Flowerdale Community Hall upgrade
- Flowerdale Recreational Reserve – upgrade cricket pitch and construct skate park
- Kinglake Ranges and Flowerdale Strategic Land Use Planning (\$500,000)
- Fire safety and preparedness program - Flowerdale
- Flowerdale revegetation
- Strath Creek Hall upgrade
- Strath Creek Pioneer Reserve upgrade

C. Mitchell Shire

- Clonbinane Hall construction
- Upper Plenty Community Hall upgrade
- Reedy Creek Community Hall upgrade
- Mitchell Shire Community awareness program
- Kilmore East Environmental program
- Wandong/Heathcote Junction revegetation program
- Reedy Creek revegetation program
- Clonbinane revegetation program
- Broadford revegetation program

D. Boolarra and Yinnar

- Boolarra Memorial Hall kitchen upgrade
- Grand Ridge Rail Trail restoration

E. Traralgon Sth & District

- Traralgon South Cricket Club Kitchen upgrade
- Traralgon South Hall upgrade
- Le Roy Park Reserve upgrade
- Koornalla Apex Park upgrade
- Callignee Community Centre construction
- Grand Ridge Rail Trail restoration

F. Hazelwood Sth & Jeeralang

- Jeeralang North Hall upgrade
- Community bushfire education program
- Grand Ridge Rail Trail restoration



Rebuilding Together Plan – Project breakdown by location (continued)

- G. Mirboo North & District**
- Mirboo North Community Facility upgrade
 - Grand Ridge Rail Trail restoration
- H. Baw Baw Shire (Labertouche, Longwarry, Jindivick and Drouin West)**
- Nangara Reserve revegetation and upgrade
 - Labertouche Hall Upgrade
 - Longwarry Hall Upgrade
 - Bunyip Ridge Bushfire Recovery Project (\$850,000)
- I. Wellington Shire (Gormondale, Yarram & District, Balook)**
- Gormondale Hall upgrade
 - Wellington Shire community emergency preparedness planning
 - Yarram Regent Theatre upgrade for community use
 - Devon North Hall upgrade
 - Devon North BBQ Area refurbishment
 - Wellington Shire community emergency preparedness planning
- J. Cardinia and Casey**
- Tonimbuk Hall upgrade
 - Community bushfire awareness project – Casey
 - Bunyip State Park – repair and replace visitor facilities
- K. Healesville, Chum Creek and Badger Creek**
- Chum Creek Community Facility construction
 - Walking Trail – Chum Creek to Healesville
 - Yarra Ranges National Park visitor facilities – restore (\$400,000)
- L. Yarra Glen, Steels Creek and Dixon’s Creek**
- Community Hub construction for Yarra Glen, Steels Creek and Dixons Creek
 - Steels Creek History Through Stories project
 - Eric Tetlow Walking and Bike Trail construction – connecting Yarra Glen, Kinglake Forest and Steels Creek
 - Yarra Ranges National Park visitor facilities – restore (\$400,000)
- M. Strathewen, Arthurs Ck, Christmas Hills and St Andrews**
- Christmas Hills Hall Upgrade
 - St Andrews Community Facility construction
 - St Andrews rebuilding workshops
 - St Andrews fire awareness & preparedness program
 - Strathewen Primary School reconstruction (\$3.1 million)
 - Strathewen Blacksmiths’ Tree and Labyrinth development
 - Strathewen Hall rebuilding
 - Strathewen – walking path between school and community hall
- N. Melba Group (Glenburn, Murrindindi, Limestone, Woodburn)**
- Fire safety and preparedness program
- O. Kinglake Ranges**
- Middle Kinglake Education and Community Recreation Precinct construction (\$8.6 million plus \$2 million from VBAF)
 - Kinglake Multi-purpose Centre construction
 - Kinglake Ranges Rebuilding Advisory Centre construction
 - Kinglake National Park visitor centre and icon sites – repair and open to public (\$1.4 million)
 - Kinglake Ranges Wilderness Camp upgrade (\$1 million)
 - Bollygum Park development for recreational use (\$1 million)
 - Kinglake Ranges and Flowerdale Strategic Land Use Planning (\$500,000)
 - Fire safety and preparedness program – Kinglake Ranges

P. Toolangi/Castella

- Toolangi/Castella CJ Dennis Hall Kitchen upgrade
- Toolangi walking/horse riding/cycling track development

Q. Marysville & Triangle

- Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub construction (\$5.2 million)
- Lake Mountain Alpine Resort rebuild and upgrade (\$9.2 million)
- Steavensons Falls upgrade (\$2.6 million)
- Marysville Police Station reconstruction (\$2.4 million)
- Marysville Motor Museum interim business hub construction (\$2.4 million)
- Marysville Rebuilding Advisory Centre construction
- Marysville and Triangle Urban Design Framework (\$500,000)
- Marysville Caravan Park restoration (\$500,000)
- Marysville Skate Park construction (\$150,000)
- Narbethong Community Hall replacement
- Narbethong streetscape redevelopment
- Buxton Hall upgrade
- Cathedral Ranges State Park – repair key visitor facilities and make safe
- Kids After School Arts Program
- Triangle Walking and Cycling Trail construction
- Community gardens and vegetable growing

R. Hepburn

- Lyonville Hall upgrade
- Leonards Hill Hall upgrade
- Bullarto Hall upgrade
- Glenlyon Hall upgrade
- Lost Children's Walk restoration

S. Horsham

- Haven Picnic Area upgrade
- Haven's history – audio visual display

T. Bendigo

- Sewerage replacement – 12 houses (\$400,000)
- Long Gully Community Centre construction
- Community bushfire awareness project
- Revegetation of Bracewell St

U. Mt Alexander

- Barfold Hall upgrade
- Baynton Hall upgrade
- Metcalfe Hall upgrade
- Redesdale Hall upgrade
- Redesdale Farmers Market and Arts Show
- Redesdale and Mia Mia community newsletter expansion
- Redesdale Local Seed Bank

V. Southern Grampians

- Redevelopment of recreation space
- Planning for bushfires post-2009 experience

W. Corangamite

- Restoration of Recreation Reserve
- Pomborneit Sports Ground (\$40,000)

Key Dates

The release of the Rebuilding Together Plan is a key milestone along the path to rebuilding communities affected by the February 2009 bushfires. Other key milestones include:

2009

February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund established Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority established Australian and Victorian government Clean-up announced Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service established Australian and Victorian governments establish Community Recovery Fund
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flowerdale Temporary Village opened Community Service Hubs open across bushfire affected areas Community meetings held across bushfire affected areas with the Authority
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Cross Bushfire Appeal closes Community meetings held across bushfire affected areas with the Authority
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marysville Temporary Village officially opened The Authority's 100 day report released
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First residents move into temporary housing villages at Kinglake
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean-up project completed two months ahead of schedule 30 Community Recovery Committees established Community Recovery Plans across bushfire affected areas developed Donation management system rolled out to bushfire affected people Rebuilding Advisory Service commences across all bushfire communities Referral cards for accessing material aid sent out to all bushfire Appeal Fund recipients
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Commission Interim Findings delivered First free toilets and showers delivered to people living on their blocks Authority's Six Month Report Released
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marysville Urban Design Framework released for public comment Marysville Temporary Village kitchen community opening Grants to remove dangerous trees rolls out to bushfire-affected people
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release of <i>Rebuilding Together - A Statewide Plan for Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery</i> First residents move into Whittlesea self-contained units
2010	
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anniversary of 2009 bushfires
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Commission findings delivered
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority's transition plan established

2011

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority's final report and handover
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The Rebuilding Together Plan has been developed – and will be implemented – in accordance with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority's Terms of Reference:

1. Advise governments, coordinate efforts and develop an over-arching plan for the restoration and recovery of regions, towns and communities affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires
2. Work closely with the community in the process of rebuilding and recovery, and ensure that individuals and communities are consulted closely – with such consultations to be transparent and sensitive to local needs
3. Analyse, and advise governments on, the impact of the bushfires on the communities, economy, infrastructure and environment in affected areas
4. Coordinate activities and the work of relevant organisations to help regions, towns and individuals re-establish their communities once it is safe to do so, in a way that is respectful of individual and community needs
5. Ensure that services to people affected are easily available and coordinated across all levels of government and community organisations
6. Work with communities to develop coordinated plans to deal with the effects of the disaster on local economies, communities, infrastructure and the environment. These plans should cover the immediate recovery requirements and longer term development
7. Have overall responsibility for ensuring that communities are rebuilt and projects are delivered quickly and efficiently
8. Work closely with all funding sources, including the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, to ensure effective and coordinated expenditure of funds
9. Report to the Premier of Victoria and consult with the Australian Government as required on reconstruction and recovery efforts
10. Report regularly on progress to both government and communities



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