

Select Committee on Regional Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Number of Australians directly affected by bushfires

Senator: Zappia

Question reference number: 0001

Type of question: Hansard, page 2, 2 June 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 18 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Mr ZAPPIA: ...Before I get to my question, can you give me any idea of the number of people who were in the bushfire affected areas? We've got the number of hectares that were burnt and the number of homes, but I've never heard a figure about how many Australians were directly affected by the fire. Is that figure available?

Major Gen. Hocking: I don't have that figure at my fingertips, but we can seek to provide you that figure, should you require it.

Mr ZAPPIA: Yes, I think it would be a useful figure for public discussion to highlight the extent of the fires.

Answer:

The most meaningful measure of the number of Australians that were directly and indirectly impacted by the bushfires is through the take-up of support measures delivered by all levels of government, which continue to rise.

While approximately 7.1 million people live in Local Government Areas that have been activated for bushfire recovery assistance in 2019-20, only some people living in these areas reside within the bushfire 'burn scar' and have been directly impacted through loss of loved ones and property. Other people living in these areas have been indirectly impacted through loss of income, trade and crops. Importantly, the Local Government Areas include large cities, such as Brisbane, where the impacts of the bushfires on the population were less severe.

No one person or community has been impacted in the same way. Therefore, each person and each community has different recovery needs.

The National Bushfire Recovery Agency is working hard with all partners including state governments, local councils, charities and non-government organisations to ensure that the recovery for bushfire-impacted communities is efficient, effective and driven by needs identified by local communities.

Select Committee on Regional Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Number of applications for grants

Senator: Zappia

Question reference number: 0002

Type of question: Hansard, page 2, 2 June 2020

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Question:

Mr ZAPPIA: ...Anyway, I have two critical questions. You said 600,000 small businesses were affected by the fires. Of those, how many have sought some kind of government assistance and received it?

Major Gen. Hocking: I'll throw to my colleague, who has a little bit more detail on the measures and the assistance requested.

Ms Bruinsma: There are a number of different supports available for small business. I will start with the \$10,000 small business grant. For those small businesses who were directly or indirectly affected in areas that are activated under the disaster recovery framework, we have 17,000 businesses who have actually had grants approved. That's about \$183 million, of which the Commonwealth pays a proportion.

We also have more substantial grants of up to \$50,000. Those are for small businesses and not-for-profits in certain fire affected local government areas. Those are more directly related to businesses who've had direct impact of the bushfire, and 1,500 businesses have been approved for grants. That is about \$41.6 million in total.

There's also the provision of concessional loans. Small businesses in fire affected LGAs are eligible for a loan of up to \$500,000, with no repayment or interest for the first two years and a concessional rate of interest after that, and 288 businesses have been approved for \$17 million in loans. We additionally have assistance for primary producers. There's another grant program where, if a small business also happens to be a primary producer, there is a grant of up to \$75,000. Over 1,800 primary producers have been approved for those grants, although they may not be small businesses.

Mr ZAPPIA: Given the figures you've just given us—and if you can't provide them now, I don't mind if you provide them to the committee at a later date—could you provide us with the number of applications for those grants that you've also received? In other words, how many did not qualify or missed out for other reasons?

Ms Bruinsma: Yes, we can take that one on notice. I think it's probably best to give the most up-to-date figures.

Answer:

The tables below outline the number of businesses (by state and program) that have applied for support reflecting data as at 10 June 2020.

Due to the way states collect and report on grant and loan information, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) does not have a breakdown of all non-approved applications by reason. Where reported to NBRA, the number of applications declined or withdrawn has been included in the tables below.

Note, while approximately 600,000 businesses are registered in Local Government Areas that have been activated for bushfire recovery assistance in 2019-20, these areas include large cities, such as Brisbane, where the impacts of the bushfires were less severe. Approximately 12,000 businesses are within the bushfire 'burn scar'.

State	Primary producer grants				Date
	Received (no.)	Approved (no.)	Not approved/withdrawn (no.)	In progress (no.)	
NSW	2,236	1,341	NA	NA	5/06/2020
Victoria	371	320	27	24	3/06/2020
SA	327	264	NA	62	29/05/2020
Queensland	65	46	15	4	4/06/2020
TOTAL	2,999	1,971	42	90	

State	Small business grants (\$50k)				Date
	Received (no.)	Approved (no.)	Not approved/withdrawn (no.)	In progress (no.)	
NSW	2,948	1,510	1,211	227	5/06/2020
Victoria	115	53	NA	21	29/05/2020
SA	139	95	35	9	4/06/2020
TOTAL	3,202	1,658	1246	257	

State	Small business support grants (\$10k)				
	Received (no.)	Approved (no.)	Not approved/withdrawn (no.)	In progress (no.)	Date
NSW	18,200	18,200	NA	NA	5/06/2020
Victoria	1,481	1,216	167	98	9/06/2020
SA	391	327	14	50	4/06/2020
TOTAL	20,072	19,743	181	148	

State	Concessional loans				
	Received (no.)	Approved (no.)	Not approved/withdrawn (no.)	In progress (no.)	Date
NSW	436	297	NA	139	3/06/2020
Victoria	62	2	24	36	3/06/2020
SA	24	5	5	14	7/06/2020
Queensland	6	4	0	2	4/06/2020
TOTAL	528	308	29	191	

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Funding breakdown by state

Senator: Zappia

Question reference number: 0003

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Question:

Mr ZAPPIA: I have one other question on that. Of the roughly \$1 billion that has been committed so far, how much of it went to South Australia?

Ms Bruinsma: I don't think I have a breakdown by state with me, but we can certainly take that one on notice. We're looking at how we can better provide a bit more transparency on our website in terms of state breakdowns and LGA breakdowns. So, we'll take that one on notice.

Mr ZAPPIA: Thank you very much.

Answer:

The National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) has compiled profiles of each bushfire impacted Local Government Area, grouped by state. Each profile includes general data, as well as information on bushfire impact, relief and recovery support, and maps:

- www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au/progress-to-date/local-communities

The NBRA does not yet have a state breakdown of all commitments/expenditure under the National Bushfire Recovery Fund. The coordination of reporting across Commonwealth agencies and state and territory governments is being refined. A state breakdown of expenditure is expected once measures and payments are reconciled for the end of the financial year.