

Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority



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Recovery Authority**

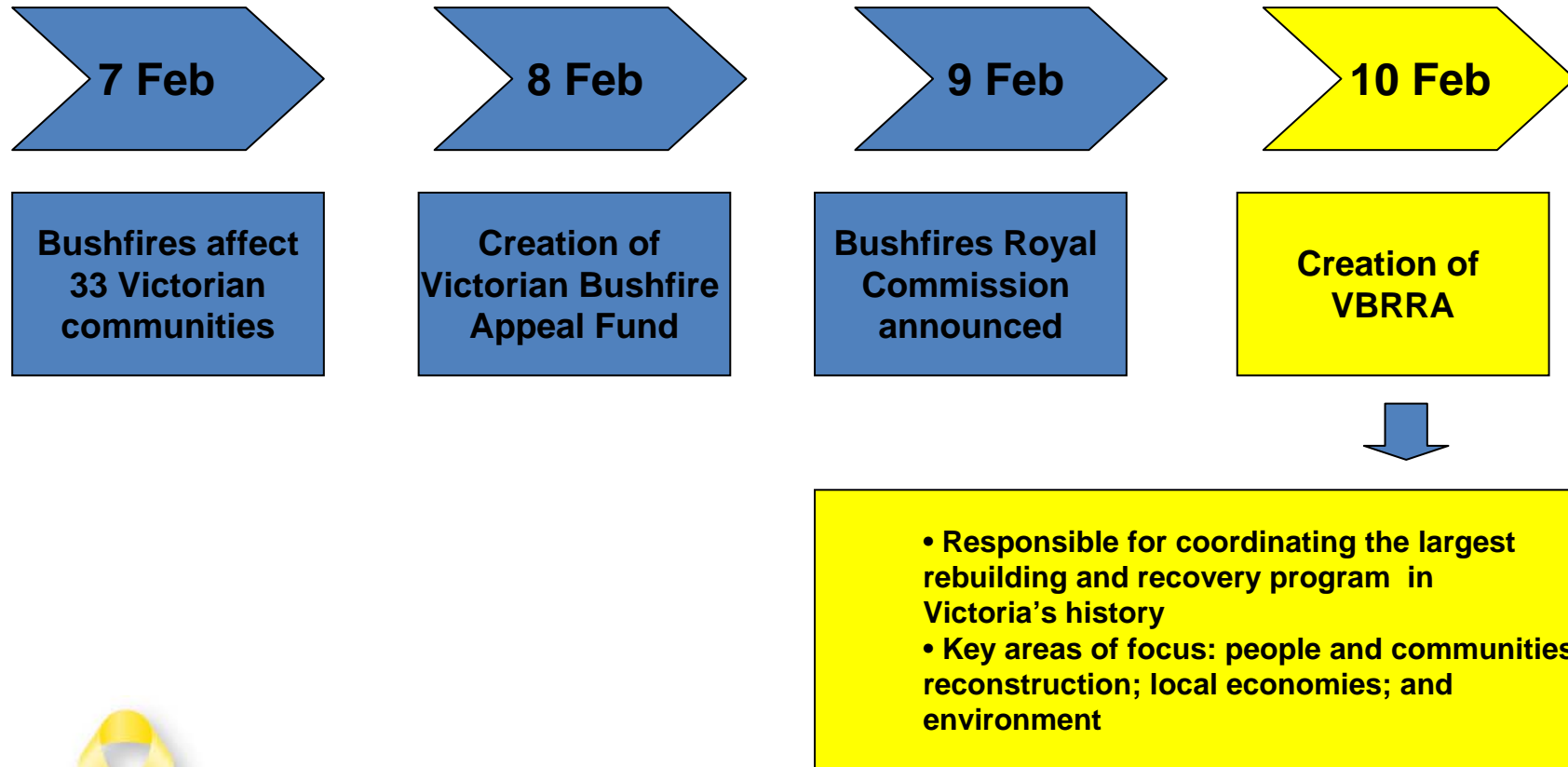
The February 2009 bushfires required a rapid and unprecedented Government response

- Over 700 fires ignited across Victoria on 7 February affecting 33 communities across 25 municipalities.
- 173 people lost their lives.
- 2133 properties were destroyed and a further 1500 properties were damaged.
- Over 8000 stock were lost and it is estimated that over 1,000,000 wild animals were killed.
- 430,000 hectares were burnt and 12,500 kms of fencing was damaged.



We will rebuild

VBRRA was established three days after the bushfires and given responsibility for rebuilding and recovery



We will rebuild

The Authority uses a recognised disaster recovery framework for its rebuilding and recovery task

Recovery and Reconstruction Framework

The Authority is using a recognised disaster recovery framework and has designed some overall guiding principles to govern activities.



Guiding Principles As a starting point for the framework the following guiding principles will govern the overall activities of the Authority through the recovery process.

Welfare The safety and welfare of people in the local community including householders, volunteers and workers will be the top level priority and will not be compromised.

Meeting Needs Resources for recovery will be focused on areas of greatest need in each community.

Community Engagement Community involvement is key and will be pursued through all activities with management at the local level empowered to deliver results.

Integrity Provision of services and resources will be governed by the principles of fairness and equity.

Tailored Solutions The needs of each community affected by the fires are different and the recovery solutions will be tailored to the specific needs of each community.



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VBRRRA Governance

Establishment	<p>VBRRRA was established on 10 February 2009 and given responsibility for the coordination of the recovery and rebuilding program following the bushfire events.</p> <p>VBRRRA was established as an administrative office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and reports directly to the Premier.</p>
Terms of Reference (Summarised)	<p>Advise Govt, undertake activities and work with other relevant organisations to help regions, towns and individuals to recover and rebuild.</p> <p>Administer funds and undertake expenditure in line with Govt expectations and community needs to maximise the effectiveness and timeliness of recovery activities.</p> <p>Ensure that the community actively participates in the process of rebuilding and recovery and that individuals are consulted closely and provided with real choices.</p> <p>Provide up to date, relevant and useful information to assist with the recovery process.</p>
Budget	<p>VBRRRA's 09/10 Budget is \$55.6m output funding and \$4.4m asset funding.</p> <p>The <i>Rebuilding Together</i> Plan launched in Oct 2009 allocated \$193m to bushfire recovery activities.</p>
Staffing	<p>VBRRRA has 108 staff (37 fixed term staff, 52 secondees, 3 pro bono staff, and 10 consultants/contractors. 14 DHS staff are co-located with VBRRRA but remain DHS employees.)</p>



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VBRRA: People and Communities

Status/ Recovery

Individuals and communities are continuing their personal journeys of recovery. Homes are starting to be rebuilt, businesses are returning and community gatherings are taking place.

Services

Support services for individuals continue including accommodation assistance, counselling, case management, and support for community memorials. There is an average of 747 visitors to Community Service Hubs each week.

Community Recovery Plans

Community Recovery Plans have been developed by the 33 Community Recovery Committees currently operating. Over 280 projects from Community Recovery Plans have now been funded, or partially funded.

Material Aid and Donations

Material aid continues to be distributed in storefronts in affected areas. 21,000 pallets of goods were initially donated. 9% of the donated material aid remains.* Larger pledged donated goods/services were distributed through a Donations Management System

Bereaved Communities

A bereaved forum was held in January for those who lost loved ones to directly involve them in the recovery process. Support groups continue to provide the bereaved with opportunities to access information and share their stories. Anniversary events were held on 7 February in communities and a multi-faith service was held at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne to recognise the event.

*Figure updated since release of the VBRRA 12 Month Report



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People and Communities: Key Statistics

Community Recovery Plans	32 Community Recovery Plans developed (no plan submitted by Cardinia CRC) Over 280 projects from Community Recovery plans funded.
Women's and Men's Retreats	2 retreats held 602 attendees at retreat
Community Development Officers	\$1.75m provided by Community Recovery Fund for Community Development Officers in 14 local councils.
Community Capacity Building	18 workshops held 351 workshop participants
Case Management Service	206 FTE Case Managers operating (500 at height of operation) 2450 active cases and 3033 finalised cases
Accommodation support	1343 households assessed (of 1389 displaced households) Medium term, low cost housing provided to 780 households including 165 that are housed in temporary villages.
Counselling support	1465 people received a total of 8790 counselling vouchers 28 community sessions held with psychologist Dr. Rob Gordon
Support for bereaved	8 support groups established with a membership of 96 people



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VBRRA: Economic recovery

Business Recovery

Activities to rebuild local economies in bushfire affected areas include: a Bushfire Investment Fund, a Business Recovery Program which has supported business events, recovery workshops and 'Buy Locally' initiatives; business information/support, and referrals to business counselling. Rural Finance Corporation provided grants and concessional loans.

Tourism Support

Tourism support has included a \$10m Tourism Industry Support Package, enhancements to visitor facilities and the establishment of a Bushfire Tourism Recovery Group. \$9.2m was allocated in *Rebuilding Together* to restore the Lake Mountain Alpine resort.

Marysville

The former Marysville Motor Museum has been redeveloped as the Marysville Central retail precinct which opened in December. A Summer Staffing initiative is helping businesses attract employees in the Marysville and Triangle area.

Skills

Support has been provided for local skills development through an Education and Training Fund established by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training. Adult Education Programs were supported by the Community Learning Partnerships Program. \$500 scholarships have been provided to bushfire affected people requiring skills training to gain re-employment.

Other support/
assistance

The Income Recovery Subsidy provided assistance to those who lost their income as a result of the fires. A Centrelink Jobs Expo was held in Whittlesea in December.



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Economic Recovery: Key Statistics

Summer Staffing Initiative	20 businesses participated hiring 37 staff*
Business Recovery Program	419 businesses accessing mentoring services
Business Information and Support	876 phone enquiries to Small Business Victoria 7250 phone enquiries to Rural Finance Victoria
Referrals to Business Counselling	494 small business referrals, 127 primary producer referrals and 21 other referrals.
Tourism Industry Support Package	23 regional events and facilities funded including the inaugural Marysville Marathon and the Alpine Ascent Challenge.
Recreational fishing	2000 trout fingerlings released in Murrindindi Shire

*Figure updated since release of the VBRRA 12 Month Report



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VBRRA: Natural and Built Environment

Environmental Activities

Environmental regeneration work includes emergency land stabilisation continuing to mid-2010, reseeded burnt forests, repairing fire control lines, and protecting threatened species.

Recreational Sites

Facilities have been restored in a number of National Parks and State Forests to allow them to be reopened for the public to use. Steavenson Falls restoration is ongoing.

Sustainable Design

The Rebuilding Advisory Centres (RACs) that VBRRA is currently building in Kinglake and Marysville incorporate sustainable design features including rainwater collection, solar hot water heating, double glazing, reclaimed and recycled timber and LED lighting. Information on sustainable rebuilding will be available in the RACs.

Cultural Heritage

Assessments are being undertaken to determine the extent of the bushfire impact on the 100 known European and Indigenous cultural heritage sites. Assessments continue to involve the Traditional Owners.

Agricultural Support

Farm Land Management support has included weed control, managing pest animals, provision of agricultural advice, agricultural community liaison and field days, and grants for stock containment areas. Fencing support was provided through a VFF coordinated volunteer scheme and DPI fencing support officers.



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Natural and Built Environment: Key Statistics

Reseeding Burnt Forests	800ha of forests assessed for reseeded 2200kg of additional seeds to be collected
Repairing Fire Control Lines	1800km of control lines rehabilitated on private land (100% complete) 1600km of control lines rehabilitated on public land (100% complete)
Visitor Facilities	Visitor facilities reopened at 10 major public sites including camping grounds, picnic areas and walks.
Waterways and catchments	53km of fencing installed along waterways 21 sites with increased water monitoring
Agricultural Advice	Advice provided to over 3000 individual landholders and 11 one-on-one property visits. 1025 participants in 'walk and talk' property visits to discuss common issues.
Agricultural Field Days	29 field days held with over 600 attendees.
Stock Containment	97 stock containment areas completed or approved for construction.



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VBRRA: Reconstruction

Building Permits

Rebuilding progress is well underway with 1506 building permits issued for homes, sheds and other buildings. Many bushfire affected people are still deciding whether to rebuild or to take up other housing options.

Community Facilities

A number of community assets are at various stages of the rebuilding process including the Marysville Police Station, Flowerdale Early Years Centre, Strathewen Primary School, Bendigo Sewerage, the Calignee Community Centre and damaged roads.

Building Standards

Under new building standards all new homes need to be assessed for their Bushfire Attack Level. Support for Bushfire Attack Level assessments have been provided by volunteer building practitioners.

Urban Design

An Urban Design Framework has been approved for the Marysville and Triangle area as part of the Murrindindi Planning Scheme. Similar frameworks will be developed to guide planning in Flowerdale, Toolangi and the Kinglake Ranges.

Rebuilding Support

A free Mobile Rebuilding Advisory Service has been operating in all affected areas. Construction is underway for Rebuilding Advisory Centres in Marysville and Kinglake. House designs and free consultation with an architect are available through the Architects Bushfire Homes Service. A free toilets and shower scheme has been operating to support people living on their blocks while they rebuild.



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Reconstruction: Key Statistics

Applications to Rebuild	1506 building permits approved
Rebuilding Advisory Service	614 residents accessing service
Bushfire Attack Level Assessments	71 practitioners trained to provide Bushfire Attack Level assessments 441 assessments undertaken by volunteers
Architects Bushfire Homes Service	Over 26 referrals to architects 18 housing designs available
Restoration of Damaged Roads	35 km of guardrail replaced 400 km roads restored
Temporary villages	164 dwellings occupied 294 residents in villages
Toilets and Showers Program	405 people registered 370 units delivered



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VBRRA: Clean Up

Key Statistics

Program commenced in March 2009 and was officially completed in October 2009. 3053 properties were cleared. More than 400,000 tonnes of material was transported to landfill by around 600 workers. 150 crews were working at the height of the clean up operation.

Process

Once individuals registered for clean up, they were contacted by a regional Grocon contact and a meeting on site was arranged. Property owners had the opportunity to determine their clean up requirements including a 'discovery phase' if requested.

Scope

All people with damaged property were eligible for the clean up. People who carried out their own clean up in the immediate aftermath of the fires were eligible for reimbursement. Partial demolitions were not available through the Govt funded clean up as Grocon would be unable to certify that the remaining structure would be safe.

Uncleared Properties

With the clean up program now complete, there is only one registered property that was unable to be cleared due to access issues. This site will be reviewed in March to see if access has improved.

Local Contractors

A key objective was to maximise the use of local contractors for clean up work. A total of 69% of the work was undertaken by local contractors and over 50% of the workforce was local.



We will rebuild



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