

## Australian Government Victorian Bushfires Summary Report

- At the last hearing on 1 June 2010, the Department tabled a comprehensive Fact Sheet describing the full range of assistance the Commonwealth delivered to support those impacted by the bushfires and the number of measures developed and implemented to better assist the states and territories to prepare for and respond to disasters in the future. This Fact Sheet is again available for tabling, including minor amendments to reflect updated funding and changed administrative arrangements orders.
- Since the February 2009 Victorian bushfires, the Commonwealth Government has invested more than \$467 million in the recovery and reconstruction of affected individuals and communities, with further payments expected to be made under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).
- This funding has supported a wide range of recovery programs, including the cleanup of fire damaged dwellings, comprehensive case management and mental health services, community service hubs, small business and primary producer assistance, tourism support, environmental recovery and the construction of memorials and community facilities.
- The funding has also contributed towards the longer term reconstruction and recovery of affected communities, with \$31 million provided through a National Partnership Agreement and \$21.21 million under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements towards the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.
- The Commonwealth has also committed an additional \$1 billion in spending across Victorian bushfire affected areas under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, generating significant economic activity across these areas and creating employment opportunities for local job seekers.
- Details on the progress of Victorian bushfire recovery are outlined in the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority's regular three-monthly reports, which the Commonwealth contributes to. These are published on the [www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/](http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/) website with the 21 month report due in October 2010.

- The 18 month report noted that local economies and businesses are continuing to show signs of recovery, with additional support now available to existing and new businesses wanting to re-establish in affected areas through the new \$10 million Victorian Bushfires Business Investment Fund, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments.
- Commonwealth Government agencies will continue to work with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority in the recovery and rebuilding process through to the first quarter of 2011 at which time the functions of the Authority and the ongoing recovery work are expected to transition to relevant Victorian Government agencies.
- Many families and communities were devastated by the bushfires and it is important to learn from these experiences.
- VBRRRA is currently working on its legacy and looking at identifying lessons and implications for the Victorian Government, documenting its establishment, operation and closure and providing a record of all of the work undertaken.
- The Commonwealth Government is committed to working with the Victorian Government to assist with the implementation of the recommendations made by the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, which handed down its report on 31 July 2010.
- The Commonwealth is working towards its own response to this report, led by the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP.
- The focus on shared responsibility in the Commission's final report is consistent with that outlined by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in December 2009 when it agreed to an approach to natural disasters based on the concept of resilience.
- This approach emphasises the collective responsibility of governments, business, the non-government sector and individuals for understanding and managing risks.
- COAG commissioned the National Emergency Management Committee to develop a National Disaster Resilience Strategy to support this vision, due by the end of 2010.
- It is expected that the recommendations for national and Commonwealth consideration will be coordinated through the National Emergency Management Committee.





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The impacts from the 7 February 2009 Victorian bushfires were far reaching, affecting the emotional and social well-being of communities, the physical infrastructure, the economy of the areas and the environment. These impacts will continue to be felt as the recovery and rebuilding process continues.

The Commonwealth Government is working closely with the Victorian Government to support the recovery efforts of the individuals, families and communities directly impacted, demonstrated through our commitment to date of more than \$467 million towards the reconstruction and recovery efforts, including:

- more than \$82 million in financial assistance to impacted people through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment, Income Recovery Subsidy and Funeral/Memorial Assistance;
- \$7.5 million for a mental health response package providing increased psychological services for people affected by the bushfires;
- over \$20 million towards case management and a one-stop-shop to access a range of government and non-government services available through the community services hubs; such as access to accommodation, finance, employment, education, counselling, health and legal services and other personal assistance;
- a jointly funded \$10 million Community Recovery Fund to help restore community infrastructure, such as local sporting clubs, and a range of community preparedness and resilience building activities such as the building of memorials;
- a \$51 million small business support package and more than \$15 million to support people who lost income as a result of the bushfires through the Income Recovery Subsidy;
- more than \$24 million under the Government's Jobs Fund program to create new jobs and employment opportunities through the rebuilding of schools, community facilities and other vital infrastructure lost in the fires, including nearly \$17 million retargeted to the *Rebuilding Together: A Statewide Plan for Reconstruction and Recovery*;
- a jointly funded \$10 million tourism industry support package to assist regional tourism operators;
- a \$10.8 million Caring for our Country Bushfire Recovery Program for targeted natural resource management bushfire recovery activities;
- over \$23 million for specific bushfire recovery projects, such as rebuilding town halls and arts and community centres, under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program as well as the opportunity to submit new or revised applications for projects under the program;
- \$52.31 million towards the longer term reconstruction efforts under the *Statewide Plan*; and
- a \$220 million advance payment to Victoria, and an additional \$17.06 million for a range of exceptional circumstance assistance under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

With Commonwealth leadership and funding a number of new measures have been implemented or progressed as a direct result of the bushfires, including \$26.3 million towards the development of a national telephone-based emergency warning capability, and \$110 million over four years for a number of initiatives, including the new Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP), providing funding for a range of emergency management activities intended to build resilience and minimise the impact of natural disasters in Australia in the future.







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## **Commonwealth financial contribution to the Victorian Bushfire Recovery**

Black Saturday is a day that will forever be etched in the memory of all Australians. More than 170 people lost their lives; over 2,000 properties were destroyed; 430,000 hectares burnt out; 13,000 kilometres of fencing destroyed; nearly 60 businesses lost or damaged; over 3,500 agricultural assets affected; 31 state/community infrastructures affected, and to date, over 10,000 insurance claims totalling more than \$1 billion.

In addition to over \$467 million contributed to the recovery and reconstruction effort, the Commonwealth has also committed over \$1 billion in spending across Victorian bushfire affected areas under the *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan*, which is helping to generate significant economic activity across these areas and create employment opportunities for local job seekers.

## **Measures Supporting Victorian Bushfire Recovery**

The Commonwealth response has involved many portfolios. The following information on Commonwealth measures indicates relevant agency contributions (acronyms are explained at the end of this document).

### **People and Communities**

#### **Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP)**

Direct and immediate financial assistance, totalling \$65.4 million, was provided to more than 59,000 individuals and families adversely affected by the bushfires through the Government's AGDRP. (FaHCSIA)

#### **Community Recovery Fund**

The Victorian and Australian Governments jointly established a \$10 million Community Recovery Fund to assist community development and recovery following the devastating bushfires. The Fund operates under the NDRRA and is designed to assist in community recovery, aid community development and strengthen community capacity building for the future. Funding was made available for community sports clubs, Community Development Officers, memorials and commemorative events in affected communities, community grants and local community projects. (AGD)

#### **Donated goods distribution**

The Commonwealth Government will reimburse Victoria half of its expenditure on the storage, management and distribution of donated goods to bushfire affected people. (AGD)

#### **Early Childhood Services in Bushfire Affected Communities - Additional assistance**

The Commonwealth Government provided \$273,200 to 29 playgroups across Victoria to ensure high quality early childhood service to bushfire affected communities. (FaHCSIA)

#### **Emergency Relief Program**

Additional funding of \$6 million was provided to 171 Emergency Relief organisations to help service providers meet the increased demand for emergency relief in Victorian bushfire affected areas and to link clients with other community supports to help their recovery. The objective of Emergency Relief is to assist bushfire affected people in financial crisis to deal with their immediate crisis situation in a way that maintains the dignity of the individual and encourages self reliance. (FaHCSIA)







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## **Family Support Program**

Funding of \$440,000 was provided to 11 community organisations to provide additional counselling support services to bushfire affected families under the Family Support Program. (FaHCSIA)

## **Income Recovery Subsidy**

Around \$16 million was provided through the Income Recovery Subsidy offering temporary income support to employees, small business operators, and farmers who lost income as a direct result of the fires. (FaHCSIA)

## **Legal Advice**

The Commonwealth Government provided \$220,000 for Victorian community legal centres to provide free legal advice to those adversely affected by the bushfires. (AGD)

## **Mental Health Response to the Victorian Bushfires**

The Commonwealth Government provided \$7.5 million of funding to go towards the provision of mental health support for individuals and communities affected by the bushfires. This program is providing increased psychological services, telephone based counselling services, community capacity building support, including training for non-health professionals, and training and support for mental health professionals. (DoHA)

## **National Schools Chaplaincy Program**

The Commonwealth provided \$165,000 to Access Ministries to provide additional chaplaincy services for school communities affected by the bushfires. (DEEWR)

## **Personal hardship and distress relief assistance**

The Commonwealth Government will reimburse Victoria half of its expenditure on eligible NDRRA assistance measures, including personal hardship and distress relief assistance to victims and personal and financial counselling. (AGD)

## **Re-establishing identity**

The Commonwealth Government assisted affected individuals re-establish their identity through:

- re-issuing of key proof of identity documents;
- updating contact details;
- replacing passports free of charge;
- issuing travel documents to any affected overseas born Australian citizens without the need for an overseas birth certificate;
- determining identity matters for overseas nationals; and
- assisting Australians or foreign nationals to re-acquire copies of documents issued by foreign countries.

(DHS, DFAT, Centrelink, Medicare, DIAC)

## **Residential and Community Aged Care Risk Management for Emergency Events**

The Government established emergency arrangements for people who required respite care through the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre. The Government also provided a \$1.5 million package to support aged care providers and clients. This package included payments of up to \$10,000 to assist elderly people and their carers replace uninsured independent living aids lost in the fires, \$500,000 for the Victorian Government for extra Home and Community Care (HACC) Program services, and other additional funding for extra aged care assessments for people living in fire affected regions. (DoHA)







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## **Special Child Care Benefit**

The Government provided \$3.703 million towards the Special Child Care Benefit which provided full childcare fee relief for parents of children who were affected by the Victorian bushfires. (DEEWR)

## **Support for Young People**

The Government provided \$990,000 to six community organisations to deliver counselling and recreational services to young people in fire affected communities. (FaHCSIA)

## **Tax Assistance and Advice**

The Australian Taxation Office established a dedicated Emergency Support Info Line and introduced a number of measures to ease the burden on affected individuals and businesses. These included the provision of extensions of time to pay debts and meet other taxation obligations, such as the lodgement of activity statements and tax returns. Refunds were fast tracked and assistance with the reconstruction of tax records continues to be provided. (ATO)

## **Taxation Legislation Amendment**

An amendment was made to the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (Cth) to allow the Treasurer to declare an event as a disaster for the purposes of more rapidly establishing tax deductible disaster relief funds.

In addition, the Government amended the tax laws to allow the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund to conduct a broader range of charitable and community activities than a charity could ordinarily undertake, including long term assistance to orphaned minors, reimbursement to individuals and organisations who had done charitable works at their own expense but who missed out on receiving help, extra assistance for farmers and extra payments for families in transitional housing. (Treasury)

## **Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Contribution**

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments committed \$2 million each to the Appeal Fund. (AGD)

## **Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service and Community Service Hubs**

The Commonwealth Government committed \$20.3 million towards the jointly established Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service and the Victorian Bushfire Community Service Hubs.

Over 100 Commonwealth case managers provided support to clients, addressing a broad range of issues such as accommodation, health, material aid, rebuilding and financial assistance. The community service hubs acted as a “one-stop-shop” for those seeking access to government services. This new initiative provided central points of contact in affected communities. (DHS)

## **Volunteer Resource Centres**

The Commonwealth Government provided additional funding of \$390,000 to 13 Volunteer Resources Centres in areas adversely affected by the bushfires. These Centres were able to provide extra support and direct volunteers to areas in need of assistance. (FaHCSIA)

## **Reconstruction and Rebuilding**

### **Building the Education Revolution - Funding for Destroyed Schools**

Bushfire affected areas were given priority access to draw on Victoria’s share of the Commonwealth’s \$16.2 billion ‘Building the Education Revolution’ Program. A total of \$2.125 million has been directly allocated to reconstruct facilities in three bushfire affected schools (Marysville Primary School, Middle King Lake, and Strathewen Primary School). (DEEWR)







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## **Clean-up and Demolition Program**

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments provided support to help communities to rebuild through a program for site clean-up and demolition (cost shared under the NDRRA). (AGD)

## **Community Infrastructure Program funding for bushfire recovery projects**

Local councils in fire affected regions were given the opportunity to submit new or revised applications for projects under the \$250 million and \$550 million Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP) to better meet their immediate needs. Over \$23 million has been provided for specific bushfire recovery projects under the RLCIP. (DITRDLG)

## **Local Government Financial Assistance Grants - Accelerated payments**

In response to the Victorian bushfires, the Commonwealth advanced the payment of \$40.6 million, in quarterly payments, for 24 local governments directly affected by the fires. (DITRDLG)

## **National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing**

The Commonwealth provided \$2.4 million, under the pre-existing \$6.4 billion Social Housing Initiative, towards the building of 11 affordable housing units in Marysville and Kinglake. (FaHCSIA)

## **Rebuilding Together: A Statewide Plan for Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery**

The *Statewide Plan* commits \$193 million to deliver hundreds of projects with \$117 million from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, \$56 million from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and \$20 million in philanthropic and corporate donations. The Plan targets rebuilding in four main areas: people, reconstruction, economy, and the environment:

- \$93.4 million to support people and communities as they rebuild;
- a further \$60.5 million to actively support and drive the reconstruction task;
- more than \$21.6 million to be allocated to help stimulate economic recovery in fire affected communities; and
- new funding of \$17.5 million to be used to rehabilitate the environment and address environmental problems caused by the fires.

In February and March 2010 consecutively, the Victorian Premier and the Prime Minister signed the National Partnership Agreement on the *Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Plan*, providing the Commonwealth's component of \$31.1 million directly towards the recovery and reconstruction of communities affected by the bushfires. This is in addition to the \$21.21 million committed under the NDRRA towards the *Statewide Plan*. The Commonwealth will also reimburse half of Victoria's expenditure on the restoration or replacement of eligible essential public assets not covered under the 'Rebuilding Together Plan' through the NDRRA. (AGD, FaHCSIA)

## **Solar Hot Water Rebate for Re-built Homes in Bushfire-affected Areas**

The Solar Hot Water Rebate was extended, with additional funding of \$5.4 million, to those re-building after the Victorian bushfires. The extension will run until June 2012. (DCCEE)

## **Economic, Business and Environmental Recovery**

### **Business Relief Package**

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments provided support, including clean up and recovery grants and concessional interest rate loans, to those small businesses and primary producers directly affected by the Victorian Bushfires through a \$51 million assistance package cost shared under the NDRRA. (AGD)







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## **Caring for our Country Bushfire Recovery Program**

The Commonwealth Government's \$10.8 million Caring for our Country Bushfire Recovery Program is providing assistance to landholders and to community, local government and non-government organisations to undertake targeted natural resource management bushfire recovery activities for eligible fire affected regions of Victoria. (DEWHA, DAFF)

## **Employment Strategy for Bushfire affected Areas, including the Jobs Fund**

An employment strategy was developed, in consultation with the Victorian Government, for areas affected by the bushfires. The strategy included the provision of funding, training and employment assistance. A DEEWR officer was outposted to VBRRRA to coordinate DEEWR employment activities, to implement the employment strategy, and as liaison with VBRRRA. Job Services Australia providers undertook outreach services in key affected areas. Green Corps, National Green Jobs Corps and Work Experience activities have provided rehabilitation, recovery, and material aid such as computers to affected areas.

Forums were conducted in Traralgon and South Morang in May 2009 to discuss employment issues with local stakeholders. The results of an employer survey undertaken in October 2009 on the effect of the bushfires upon employment opportunities have assisted in better targeting training and placement activity. Examples of activities include the Whittlesea Centrelink Jobs Expo in December 2009, attended by people, from across bushfire affected areas, which focused on supporting the bushfire recovery priorities as well as the "Building the Recovery" information session in Murrindindi Shire highlighting available construction opportunities and how local businesses and tradespeople could be involved.

A total of \$4.8 million, under the Jobs Fund initiative, was initially provided for five community projects including \$1.12 million to turn the car museum in Marysville into a community and business centre. In addition, \$15.4 million was retargeted from the Jobs Fund with the associated creation of new employment opportunities and economic activity. In March 2010, two additional projects were announced under the Local Jobs stream of Round Two of the Jobs Fund, providing \$2.5 million to the Kinglake and La Trobe communities. (DEEWR)

## **Exceptional Circumstances Relief**

Extensions to all Victorian Exceptional Circumstances (EC) declared areas provided much needed assistance to farmers and small businesses, including interest rate subsidies, income support, and access to health care cards and youth concessions. (DAFF)

## **Tourism Industry Support Package**

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments are providing support to regional tourism operators who have been affected economically by the bushfires through a \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package which targets marketing, the bringing forward of postponed events, and infrastructure (cost shared under the NDRRA). (AGD)

## **Victorian Bushfire Business Investment Fund**

Local economies and businesses are continuing to show signs of recovery, with additional support now available to existing and new businesses wanting to establish in affected areas through the new \$10 million Victorian Bushfire Business Investment Fund, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments (under the *Statewide Plan*). (FaHCSIA)







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## Initiatives in Response to the Victorian Bushfires

Following the Victorian bushfires the Commonwealth has implemented and progressed a number of measures to assist the states and territories to prepare for and respond to bushfires in the future. The approach to managing emergencies and disasters is designed to prepare Australia for all hazards that may arise (including bushfires) and ensure measures are implemented to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies under a broad disaster resilience framework.

### Prevention and Preparedness

#### **Australian Climate Change Science Program**

This program, which includes the \$1.4 million 'Projecting Future Climate and its Extremes' project, aims to improve the understanding of the causes, nature, timing and consequences of climate change so that industry, community and government decisions can be better informed. (DCCEE)

#### **Building Regulation – Bushfire shelters and review of AS3959-2009**

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) developed a national standard for private bushfire shelters and is participating in reviews of aspects, and application, of Australian Standard 3959 2009 (AS 3959) arising from deliberations of the Royal Commission with the aim of further reducing the risk of loss of life and property as a result of bushfire. AS 3959 prescribes measures for assessing the level of bushfire attack and for the design and construction of buildings in order to improve their resistance to ember attack, radiant heat or flame generated by bushfire. (DIISR)

#### **Bushfire Advice and Alerts – Revised Arrangements**

This initiative, a revision of existing arrangements in which the Bureau of Meteorology provides strong assistance to fire agencies in the provision of fire weather information and operational support, aims to reduce the risk of loss of life and property by introducing new measures, such as changes to the fire danger rating system. The Bureau is collaborating with fire agencies to develop messaging that increases the efficiency and effectiveness of systems that manage agencies' responses to bushfire. (BoM)

#### **Centrelink Emergency 'Reserve Force'**

As of 4 December 2009, there were approximately 1,200 employees signed up to the 'reserve force' to help improve Centrelink's emergency preparedness. (DHS)

#### **Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment**

The Government provided \$532,781 towards research into the effects of climate change on the intensity, rate of spread, and difficulty of suppression of bushfires. (DCCEE)

#### **Common Alerting Protocol Project**

This \$50,000 multi-stage project aims to establish whether 'CAP' is the most appropriate standard for all hazard emergency warning systems in Australia and, if so, whether to adopt that standard in all Australian jurisdictions. (AGD)

#### **Commonwealth Pre-Season Operational Briefing**

This national briefing, which is intended to be an annual event, aims to improve pre-seasonal and seasonal bushfire hazard preparedness and planning between Commonwealth Agencies and the States and Territories. (AGD)







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## **Cooperative Research Centres Program – Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre**

The Government has announced that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre will receive an additional \$15 million, from 2010-2013, to undertake specific research tasks arising from the experience of the Victorian bushfires and to implement programs relating to safe prevention, preparation and suppression, fire management, community self-sufficiency, protection of people and property, education, training, communication and community outreach. (DIISR)

## **Development of a National Disaster Resilience Strategy**

The Government is developing jointly with States, Territories and Local Government a National Disaster Resilience Strategy. This new initiative aims to, by the end of 2010, address the complexity of building disaster resilience by bringing together the representative views of all governments, business, non-government sector and the community through a national, coordinated, whole-of-government approach. This Strategy aims to establish a mechanism through which all stakeholders can work collaboratively with a shared sense of responsibility to improve disaster resilience. (AGD and PM&C)

## **Development of a National Telephone-based Emergency Warning Capability**

The Government has committed over \$26 million to assist States and Territories in developing a telephone-based emergency warning capability. This includes providing funding to Victoria, for the establishment of the national telephone-based emergency warning system, Emergency Alert which sends warnings to fixed line telephones and mobile telephones based on the customer's registered service address. Emergency Alert was operational on 1 December 2009 and has been used to send warnings about emergency incidents, including bushfires, in a number of states. AGD conducted the procurement process and provides ongoing contract management for the Location Based Number Store (LBNS), which serves as the data source for Emergency Alert, and Western Australia's telephone-based warning system, StateAlert. The LBNS holds and geo-codes telephone number and address data drawn from the Integrated Public Number Database (IPND). Work was already underway prior to the bushfires to amend the Telecommunications Act 1997, to allow access to IPND information for emergency warning purposes (DBCDE and AGD). Funding has also been provided to the States and Territories to conduct research into the feasibility of delivering warnings to mobile phones based on the handset's location at the time of an emergency. (AGD)

## **Digital Regions Initiative (DRI)**

The four year \$60 million DRI will fund digital enablement applications projects, such as remote cameras, telemetry and video conferencing, to improve services in the key sectors of health, education and emergency services in regional, rural and remote communities across Australia. (DBCDE)

## **Enhancements for Call Centre Surge Capacity**

The Commonwealth Human Services portfolio worked with the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment to develop this initiative to strengthen the integration of call centre surge operations in the event of a disaster through establishing protocols that assist with the efficient sharing of information about call volumes and predicted weather patterns. (DHS)

## **Joint Service Delivery in Disaster Recovery**

This new initiative aims to identify ways to improve joint Commonwealth and State delivery of service and support to disaster affected communities and individuals. (DHS)

## **National Aerial Firefighting Arrangements**

The Commonwealth Government announced an additional \$4 million under the national aerial firefighting arrangements for 2008-2009, and in May 2009 announced \$12.8 million over the next four years for the national aerial firefighting fleet. (AGD)







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## **National Work Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia**

This National Work Plan was developed jointly by the Commonwealth, States and Territories to institute a more preventative and collaborative approach to reducing bushfire arson. It specifically focuses on activities that will benefit from a national approach and from sharing resources and expertise. (AGD)

## **Natural Disaster Resilience Program**

As part of a range of initiatives totalling \$110 million, the Commonwealth has established a Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP), providing funding for a range of emergency management activities intended to build resilience and minimise the impact of natural disasters in Australia. Priority areas for the Program are disaster mitigation, support for volunteers, consideration of the impacts of climate change and partnerships with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector. The Program is managed through the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience (NPA) between the Australian, State and Territory governments. (AGD)

## **Reducing Demand on Triple Zero during a Disaster – National Tailored Recorded Voice Announcement Protocol**

During large scale emergencies, people may call the Triple Zero Emergency Call Service seeking information, rather than because they need emergency assistance. The activation of a Tailored Recorded Voice Announcement will assist in redirecting Triple Zero callers seeking information to appropriate information sources, such as a State Information Hotline. AGD undertook extensive consultation within the Commonwealth, across State and Territory agencies, with the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association and with Telstra, (in its capacity as the Emergency Call Person) in drafting the Protocol. As a result of the development of the Protocol, States and Territories and Telstra, are now putting in place arrangements for using Tailored Recorded Voice Announcements. (AGD)

## **Remote Forest Fire Detection Cameras - Trial**

This new trial, which will run until April 2010, aims to determine the reliability and effectiveness of remote forest fire detection camera systems. (AGD)

## **Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme**

Following the Victorian bushfires significant enhancements were made to the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme to make this mobile communications option available to more people and organisations in fire affected and fire prone areas of Victoria. The \$8.9 million Scheme, which has been extended until June 2013, improves the affordability of mobile communications for people living and working in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage by providing subsidies for the purchase of satellite phone handsets. (DBCDE)

## **Response and Recovery**

### **AGDCC Fire Weather Report and Bushfire Incident Brief**

These briefings provide summaries of Fire Weather Warnings and information issued by the Bureau of Meteorology together with information about bushfire activity to Government agencies, and are intended to assist with the coordinated responses to bushfires across the country. (AGD)

### **Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)**

AGD, through Emergency Management Australia (EMA), coordinated 20 requests for physical assistance, including the supply and transportation of 150 mattresses/sleeping bags for emergency relief centres, aerial imagery capability, forensic specialists (including an odontologist), and equipment to support disaster victim identification operations, the supply and construction of shelter and the provision of 160 personnel to assist in search and recovery operations. (AGD)







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## **Centrelink's Emergency Management Guide**

This initiative, which builds on existing measures, aims to improve the procedural, tactical, and operational and record keeping aspects of Centrelink's emergency response functions. (DHS)

## **Coordinating Offers of Assistance**

AGD, through EMA, established an 'Offers of Assistance' team to coordinate all offers of domestic and international assistance. These offers were logged and forwarded to the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner Victoria (OESC) for cataloguing and consideration. EMA received 45 offers of international assistance from foreign governments through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, six of which the OESC accepted. EMA received and catalogued 19 offers of domestic assistance for OESC consideration. (AGD)

## **Disaster Response Framework**

The aim of this new initiative is to provide a framework which is able to effectively support taxpayers, businesses and tax agents affected by disaster events. This will involve relaxation of tax obligations and the provision of tailored assistance to taxpayers and businesses. (ATO)

## **Emergency Management Australia's Incident Management Facility - Development of Major Activation Procedures**

This measure aims to formalise the briefing and coordination procedures that EMA can use when activating an Incident Management Facility (IMF) during a state of emergency. (AGD)

## **Emergency Management - Technology Infrastructure Services and Support**

This initiative involves testing new technology to see whether it is able to provide Centrelink with more mobile, reliable, flexible and efficient information communication services for disaster response. (DHS)

## **Foreign States Immunities Amendments**

The amendments made to the *Foreign States Immunities Act 1985* (Cth) confer immunity from tort proceedings on firefighters from the United States when providing bushfire assistance in Australia. (AGD)

## **Identity Management in a Disaster**

The aim of this new initiative is to streamline arrangements for issuing proof of identity documents by having a readily available form in all disaster recovery or relief centres. (DHS)

## **Improved Commonwealth Payment Capability for Emergency Relief Payments**

This new initiative aims to improve the Commonwealth's ability to deliver relief payments to those affected by emergency or disaster events, whilst also reducing the reliance in urgent situations on cash, manual cheques and electronic benefits transfer cards. (DHS)

## **National Emergency Call Centre Surge Capability Project (NECCSC)**

The Commonwealth allocated \$2.7 million per annum towards the NECCSC, which provides agencies with an 'overflow' emergency call centre capability in the event that local resources are overwhelmed as a result of an emergency or disaster event. (DHS)

## **National Employment Standards - Legislated Entitlement to Community Services Leave**

The *Fair Work Act 2009* provides employees, including casual employees, an entitlement to take leave to carry out certain community service activities including voluntary emergency management activities. (DEEWR)







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## **National Lineworker Refresher Training Recognition Protocol for Emergency Situations**

The Government provided \$93,500 to establish a set of refresher training units that provide line workers with the skills needed to work more quickly and effectively on inter-state, or different, electricity networks during a natural disaster. (DRET)

## **Rapid Inventory Collection System (RICS)**

Geoscience Australia is making its RICS available for natural hazard impact assessments for both pre- and post-disaster situations. The RICS is able to quickly collect information regarding damaged or undamaged infrastructure following a natural hazard event such as a major bushfire or tropical cyclone. (Geoscience Australia)

## **Review of Incident Management Response and Communication Protocols**

This is part of an ongoing process that aims to develop and/or enhance DEEWR's stakeholder response and communication plans to support emergency, business continuity and pandemic planning and assist in delivery of recovery responses. (DEEWR)

## **Revisions to the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements**

The Government has extended the period within which the States and Territories may seek partial reimbursement for the costs of personal and financial counselling to 24 months from the end of the financial year in which the NDRRA-eligible disaster occurs. (AGD)

## **Wireless Priority Service System Upgrade**

The Government has provided additional funding of \$6.8 million over two years to upgrade the Wireless Priority Service System to provide 3G mobile phone priority access during times of network congestion caused by a disaster event for up to 30,000 key decision makers and emergency response personnel and 30,000 users on a 3G network. (AGD)







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## Agency acronyms listed in the Fact Sheet

**AGD** - Attorney-General's Department

**AGDCC** - Attorney-General's Department Coordination Centre (Commonwealth)

**ATO** – Australian Taxation Office

**BoM** – Bureau of Meteorology

**DAFF** - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**DBCDE** - Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

**DCCEE** - Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

**DEEWR** - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

**DEWHA** – *formerly Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts* – now Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (@ 14 September 2010)

**DFAT** - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**DIAC** - Department of Immigration and Citizenship

**DIISR** - Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

**DITRLDG** – *formerly Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government* – now Department of Infrastructure and Transport (@ 14 September 2010)

**DHS** - Department of Human Services, including Centrelink

**DoHA** - Department of Health and Ageing

**DRET** - The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism

**FaHCSIA** - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

**PM&C** – Prime Minister and Cabinet





**Commonwealth Government Victorian Bushfires Expenditure and Commitment as at 12 October 2010**

Realised Expenditure (\$ million)	
Financial assistance to individuals	Commonwealth Expenditure
Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment	\$65.400
Income Recovery Subsidy	\$15.900
Funeral/Memorial Assistance	\$0.890
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$82.190</b>
2009 Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Expenditure (\$ million)	
Measure	Commonwealth Contribution
2009 Victorian Bushfire Public Appeal Fund	\$2.000
Program Commitments (\$ million)	
NDRRA Program Commitments	Commonwealth Contribution
Commonwealth commitment to NDRRA programs	\$237.060
<p><b>Note:</b> In 2008-09, the Commonwealth Government made an advance payment of <b>\$220</b> million to the Victorian Government under NDRRA. An additional <b>\$17.06</b> million has been committed by the Commonwealth for a range of exceptional circumstance assistance to be funded under the NDRRA, based on an estimate for 2008-09 expenditure (not yet claimed). The Commonwealth's commitment is for a range of measures, including the Personal Hardship and Distress Payments, the Small Business and Primary Producer Package, the Clean-up and Demolition Package, the Community Recovery Fund and the Tourism Industry Support Package.</p>	
Funding Bushfire Recovery (\$ million)	
Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service, hotline, social workers and Community Service Hub staff	\$20.300
Continuity of Care for aged care clients and services/respite care	\$1.500
Emergency Relief (\$5.5 million expended)	\$6.000
Mental health measures (\$7.5 million over two financial years)	\$7.500
Grants to GP Practices for infrastructure for additional mental health staff	\$0.012
GP Locum services to bushfire affected areas.	\$0.500
Legal assistance for victims	\$0.220
Caring for Our Country - Environmental works	\$10.800
RLCIP - Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail (Stimulus package product)	\$13.276
RLCIP - Farm Vigano Community & Cultural Centre in Whittlesea (Stimulus package product)	\$2.452
RLCIP - redevelopment of the Horsham Town Hall (Stimulus package product)	\$5.000
RLCIP - stage two of the Healesville Arts & Community Precinct	\$2.900
Family Relationship Services Program	\$0.440
Child care benefits	\$3.703
National Schools Chaplaincy Program	\$0.165
Supporting Young People	\$0.990
Volunteer Management Program	\$0.390
Jobs Fund - 5 projects announced 23/8/09 in bushfire affected areas (Rnd 1)	\$4.800
Jobs Fund - Latrobe Bushfire Recovery Community Jobs Project (Rnd 2)	\$1.738
Jobs Fund - Kinglake Sustainability Leadership Centre (Rnd 2)	\$0.751
Building the Education Revolution Primary Schools for the 21st Century- round 3 funding for schools destroyed in the bushfires (Stimulus package)	\$2.125
Rebuilding Affordable Homes (Stimulus package product)	\$2.400
Solar Hot Water Rebate for Fire Victims (by 2012)	\$5.400
Primary Care	\$0.158
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$93.520</b>
Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA)	
Commonwealth share for the <i>Rebuilding Together, A Statewide Plan for Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery</i> , which is jointly funded with the Victorian Government and administered by VBRRA. \$21.21 million of this will be provided by the Commonwealth via NDRRA Categories A & B when Victoria submits claims.	\$52.310
<b>Grand total (including NDRRA balance)</b>	<b>\$467.081</b>