MESSAGE FROM
THE CHAIR

It’s often said that every disaster provides opportunities. The major opportunity that bushfire-affected communities have grasped in the wake of the January fires seems to be a determination to create good from bad.

A significant role for the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce has been to understand the needs of affected communities; to talk with them rather than “at” them. We and others in Government have been determined not to dominate the process or the conversation, but rather, assist communities to move from a state of bewilderment about where and how to begin, to a state of confidence in moving forward. Engaging with locals affected by the bushfires has required a multi-pronged approach to enable every voice to be heard, not just the loudest. This listening process is important and has taken some time.

In January when we started out, we felt it would be important, after the restoration of most services and the clean up, to seek community input in producing a Plan to outline the process of recovery from that point. The response to the fires, across the State, has been immediate, constant and humbling to engage with. Everyone, particularly those who suffered most as a result of the fires, has engaged with the task of recovering and rebuilding that which was lost. The “Recovery” we have been tasked to oversee and assist has moved ahead in such a cohesive, energetic and community-driven way that we have decided not to produce a Plan as such. The evolution of the Recovery, we believe, should continue to take its course, assisted and encouraged by the Taskforce and Bushfire Recovery Unit together with those groups described in this Report. No one should feel compelled to keep pace with a Plan but rather be encouraged to work their way forward knowing that they have support and assistance within reach.

So, this is an attempt to provide an evaluation of the fires of January 2013, to give some sense of their ferocity, speed and utter devastation, to assist in understanding what our communities endured and were confronted with, the roles played by all the brave and generous Tasmanians and our friends from interstate and New Zealand who were there when needed and have stayed for the long haul. We will detail what has been achieved so far and the direction in which we are heading with the five distinct programs which best define the paths forward from here. In that sense we trust that this Report informs not only what has happened so far but, with that understanding, the direction forward for all those still involved and wishing to become involved in this very inspirational and Tasmanian story.

There’s no doubt the fire event itself was incredible in terms of intensity and damage to property, livestock, vegetation and wildlife. But just as forceful was the response – from emergency authorities, State Government agencies, Aurora Energy, volunteers, charities, other non-government organisations and individuals around Tasmania and beyond. And then, the communities’ brave and strong embarkation on the road to recovery has been nothing short of inspirational.

The Programs for Recovery outlined in this Report explain our considered approach to continuing to empower bushfire-affected communities to recover, rebuild, revitalise and face the future with optimism.

Damian Bugg
Chair, Bushfire Recovery Taskforce
“We need to look out for each other; that includes caring for ourselves and also being ready to reach out.”

LUCAS VAN RIJSKWIJK
Volunteer Strategy Co-ordinator for the TFS
The Fires

On Friday 4 January 2013, as temperatures soared to nearly 42 degrees, around 40 fires were burning across Tasmania. The fire weather conditions were as severe as during the 1967 fires and the danger rating reached ‘catastrophic’ in many areas.

Over the course of the next four days the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) – with support from a range of emergency services, government agencies and volunteers – battled to contain a firestorm that was driven by ferocious winds and low humidity.

Four fires in particular presented a serious threat to lives and property. The Forcett Fire was running at great speed south of the Forcett community, cutting off the Arthur Highway (the sole road in and out of the Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas). Thousands of residents and tourists were stranded for days and there was widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure across an area of more than 20,000ha – including a third of the buildings within the township of Dunalley, such as the local school and police station.

A fire that started at Lake Repulse caused significant damage to farms in the Central Highlands, burning an area of more than 11,500ha. Wheat crops, due to be harvested within days, were among the losses. Over on the East Coast, a fire near Bicheno destroyed properties and other infrastructure across an area of more than 4,900ha. A fourth bushfire near Montumana in the North-West consumed an area greater than 3,400ha, destroying property and threatening coastal communities.
Among the areas most affected were Dunalley and Boomer Bay, Murdunna, Copping and Connellys Marsh. More than 200 dwellings were destroyed in this region alone. A number of large farms in the Forcett, Dunalley and Murdunna area were also severely damaged.

Primary producers in the Central Highlands were also impacted heavily by the Lake Repulse Fire. Eighteen properties reported extensive damage to fencing, feed, equipment, stock and crops.

Seaside homes and outbuildings were also reported as lost in the Bicheno and Montumana Fires – although the true costs and the lasting impacts for fire-affected communities across the State were only just beginning to be felt.

“I looked up and I saw this fire. It had jumped the track... it just took off and it was going like a Bondi tram.”

BRAD WESTCOTT
Dunalley Volunteer Fire Brigade Chief and Murdunna resident

The scale of the task was huge. During that first week of bushfires more than 2 000 firefighters responded to 1 350 emergency calls. At the peak of the emergency there were 498 fire crews on the ground and 25 helicopters battling fire fronts up to 350 metres wide. During the same period the TFS issued more than 600 emergency warnings and almost 23 500 individual emergency alerts by telephone. In the first six days after the fires broke out, there were more than 1.1 million visits to the TFS website and almost 6.3 million page views. At peak demand, on Saturday 5 January, page views hit 1.63 million.

The damage to Aurora Energy’s infrastructure was extraordinary with 100 km of powerlines on the ground, 700 poles destroyed and 80 transformers lost.

By the time the smoke began to clear, more than 100 000ha of land had been burnt across the State: more than 200 homes and shacks had been destroyed and there were millions of dollars of losses for farmers and local businesses.
The Initial Response

While thousands of firefighters fought to protect lives and homes, the people of Tasmania swung into action. Local councils rapidly set up refuge centres in the Central Highlands, Sorell and Tasman Peninsula areas. A flotilla of volunteer and Police boats began transporting supplies to the isolated refuge centres on the Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas, as well as evacuating the thousands of stranded residents and tourists. Meanwhile, Australians from across the nation began offering food, clothing and money – from individuals to major corporations, help was arriving.

Sharing information and connecting people became a priority. Emergency services worked closely with local media and the State Government to establish a call centre, dedicated website and social media presence. There were nearly 70,000 visits to the Tasmania Police website and more than 42,000 visits to the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s (DPaC) bushfires site in the first week.

The community relied heavily on the regular radio and TV updates provided by the ABC in its role as the nation’s emergency broadcaster. Community meetings were held in refuge centres to bring everyone up-to-date on progress being made. Meanwhile, Telstra set up mobile phone transmitters to restore signal as soon as possible. Social media played an important role in disseminating information from official channels. The State Government used its own presence to instantly broadcast emergency warnings and information. It also interacted with other social media channels to get accurate information to communities.

The community used social media to fulfil another role – the mobilisation of people to volunteer or make donations. One of the most prominent examples of this was the Facebook page “Tassie Fires – We Can Help”. This page attracted 20,000 followers and helped connect those in need with those willing and able to help.

Volunteering Tasmania activated a call centre and online register for spontaneous volunteers throughout the response and recovery phases. The organisation matched volunteers to agencies requiring help, and kept 600 volunteers informed of the available opportunities to assist.

Major challenges in the initial aftermath of the bushfires included reopening the Arthur Highway (as soon as it was safe from the fire and the danger of smouldering trees), and replacing power poles and infrastructure to connect electricity to the region. The tremendous efforts of Aurora Energy to restore power within two weeks sent the strongest signal to the community that their immediate recovery needs were a priority.

Residents returning home were provided with information packs detailing the help available, what to expect when they saw their properties for the first time, health risks from smoke and asbestos, how to deal with trauma and how to access donations and emergency government payments.

These tasks were achieved through a team effort, coordinated by State and Local governments and other partners under the umbrella of the Southern Region Emergency Management Committee.

In the months since the bushfires, thousands of Australians have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the recovery effort: volunteers have rebuilt fences, clothed and fed those who lost their homes, organised relaxing retreats, nursed injured wildlife, replanted vegetation – the list seems endless. But some of the impacts of the January 2013 bushfires may take months or years to surface.

“The weather changed and the wind picked up. I’ve never been in a wind event like it.”

ANDREW SKELLY, Acting East Coast District Officer, Tasmania Fire Service
Red Cross Bushfire Appeal

Australian Red Cross, at the request of the Tasmanian Government, established the official Red Cross Bushfire 2013 Appeal on 7 January 2013 as a recovery fund to assist individuals, families and communities affected by the January bushfires. Donations were received from throughout Australia and overseas.

The independent Tasmanian Bushfire Appeal Distribution Committee was established to set the criteria for, and oversee the distribution of, Appeal funds.

All money donated to the Appeal is being directed to the people and communities affected by the bushfires. The Tasmanian Government has agreed to fully fund the administration of the Appeal, including the costs to Red Cross associated with the collection of the funds, as well as secretariat and administrative support through the Bushfire Recovery Unit to distribute the funds.

The total raised through the Red Cross Appeal to date stands at $8.78 million.

So far, $4.6 million has been allocated for distribution, which includes:

- $2.28 million distributed through 340 grants in stages one, two and three of the Appeal
- $1.7 million allocated to support community-based recovery projects, managed by the Affected Area Recovery Committees
- $400,000 allocated to support beyondblue’s Child and Bushfire Disaster Response program in bushfire-affected communities
- $300,000 allocated for a revegetation project managed by the Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House.

In the initial aftermath of the bushfires, the focus of the Appeal Distribution Committee was on delivering urgent assistance to people who had lost their homes and were displaced. The focus then shifted towards providing short-term assistance for people who lost their homes, as well as those who remained in the community but were facing the distress associated with the constant visual reminder of the fires. Stage 4 of the Appeal focuses on the financial hardship facing those directly affected by the fires both in the immediate and longer term, as well as rebuilding communities.

A further $1.5 million has been set aside to meet longer term needs that will arise as people and communities transition to rebuilding and resettling.

“The public response to the fires was extraordinary, with financial support flowing in from around Australia and the world to the Red Cross Tasmanian Bushfire 2013 Appeal. The Appeal has, and is continuing to provide, welcome financial relief to help people recover and rebuild their lives, homes and communities.”

PAT LEARY
Chair, Tasmanian Bushfire Appeal Distribution Committee
Eugene Ross coordinated the BlazeAid camp at Sorell for more than four months and is happy to admit he felt like a local. “When I walk down the street,” the Victorian retiree laughs, “people toot their horns and wave.”

Eugene and his cheerful teams of volunteers provided more than 3 000 volunteer days of labour and constructed 170 km of new fences in the Sorell district alone. Not a bad result, especially considering that Eugene was simply enjoying a Tassie holiday when the January bushfires hit.

“I phoned BlazeAid and offered to set up a camp because I’d been involved with the group since the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires,” Eugene said.

“The local support in Tasmania has been overwhelming and that’s the main thing I’ll take out of this experience. Well done Tasmanians!”

And what the local property owners took out of the experience was the chance to move forward with their businesses. Fourth generation Dunalley farmer, Matt Dunbabin, lost 30 km of fences on the family’s sheep and cattle property.

“Unless we can graze our cattle and sheep, we don’t have a business – it’s that fundamental,” Matt said.

“So it’s a huge relief, both financial and emotional, to have those fences back. It means we can now just get on with it.

“If we were still facing the prospect of months of fencing, then we’d have to take our eye off the ball with the other parts of our business.

“In short, BlazeAid’s work across the district means we’re that much closer to normal again, and we’re all very, very grateful to the volunteers.”

Two BlazeAid camps operated in Tasmania following the January bushfires. In the Central Highlands, 110 km of fencing was built by 181 volunteers, contributing 1 266 volunteer days to 20 properties.

In Sorell, 135 properties received assistance from 598 volunteers, contributing 3 253 days of labour. More than 120 km of damaged or destroyed fences were cleared, with a further 177 km of fences rebuilt.

In cooperation with BlazeAid, Aurora Energy assisted in the recovery efforts by donating condemned poles. This provided immediate access to resources and enabled BlazeAid to commence its recovery efforts.

BlazeAid - bringing us another step closer to ‘normal’

Your Stories
Principles of Recovery

“Community recovery after a disaster is more than simply replacing what was destroyed and rehabilitating those affected...The best outcomes are achieved when the affected community is able to exercise a high degree of self-determination.” Australian Emergency Management Institute 2011.

Recovery programs need to be community-led; programs must be supported and understood by the community and, where possible, communities should be empowered to make decisions. This is often challenging given the pressures that individuals, families and businesses are already facing.

Consistent with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, recovery programs should build capabilities in bushfire-impacted communities. Assistance grants and programs from governments or other organisations cannot be continued indefinitely. Communities should feel strengthened by recovery programs, not abandoned when these programs conclude.

Recovery can be an opportunity to build greater resilience in communities. Through recovery programs, “individuals and communities should be more self reliant... A resilient community will understand and have the ability to use local networks and resources to support actions required during an emergency and to support recovery efforts.” National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

National Principles for Recovery

Principles that underpin successful recovery:
- understanding the context
- recognising complexity
- using community-led approaches
- ensuring coordination of all activities
- employing effective communication
- acknowledging and building capacity
Objectives

The objectives of recovery are:

• to assist recovery at a personal, community, economic, and environmental level
• to ensure that recovery activities are community-led
• to ensure that available government and non-government support to affected communities is targeted
• to assist communities to rebuild in a way that enhances social, economic and environmental values where possible
• to improve resilience of the relevant communities to bushfire
• to ensure that lessons learnt through the recovery process are captured and available to managers of future recovery processes.

“We need to listen more than we have time for.”

DR ROB GORDON
Consultant Psychologist

Photo by: Red Cross Australia
A Framework for Recovery

For community recovery to be successful, it’s vital that affected locals are able to have their voices heard. When the needs of the community are heard, a framework can be developed which will deliver the right kind of assistance.

The Bushfire Recovery Taskforce

A Bushfire Recovery Taskforce was set up six days after the fires broke out. The Taskforce is led by a highly respected Tasmanian and brings together State leaders in Government (State and Local), business, the farming community and the not-for-profit sector.

Harnessing the individual expertise of some of Tasmania’s leading Government, business and community figures allows the Taskforce to ensure that whatever needs to be done is done as effectively as possible to rebuild Tasmanian communities.

The Taskforce is focused on listening to the affected communities and working with them to rebuild.

The Taskforce is able to provide advice to Government on the needs of the people, groups, businesses and other organisations affected by the bushfires. The Taskforce is independent of Government but is able to report directly to the Premier of Tasmania and key Ministers on the progress with community recovery.

The Taskforce works with and supports everyone involved in the recovery process, especially the local Affected Area Recovery Committees (AARCs) and ensures people are treated fairly and equitably. The Taskforce ensures that actions are carefully planned but implemented with due speed.

The Affected Area Recovery Committees (AARCs)

The AARCs were set up in the Sorell/Tasman and Central Highlands municipalities to assist the communities in managing their own long-term recovery. They represent the communities, implement locally-driven programs and provide feedback about needs to the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce so that the necessary assistance can be provided to support the recovery and rebuilding process.

Working with community representatives has been a key component of the recovery strategy. From the start, key community members were invited to become an integral part of the AARCs. This local perspective has proven invaluable and the local flavour continues to provide a reality check for ideas and initiatives that are being proposed. Through liaison with their community, the community representatives are able to raise issues and concerns as well as providing positive feedback on what is being well received in the community.

The AARCs are led by Local Government and draw together several Government and non-government recovery partners to coordinate and plan activities to meet recovery needs. The membership may change over time to reflect the changing focus of recovery programs.

The Sorell Tasman Affected Area Recovery Committee (STAARC) is co-chaired by the Mayor of Sorell Council and the Mayor of Tasman Council, while the Central Highlands Affected Area Recovery Committee (CHAARC) is chaired by the Mayor of Central Highlands Council.

“We’re here to help you through the turmoil, to support you in getting your lives back on track.”

DAMIAN BUGG, QC
Bushfire Recovery Taskforce Chair
The Bushfire Recovery Unit (BRU)
A BRU was established within two weeks of the fires. The Unit was established as part of DPaC to coordinate State recovery activities and to support local, community-led recovery programs.

The activity of the unit focuses on:
• providing community recovery support to affected communities
• developing policy, administrative process and advice to facilitate immediate and long-term recovery needs
• providing personal and social support for individuals, families and communities
• developing and implementing strategies that ensure there is clear communication to and from the affected communities

The Unit also tracks progress, monitors whether resources are adequate in meeting needs, and provides administrative support to the Taskforce, the Bushfire Appeal Distribution Committee, the AARCs and the Multi-Agency Recovery Committee (MARC).

The Multi-Agency Recovery Committee (MARC)
The MARC ensures a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to recovery activities. It identifies gaps and recommends appropriate policies and programs. This group also maintains relationships with non-government recovery service providers.

Further information, including Terms of Reference and membership of the groups, is available at Appendix 1.
Active Partners Program
The BRU set up the Active Partners Program to help coordinate the efforts of organisations, businesses and individuals providing support to the recovery effort.

This brought Government agencies and community organisations together under two Reference Groups.

The **Bushfire Social Recovery Reference Group (BSRRG)** is a forum for organisations to share information to coordinate service delivery and consider ways to collectively resolve issues that arise.

It also provides a forum where lessons learned from this bushfire emergency can be discussed to improve service delivery for future emergency events. There are two subcommittees of this group - the Donated Goods Subcommittee and Monetary Donations Subcommittee.

The Donated Goods Subcommittee consists of members of non-government organisations that have received donated goods for people affected by the bushfires. This group shares information on goods collected and matches them to recipients, and develops strategies for efficient transport, distribution and storage.

The Monetary Donations Subcommittee includes non-government community service organisations with an ongoing commitment to assisting bushfire-affected communities through financial donations received for that purpose. The group ensures these donations are coordinated and effective, and identifies individuals requiring additional assistance who may not be eligible for Red Cross Appeal funds.

The **Bushfire Rebuilding Reference Group (BRRG)** was established for organisations with rebuilding expertise and initially focused on the needs of those rebuilding homes.

Members contributed content and ideas to a **Building Back Better** guide and participated in an expo to allow residents to ask rebuilding questions of the experts. Membership of this group changes over time to provide advice on other issues, including community infrastructure and support for environmental recovery.

### Membership of Reference Groups

#### Bushfire Social Recovery Reference Group
- Anglicare
- Australian Red Cross
- Bushfire Recovery Unit
- Colony47
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House
- Foodbank
- Housing Tasmania
- Landcare
- Lifeline
- Medicare Local
- Relationships Australia – Tasmania
- Royal Hobart Showgrounds
- Rural Business Tasmania
- Sorell Council
- South East Community Care
- Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
- Tasman Council
- Tasman Health and Community Services
- The Salvation Army
- Uniting Care
- St Vincent de Paul
- Volunteering Tasmania

#### Bushfire Rebuilding Reference Group
- Australian Institute of Architects
- Australian Institute of Building Surveyors
- Building Designers Association Tasmania
- Bushfire Recovery Unit
- Housing Industry Association
- Planning Institute of Australia
- Master Builders Association
- Master Plumbers Association
- Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board
- Tasmanian Plumbing Surveyors Association
- Workplace Standards Tasmania
Battling the emotional aftermath of bushfires

Central Highlands Mayor Deirdre Flint OAM and Council’s General Manager, Lyn Eyles, were among the first to gain access to the area after the devastating bushfire.

“It was horrific to see a blackened landscape - no fences and in parts no trees left standing,” Mayor Flint said. “The residents certainly appreciated the visit - no in-depth conversation but reassurance. We were there for them. Aurora was already working on the power lines, and what a great job they did. This was one of the greatest psychological boosts for these affected residents.

“We owe so much to those individuals, businesses, groups and agencies who supported the community, including the volunteers and career firefighters and special remote firefighters who came from interstate and New Zealand to tackle the inhospitable terrain combined with the extraordinary support from Norske Skog, Forestry Tasmania and their contractors, Tasmania Police, the State Emergency Service, Ambulance Tasmania, helicopter pilots and our local contractors. Their support cannot be measured, they all did a magnificent job. Thank you.”

Mayor Flint said she was proud of the extraordinary dedication displayed by council staff.

Wayne Turale, Senior Rural Alive and Well (RAW) Outreach Worker in the Central Highlands, said farmers facing challenges can know they will have the support they need.

“Farmers know how to respond to a threat and are very good when it comes to defending their families and assets,” he said. “I’m sure there are several homes that would have been lost except for the determination and actions of the fathers, wives, and children who simply refused to give them up. But the real danger can come later; they can hit the wall when they realise the extent of the damage that’s been done by the fires, and the number of hurdles they’ll need to clear in the coming months to keep their families financial.”

RAW is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers community wellbeing services. It also helps to establish structures and networks to assist people, their families and communities to deal with stressful life events.
Ongoing care for our furry (and spiky) friends

Trained volunteers from Wildcare Southern Wildlife Rescue and Care (WSWRC) established a Wildlife Emergency Response Unit during the first days of the recovery to care for injured native animals.

Rachel Meyers, the Secretary/Treasurer of WSWRC, said many Australian animals have adapted to the reality of fires; echidnas, for instance, generally burrow into the ground to allow the fire to pass over them.

“But this fire was so fast and so hot, many native animals just didn’t make it,” Rachel said. “We found lots of animals trapped in fences – more than 50 in the first day alone. Pademelons and Bennetts wallabies were badly affected this way; they died tangled in fences, and many more were burnt as they hopped over the hot ground. Possums were also among the worst-affected species; they tried to out-climb the fire by going higher in the trees, only to be trapped by the flames.”

Volunteers supplied wildlife food stations at Forcett, Copping, Boomer Bay, Dunalley, Eaglehawk Neck and Murdunna. And, sensing the community’s eagerness to take care of its own, WSWRC also provided residents with wildlife food and information.

Restoring life and colour in the community

The Revegetation and Garden Restoration Program was triggered by the response of the community in the first days after the fires when many people talked about the devastation of losing their garden. This distress was particularly profound, said DTNH Coordinator Yve Earnshaw, because a garden means many things to people.

“The loss of a garden for some people is a loss of history,” Yve said. “Their garden might have been 90 or 100 years old. Gardens can often reflect the passion and efforts of several generations of a family.

“For many people a garden is also a way of connecting to their own landscape; the plants, as well as the birds they attract, can be the way a person directly relates to his or her environment. And to others, a garden is a place of peace, reflection and meditation – it’s crucial to their sense of wellbeing and, in some cases, their identity.”

Workshops provided information on the post-fire care of plants, and volunteers have helped those less able to restore their gardens.

“Seeing regrowth in the district helps the healing process, but this project is also about people being connected to their community,” Yve said.

“Buildings might take a long time to be replaced and people who’ve had to temporarily leave the community might feel like they’ve lost their connection with their home. But if they can come back and potentially start working in their gardens, it will help them maintain these important connections.”

A project to help restore the gardens and orchards that were lost in the January fires is being run by the Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House (DTNH), with funding from the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal.
Programs for Recovery

The objectives of recovery will be delivered through the coordination of efforts across five programs.

These programs for recovery reflect the collective efforts of everyone involved in the recovery process, including many individuals and local groups across the community, not-for-profit sector, business and government (Federal, State and Local).

The challenge for the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce is to ensure that actions under each program are driven or supported by the community and guided by the principles and objectives of recovery.

Program One: Supporting individuals, families and the community

**Aim:** To support individuals, families and communities by rebuilding emotional, social and physical wellbeing through a community-led, coordinated and planned process.

Program Two: Engaging the community in decisions that affect them

**Aim:** To ensure bushfire-affected communities are informed and involved in the recovery processes so actions and programs match their needs.

Program Three: Restoring homes, businesses and community infrastructure

**Aim:** To assist the community to restore their homes, businesses and local infrastructure in a timely manner by providing coordinated services and advice.

Program Four: Helping the local economy to rebound

**Aim:** To encourage revitalisation of the economy by working with local businesses to determine the most effective forms of assistance and support.

Program Five: Supporting environmental recovery

**Aim:** To support environmental recovery of affected areas by assisting landowners with information, advice and monitoring and rehabilitation projects.
PROGRAM ONE: SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

Aim: To support individuals, families and communities by rebuilding emotional, social and physical wellbeing through a community-led, coordinated and planned process.

A priority for the Taskforce is to help individuals, families and communities affected by the bushfires to recover; to feel safe and secure and to continue to enjoy living in the communities they knew before the bushfires.

It is important that people have information and support to deal with the emotional trauma of such a devastating event, to access the fundamentals of life (food, accommodation and security) and to maintain relationships that were built before, or formed as a consequence of the fires.

Emergency response and immediate needs

Governments, non-government organisations, the private sector and the community responded to the needs of the people affected by the bushfires with great compassion and energy.

Non-government organisations with dedicated roles under the State recovery arrangements were quick to mobilise support for the communities. Strong support was provided by many agencies including the Sorell, Tasman, Central Highlands and Glamorgan-Spring Bay Councils, Australian Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, The Salvation Army, Rural Alive and Well, the Tasman Community and Health Service, Foodbank and many others.

Between the State and Federal Governments, over $9 million has been paid to individuals and families in emergency assistance and restoration grants, including:

• $824 810 from the Tasmanian Government in Emergency Assistance Grants
• $842 186 from the Tasmanian Government in Housing Assistance Grants
• $7.5 million from the Federal Government in Disaster Recovery Payments
• $1.33 million from the Tasmanian and Federal Governments in Clean-Up Assistance Grants.

In addition Aurora Energy provided a $1.3 million package to provide emergency and ongoing relief to those whose properties were destroyed by the fires, as well as assistance to those who experienced extended electricity outages.
Social and personal recovery
The impact of experiencing a natural disaster on a person’s emotional and social wellbeing and mental health is as individual as they are. As pointed out by Dr Rob Gordon, a Clinical Psychologist with 30 years of experience in working with people and communities affected by disasters, nobody copes in the same way.

Everyone has had a different experience of the disaster. For example, some people will have lost their home or business, or both, while others may still have their home but feel they have lost neighbours and friends that made the community their home. Some people may not have lost material goods but were fearful for their lives while the fires raged around them. It is critical not to judge people for their experience or response, as no-one can know what another person is going through.

A person’s response to their experience could be mild or severe, short-term or long-lasting. People’s feelings will also change over time. Some people may cope well initially but as the stresses of daily life and of rebuilding their lives continue, things might get on top of them more than they usually would. Most people recover well with the support of family and friends and without the need for formal counselling or support. Some people might need the support of social workers or psychologists once or twice, or for a short time. A few might need ongoing help.

Because people’s experiences are different and their recovery pathways differ, it is important that help is available not just in the short-term but for the long haul. To ensure this, government and non-government services have been working together to make sure that the assistance people need is available, timely and well coordinated. Organisations such as The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Australian Red Cross, Rural Alive and Well and the Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House (DTNH) have been working together with government services to make sure that people have food, clothing and shelter as well as someone to talk to.

“People need to maintain a pace that will last the distance. Recovery from disaster is about running a marathon, not winning a 100 metre sprint – even if that’s what was required to outrun the fire.”

DR ROB GORDON
Consultant Psychologist

Photo by: Carolyn Daly
Local schools have played a major part in making sure that children and families are supported and can continue to grow and learn. beyondblue has been working with schools to check how children are faring and to provide help for those who need it through the Child and Bushfire Disaster Response program.

The community has the central role in the recovery of its members. People in affected areas know what they need and want, and also have great ideas and experience with helping each other. Since the fires, community members have provided strong support to each other through groups and organisations such as the DTNH, local craft groups, and the Hall Committee as well as being part of voluntary activities through the TFS, Rotary and Lions Clubs, for example.

Funding for Health and Human Services

Government has allocated $1.3 million for 2012-13 and 2013-14 to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to support a Social Recovery Plan.

The Social Recovery Plan supports the following services:
- A range of services are provided by local councils, charities and community groups in bushfire-affected areas. To maximise the benefits of these and avoid duplication or gaps, a State Operations Manager is coordinating and supporting these services.
- To ensure that vulnerable members of the community are connected seamlessly to the services they need, a Regional Social Recovery Coordinator is based at the Dunalley Information and Service Hub (DISH). This person also leads, supports and coordinates the on-the-ground services.
- Funding for three additional Community Recovery Workers with backgrounds in counselling, social work and psychology, and ongoing support from expert psychologists.
• To help people through environmental health issues like waste solutions, septic systems and water quality, a full-time Environmental Health Officer is on-hand in the local area to provide advice and support to residents and businesses as they rebuild.
• Clinical Psychologist Dr Rob Gordon has provided invaluable support to residents, helping them make sense of the emotions they are experiencing during the recovery process. Funding has been made available to ensure that community events and access to national experts like Dr Gordon continues.
• Some non-government agencies have provided much needed services beyond their normal operations. Funding is available under this Plan to enable these partnering activities to continue.

Social and Personal Support Team (DHHS)
The Social and Personal Support Team is made up of a Regional Recovery Coordinator and three Community Recovery workers. The team is based in Dunalley and can be accessed by appointment at the DISH or can provide home visits. The team works with other service providers and community groups to ensure that services are available to support individuals, families and communities in their recovery. This includes providing information (written and through information sessions) and support on a range of issues such as:
• housing and financial assistance
• children and trauma
• teenagers and trauma
• dealing with grief and loss
• sleep
• relaxation
• relationship support
• managing money
• looking after others.

The team can also put people in touch with other services they might need, can help with filling out forms or can provide a listening ear and help with strategies for coping with stress and dealing with problems.

Public and Environmental Health
Additional environmental health resources, allocated through the Social Recovery Plan, have been provided to Tasman and Sorell Councils to help with rebuilding residential and business properties. The work includes:
• Providing advice to people planning to rebuild homes and businesses about such issues as septic/sewerage and water quality.
• Assessing plans for new/rebuilt homes to ensure they meet requirements for public health.
• Assessing plans for commercial business, especially food businesses, to make sure they meet food safety standards, for example.
• On-site assessments at homes and businesses of new septic systems and other waste water systems.
• Monitoring water quality of rainwater tanks (both new and existing).
• Ensuring all post-bushfire activities comply with legislation regarding environmental health, food safety, and pollution.
• Responding to ongoing enquiries from residents of affected areas.

“If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. We're working to help communities arrive on the other side of this trauma in a stronger position than before the fires.”

MICHAEL STEVENS
Bushfire Recovery Coordinator
Supporting Established Services

The DTNH became an important community centre for the affected communities during both the emergency and recovery process. Additional funding has been provided to the organisation to support its work.

The DTNH provides family support, child care, playgroups, massage, and a range of other programs and services, and is also the “home base” for a number of other community projects, such as the gardening rehabilitation project. The DTNH is also working with young people across the Tasman and Dunalley areas to ensure they have a voice and are involved in ideas and projects to benefit their communities.

Tasman Health and Community Services (THCS) is a significant local community health provider with strong community connections. The service delivers individual and family support through its Social Work and Community Health and Youth work teams. THCS provides social work services to Murdunna and actively promotes and supports activities such as craft groups, activity programs and community events. THCS initiates community wellbeing activities and shares information through a variety of media, including hosting special health radio shows that focus on general health and wellbeing but also on specific issues to do with recovery. The service is here for the long-term in the Tasman municipal area.

St Vincent de Paul has responsibility for managing donated goods during and after an emergency. The charity organisation has set up a distribution centre at the DISH that can be accessed by community members, and can provide clothing, household goods, toys, books, furniture and more for people who need them.

The Salvation Army has increased its resources in the local community and is helping people in need to access support. Their staff have organised for portaloos to be made available for those living in sheds and caravans, as well as donations of wood splitters and other tools.

The goodwill of individuals and organisations in donating money, time and goods to the affected communities has been overwhelming. The community has been touched by donations of such things as pet food and beds, native animal food, handmade toys, handmade clothing items and a huge number of beautiful quilts and handmade blankets from all over Tasmania, interstate and even overseas. This support has shown the community that others care about what they have been through, and are thinking of them.
“The community has been fantastic. I’m fairly sure most of the people will rebuild. Some good stuff will come out of this.”

BRAD WESTCOTT
Dunalley Volunteer Fire Brigade Chief and Murdunna resident
Firies: ‘We take care of our own’

Kevin Daly has been a volunteer firefighter for 40 years and a paramedic for the past 18, but he said the bushfires that came through Dunalley last January were the worst he’s ever seen.

“In terms of the impact, I’ve not experienced any other fire like it,” Kevin said. “That’s the ongoing challenge for the local fellas; we can’t walk away from it or leave it behind because we’re stuck with reminders of the destruction every day.

“But having said that, we’ve had amazing support from the Fire Service; they seem really keen to make sure we’re all okay. And yes, most people on the outside are doing alright, but you can’t go through something like this without some sort of emotional scarring – and it doesn’t go away in a matter of three or four months.”

In recognition of these exceptional circumstances, the TFS has launched the Member Welfare Project to address the unusually heavy demands that have been placed on volunteers and staff.

Lucas van Rijswijk, Volunteer Strategy Coordinator for the TFS, said this year’s fire season was not only more intense and long-lasting than other years, but devastating in terms of the number of members who lost their homes, property, animals and jobs.
Depositing memories in the Retro Bank

Among the losses for many families in the January fires was their sense of history; a childhood toy, a family heirloom, or even a well-worn tool. Most objects can be replaced, but sometimes new objects just aren’t the same.

In an attempt to restore a feeling of familiarity to those who lost their possessions in the fires, a Retro Bank was launched by Libby Doddridge, a Marion Bay hobby farmer and a tutor in memoirs writing, along with Suzie Moore, a former researcher for the ABC Television show Collectors.

The pair first heard of the idea of a Retro Bank after the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, when collectable cups and saucers were donated to women who’d lost their homes. The difference with the Dunalley/Tasman Retro Bank is that items will also be available for men and children.

“We’re talking about items that can remind people of their past,” Suzie said. “It might be the right piece of china for a 1960s bride, or an older-style tool that a man might have used with his father.”

The Retro Bank stall was run at the Bream Creek Farmers Markets (the first Sunday of every month). Later this year, the goods will be passed on to The Salvation Army for distribution in the district.

The gift of the Stawell

Athletics coach Ray Quarrell hopes a history-making win by a Tasmanian runner in the Stawell Gift was a boost for the Dunalley community.

Twenty-year-old Andrew Robinson took out the $40,000 Victorian event by 0.02 seconds—the first Tasmanian runner to win since 1941. Andrew dedicated the victory to his coach Ray, who lost his family home in the bushfires.

“After everything that happened I used that as personal motivation to do it for someone who I love like a second Dad,” Andrew said. “I just really wanted to go out there and make him proud…”

“It’s a great win for Dunalley,” Ray said. “After everything that has happened, it was a boost for the town. We’ve worked hard to get here.”

“I’d like to think this win will be a terrific lift for Dunalley,” Ray said. “No-one in Tasmania has won this race for 72 years and I want Dunalley to know that we’ve done this for the whole community – for the town in which I live and the people I grew up with.”

Ray and his wife Kathleen escaped from the bushfires with only the shirts on their backs… as well as a determination to remain positive. Their home was the house in which Ray’s 99-year-old mother had lived as a little girl; she returned last Christmas to spend the holiday with her grandkids and great-grandchildren, and slept in the bedroom that was hers as a child. Weeks later, it was all gone.

“We could have thrown our hands in the air and asked ‘why’, but it’s moments like these that build you,” Ray said. “I guess it’s from our involvement with athletics over the years that we’ve learnt to push even harder when things get tough. For sure the sentimental side of losing our home is devastating and, to start with, I wondered what we were going to do. So we decided to throw all of our energy into being positive. “

“I know the same positivity is embracing the whole Dunalley district. When you go through a tragedy, everyone can see what’s bad. But already we’re seeing that a lot of good will come out of this event as we rebuild the town and move forward as a group.”
True island spirit shines at community event

Tasmania’s community spirit during the 2013 bushfire season was celebrated with a ‘thank you’ event, hosted by Premier Lara Giddings.

Well over 1,000 of the Tasmanians who contributed to the bushfire response, along with those affected by the bushfires, attended the community celebration at Princes Wharf No. 1 Shed in Hobart.

“The compassion and generosity demonstrated by Tasmanians from all walks of life during this devastating bushfire season has been inspiring,” Ms Giddings said.

“The True Island Spirit event was a wonderful chance for everyone to share their stories of community spirit, acknowledge the contribution of our emergency services, and relax with family and friends.”

There were family activities, live entertainment, a barbecue lunch, and emergency services vehicles, including fire trucks, a Police marine boat and an ambulance for the kids to explore.

“It’s important to remember that although the bushfire season is officially over, efforts to help communities recover and rebuild continue, both in a volunteer and official capacity,” Ms Giddings said.

“I thank all those still involved in this long-term recovery process, and I hope it serves as an assurance to bushfire-affected communities that they will not be forgotten. We will continue to coordinate and provide the support services that individuals, families and communities need.”
THANK YOU

TAS Fire Service

Daniel Jacobson + Crew
Impact Fertilisers
Kingborough Council
Forestry Tasmania
SFM Forest Products
Norske Skog
Vinnies
+ ALL VOLUNTEERS

Photo by Bianca Callinan
PROGRAM TWO

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM
PROGRAM TWO: ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM

Aim: To ensure bushfire-affected communities are informed and involved in the recovery processes so actions and programs match their needs.

A core principle of effective recovery is that it must be community-led. National and international experience shows that communities recover most effectively if they work together and play a central role in the decisions that are made.

“Disaster-affected people, households and communities understand their needs better than any of the professional, government, non-government or corporate supporters. They have the right to make their own choices about their own recovery. There is increasing recognition that the processes used by government and other key recovery agencies to interact with communities are critical and can impact either positively or negatively on the capacity of individuals and groups to manage their own recovery process.” Australian Emergency Management Institute, 2011

Cohesive communities provide a sense of place and a sense of security. They provide opportunities for people to share experiences and learn from others. They provide familiar opportunities for people to reach out for help or for others to offer help to those who may not recognise that they need it.

Communities provide people with an identity that extends well beyond their personal surrounds; and a safety net for those working their way along the often difficult road to recovery.

Communities can only be built or sustained from within. There are, however; many things that government and external organisations can do to assist communities, such as provide community spaces and bring communities together at events, support the spread of information to breed familiarity across communities and generate a new sense of place that accords with the new environment.

The AARCs are key to the Taskforce strategy of ensuring that the community is at the centre of decisions made throughout the recovery program. The AARCs provide regular input and ensure that major decisions are driven by communities.

Through the resources allocated to the BRU, the Taskforce helps the AARCs to keep communities together. The resources of the BRU will be focused on engaging communities to identify recovery priorities and projects that can be implemented from the various sources of funds available.

The Taskforce will ensure that communities stay connected with, and can drive recovery activities by:

• Working with AARCs to identify the priorities for recovery and community-based projects that support those priorities
• Maintaining local information and service hubs for as long as is reasonably necessary to support recovery efforts
• Working with the Central Highlands Council to ensure that information and services are available through the Council offices
• Ensuring that communities are aware of decisions and programs through a wide range of communication channels, including newsletters, website, social media, local flyers, and local and mainstream media
• Ensuring that communities understand how they can share stories and celebrate key milestones throughout the recovery process.
It's well-documented from previous natural disasters that clear and frequent communication with affected locals using multiple channels is a crucial factor in assisting recovery.

The BRU has coordinated many community and media events to highlight progress, celebrate milestones and local positivity, helping to give a sense of hope, trust and support.

The Unit produces a regular newsletter (5,000 copies plus electronic distribution) providing practical information and advice as well as locals’ stories; and fact sheets, flyers and posters as required.

The Unit’s website averages 3,000 hits a week, and approximately 20 tweets are sent out each week to 500 followers, and many re-tweet the information. The framework for the website will be in place for future emergencies as required.

**Targeting services to areas of need**

A key strategy in the implementation of a community led recovery is the establishment of Information and Service Hubs in locations most convenient to the bushfire-affected communities.

The Sorell, Dunalley and Murdunna Information and Service Hubs (SISH, DISH and MISH respectively) opened shortly after the initial emergency response had concluded. The immediate task involved coordinating a range of services to ensure that the needs of the community could be met from these Hubs. This included:

- Provision of psychosocial support by DHHS social workers
- Base for outreach services provided by DHHS and supported by Red Cross
- Provision of information regarding financial assistance and emergency housing
- Central location to lodge applications and certify documentation
- Central location for people with specific needs, issues and problems to speak to staff experienced in dealing with bureaucracies
- Provision of clothing and household items through St Vincent de Paul
- Provision of advice from other government departments such as the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts (DEDTA).

The services and information provided through the Hubs evolved according to the needs of the communities. In the longer-term, the DISH will continue to operate with a full range of services and both the MISH and SISH were scaled down as demand declined.
Recruitment of locally recognised staff
Associated with the establishment of the Hubs was the recruitment of people from the fire-affected community into the BRU. Three Dunalley residents are employees based at the DISH. This strategy has been highly successful in engaging with a range of people who may not have otherwise embraced government-led programs, including counselling services. This strategy also gives confidence that activities, information and modes of distribution are tailored to fit the genuine needs of the communities.

Supporting local communication channels and activities
BRU staff have actively supported and participated in community events and local groups, both formal and informal. This provides the opportunity for community members to give feedback in a relaxed environment about what’s needed to support their recovery. It also gives Unit staff the chance to share important information about available services and assistance.

One of these forums is a ‘locals group’ which evolved from its early purpose as a key communication conduit to and from residents during the bushfire crisis, into a very active group that finds practical local solutions to challenges.

This group has developed communications channels tailored to the local community, like dedicated chalkboards in prominent public areas and a ‘phone tree’, which is a pyramid-style system of sending text messages to community members.

The ‘locals group’ has also initiated creative ideas for community events, which the BRU has supported and helped deliver.

For example, the group initiated an evening presentation by a nationally recognised expert in disaster recovery and a Marysville resident, which was attended by about 90 residents.

Encouraging community engagement and participation
The BRU also plays a key role in ensuring that communities’ priorities for recovery are recognised and able to be realised through the development of specifically tailored project activities. Affected communities have differing needs, so it’s important to develop different approaches to ensure that engagement is tailored to meet these needs, and is therefore effective. In collaboration with the CHAARC, the BRU conducted workshops, a community barbecue and information sessions to provide an opportunity for locals to express their views on priorities and projects.

For the Sorell/Tasman area, a public participation plan was developed to ensure high levels of community involvement in the allocation of funding to community projects. The purpose of the plan is to support the STAARC in its selection of community projects for recommendation to the Tasmanian Bushfire Appeal Distribution Committee for Community Assistance Grants.

This plan uses a variety of approaches that provide opportunities to inform, consult, involve and collaborate with the affected communities to help to establish their priorities for recovery. These community engagement methods include keeping the community informed through a variety of channels, informal consultation via existing networks, community surveys, local events, and formal community workshops.

The key outcomes of the public participation process will be to enable:
• the identification of community priorities
• the development of community project ideas
• discussion regarding the Dunalley Structure Plan.

This approach to the task of managing a community-led recovery will continue to evolve in recognition of the changing needs of the community.
Your Stories

Improved communications crucial to future emergency responses

The need to improve the communication of emergency warnings and updates has been identified as a community priority in the Central Highlands. Locals' ideas were gathered at a function to celebrate the official opening of the upgraded Ellendale Fire Station in March.

The function was attended by dignitaries such as The Hon. Craig Farrell MLC, the Chief Officer of the Tasmania Fire Service, Mike Brown, Central Highlands Mayor, Deirdre Flint OAM, and the Director of the Bushfire Recovery Unit, Mathew Healey.

“The diversity of expertise at the gathering,” said Mathew Healey, “encouraged discussion about the lessons of the January bushfires—in particular, the difficulty in relaying emergency information across areas.

“But the funds that have been made available through the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal have given us an exciting opportunity,” Mathew added. “These funds mean that we are in a position to respond to the priorities that are identified by the community to ensure that the Central Highlands is in a better position to respond to future emergencies.”

Close to 80 people braved the wet conditions to attend the Ellendale function. After the district’s scorching summer, Deirdre Flint felt the rain brought a slight sense of closure.

“And the best way to spend that moment was thanking the firies,” Deirdre said. “The fact that locals also got to speak directly with Craig Farrell, and several heads of government departments, reminded the community that our comments are important.”

Sawmill worker finds new start in clean-up

The day after the bushfire swept through Dunalley, Brent Cashion took a drive up to Kelly’s sawmill. He’d worked there for the past 26 years but, on this day, he saw there was almost nothing left standing.

“I sat in my car and cried for about five minutes,” Brent said. “The bushfire had come down on the sawmill that fast—fireballs went everywhere. But it wasn’t until that following day that it began to sink in for me. I wouldn’t be going back to the sawmill and I was going to miss it.”

For a while, Brent didn’t know what he was going to do, but then he heard that Hazell Bros were doing the clean-up and were looking for workers.

“It’s gut-wrenching when you go to clean up the homes of people who you know—places I remember visiting,” Brent said. “It’s something I never thought I’d have to do. But when the owners come back to the property and start talking about when they’re going to rebuild, that’s a good feeling.”

Hazell Bros worked to help people who’d lost their livelihoods in the fire to find a role in the clean-up. They also provided training to ensure new employees were qualified to perform the work.
Phone Tree

“PLEASE FORWARD” became the buzz phrase around Dunalley in the early days of the recovery as a Phone Tree began to branch out in the community.

Lyn Steele, a resident of Dunalley, helped set up a Phone Tree, a network of text messages that link everyone in the district. Every time Lyn hears of an event in the community, she sends a text message to 12 specific people and the message always ends with the phrase “Please Forward”.

“My 12 people then forward the message on to four more people each, who then forward it on to four more people, and then on and on it goes;” Lyn said.

“We’ve got messages going out to more than 200 people – that’s 200 people being reached with one text message from my phone!

“Some people are calling the project a Phone Tree while others say it’s like a pyramid of SMSs. I don’t care what it’s called, but I do know that it’s working really well.”

The concept took root at a meeting of locals who called themselves the “locals left standing”. Lyn and her friends talked about ways they could support those who’d relocated after losing their homes.

“Many locals might now be living an hour or so away and this is a way to keep those people informed – and to maintain their sense of belonging. That’s really important to us because the relocated residents just want to come home,” Lyn said.

Photo by: Warren Frey Tasmania Fire Service
PROGRAM THREE

RESTORING HOMES, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE
PROGRAM THREE

RESTORING HOMES, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE
PROGRAM THREE: RESTORING HOMES, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Aim: To assist the community to restore their homes, businesses and local infrastructure in a timely manner by providing coordinated services and advice.

Cleaning Up
One of the most significant early challenges for a community that has been impacted by a disaster is to clean-up.

It is not just the physical process of removing destroyed property. Individuals and families need time to come to terms with their loss and to salvage anything that can be retrieved. They also need time to work with their insurance providers to make sure that they can get their maximum entitlements. For some, the time between the fires and clean-up needs to be short so that they can move on. For others, the process can take many weeks.

To alleviate the cost and stress to property owners, the State Government appointed a single contractor, Hazell Bros, to undertake the clean-up of all properties destroyed in the January fires. The Tasmanian and Federal Governments shared the cost of the clean-up to not only ease the financial burden on residents but to ensure it was done safely, given the majority of properties were contaminated with asbestos.

The clean-up of all 306 registered properties was completed at the end of May. This was an enormous task, with Hazell Bros crews removing 44,000 tonnes of contaminated material from properties. The completion of the clean-up gives residents the opportunity to focus on the future and rebuilding their homes, and their lives, without the constant visual reminder of the fire’s destruction.

Supporting people in temporary accommodation
Identifying the needs of those in temporary accommodation was a priority in the lead-up to the winter months. More than 120 families have been contacted by the BRU to assess their needs, such as heating and the adequacy of cooking and bathing facilities. A number of people had been living in temporary facilities, including tents, caravans and sheds.

Liaison officers were appointed to assist families, identifying those most at risk and working with them to develop solutions. The first priority was to offer to help people find alternative accommodation, however for those wishing to stay on their property, the Unit is working with them to make sure their temporary accommodation is of a basic standard of living in terms of security, privacy, access and basic comforts. This important work is being funded through the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal.

Funding has also been allocated by the State Government to the completion of property boundary resurveys in the settlement areas affected by the Forcett fires. Where surveyed boundaries have been lost, their re-establishment is necessary to determine locations of buildings and other infrastructure to enable planning applications to progress.

The program applies to all residential blocks where the residential building has been destroyed and/or the survey boundary has been otherwise lost, in the settlement areas of Boomer Bay, Dunalley, Connellys Marsh and Murdunna.

This program is being delivered by the Geospatial Infrastructure Branch from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) in collaboration with the BRU. Private survey contractors will conduct the boundary surveys.
“Now we’re moving ahead. We’re going to build the house of our dreams and have things we never had before.”

XANATH NEWBOLD, Dunalley resident

Photo by: Carolyn Daly
Rebuilding Homes
A key part of recovery and community cohesion is rebuilding the homes and shacks lost in the bushfires.

The BRU worked with relevant industry associations and councils to develop the ‘Building Back Better’ guide to rebuilding homes and shacks, to help locals navigate their way through the often complex and confusing process.

With the help of professional associations covering the design, planning, building and construction industries under the Active Partners Program, the guide provides overarching advice on the range of issues to be considered when rebuilding.

Building a home can be a daunting task at the best of times, but when you’ve lost your home to bushfire, there’s an added layer of stress. The guide is designed to help ease this burden.

Importantly, it was backed up with on-the-ground assistance in the form of a rebuilding expo, providing an opportunity for locals to chat to the experts.

Electricity Supply to the Tasman Peninsula
Aurora Energy’s immediate response to the bushfires was to re-establish power supply via the main feeder.

Currently under construction is a second feeder between Dunalley and Eaglehawk Neck. This will provide security of supply to households and businesses with Aurora deploying a new type of concrete pole, as well as undergrounding part of the route.

Rebuilding Community Facilities
Dunalley Primary School
It became very clear soon after the fires that the loss of the Dunalley Primary School cut deep into the heart of the local community.

Only 40 days later, after a mammoth effort by the local community, teaching staff, Department of Education and construction crews, the gates reopened on a temporary school.

Having the school set up and running so quickly was an important milestone in the early recovery phase.

Touring the new facilities, Premier Lara Giddings described it as a powerful symbol of a community which had not allowed its spirits to be broken by the devastation of the fire and had instead regrouped and begun to rebuild.

An incredible number of people worked tirelessly to ensure that the 130 students in the Dunalley area could continue their learning in their local community.

For students who experienced the trauma of a wildfire and, in many cases, lost their homes, having their school up and running with little disruption was important.

The Department of Education has commenced the planning process for building the new permanent school.

“By removing the visual scars of this devastating event as soon as possible it gives residents the opportunity to focus on rebuilding their lives and their communities.”

MAT HEALEY
Bushfire Recovery Unit Director
Dunalley Police Station
The Dunalley Police Station and a vacant residence owned by the Department of Police and Emergency Management were destroyed in the fires.

The third building on the property at 126 Arthur Highway - a newly-constructed four-bedroom brick residence - survived the fire but sustained heat and smoke damage.

The Department plans to rebuild the police station and a residence at the Arthur Highway site, to cater for an additional officer based in the township.

In the meantime, Dunalley police officers are working from the Dunalley Fire and Ambulance Station.

The Dunalley Community Hall
The Dunalley Community Hall, which was destroyed in the January bushfires, is to be rebuilt as a modern, multi-purpose facility.

This project – which received a $250 000 contribution from the Federal Government, as well as donations from local community groups and the public – will help to reinvigorate the central Dunalley site, which traditionally hosts community events.

Early conceptual drawings have been prepared for a new facility but nothing will be finalised before the completion of the Strategic Plan for the rebuilding of Dunalley; Sorell Council wants to make sure the new hall fits in with the community’s vision for its path forward.

Once the draft plan for the new Dunalley Hall has been prepared, it will go to the community for comment.
By Matthew Kenny, Principal of Dunalley Primary

The loss of the school in the January fires was devastating on many levels. Gone was the school that had served so many for more than 125 years. Gone were the connections between generations of family members and gone was the history which revolved around a small but integral part of the community.

There was a real fear that without the school the heart of the community was gone. The school provided many opportunities for families to bond and interact and perhaps these connections would be lost.

Having the school up and running again has brightened the whole community. People are happy to see the students playing, the noise of laughter and squeals as they play. Smiles on the faces of locals as Dunalley students walk down the street to various activities in the town tell the story that the townsfolk themselves are very happy to have the heart of the community beating again. The massive construction effort had the town buzzing.

The arrival of families on the first day told the story. “Awesome,” they said. “It’s excellent,” and “You can’t believe this was achieved in five weeks.”

The school once again stands proudly within the township. A focal point once again. A sense of routine and normalcy is evident. Parents are overjoyed that their children will not have to travel but most importantly parents are most comfortable with the fact that students are back in a familiar environment with their friends together as one school, with teachers who deeply care for them.

Oliver Bird, Student of Dunalley Primary

When Dunalley schoolboy Oliver Bird heard that the local primary school had burned down, he was distraught – he was so anxious about having to move to a new school that he vomited for two days and couldn’t sleep.

“So I wrote a letter to Mr McKim and told him how I was feeling,” Oliver said.

Oliver first met Nick McKim MP, the Minister for Education and Skills, when he came to Dunalley to look over the devastation.

“When I heard that we would be getting a temporary school and that I wouldn’t have to go away, I was so happy,” Oliver said. “And then, when I saw the workers getting ready to put in the temporary buildings, I felt heaps better about it. I watched it being built but didn’t think they could do it so quickly.”

“‘When I heard that we would be getting a temporary school and that I wouldn’t have to go away I was so happy’

OLIVER BIRD
Dunalley Primary School Student
Spotlight shines on clean-up milestone

Within days of receiving Statewide news coverage as the 100th property owners to have their bushfire-ravaged block cleared, Judy and Noel Young were recognised by a stranger. "We were looking at new garages when a woman said to us that we've become media stars," said Judy. The work on Judy and Noel's Dunalley block received a lot of attention because it was a milestone in the Hazell Bros clean-up. "I'm certainly not used to being recognised by anyone -- although on the day of the clean-up, when all of the media were around me, it did cross my mind that this is what movie stars do," Judy said. "It's given us all a good laugh, especially the grandkids. But deep down the clean-up is mostly closure for Noel and I. Life is a journey and we followed a path for the past 40 years; now we're on another path and about to start a new chapter."
PROGRAM FOUR
HELPING THE LOCAL ECONOMY TO REBOUND
PROGRAM FOUR: HELPING THE LOCAL ECONOMY TO REBOUND

Aim: To encourage revitalisation of the economy by working with local businesses to determine the most effective forms of assistance and support.

Tourism operators, primary producers and other businesses were hit hard by the fires, both in terms of physical loss and the loss of business. The fires could not have hit these communities at a worse time in terms of seasonal peak tourism demand and holiday trade. For the Forestier and Tasman Peninsulas, the location of the fires was also highly significant as it isolated the communities for over a week.

Helping local economies to recover from disasters is complex. The impact on businesses can range from the destruction of goods (eg crops) to lost productive capacity (eg damage to factories or retail outlets). Issues also often relate to a lost ability to sell products because fewer people are visiting (for tourism operators) or living in the community (for other local businesses).

The Taskforce is committed to working with the local business community to understand their needs and to link businesses with appropriate support programs.

The Taskforce recognises that helping farmers and business is usually beyond the scope of tax-deductible appeal funds. Identifying opportunities from other sources is therefore a priority.

Supporting Farmers

Farmers in bushfire-affected areas are being supported throughout the winter months with a package of assistance over $500 000.

The State Government, at the request of the Taskforce, directed $300 000 of funds donated by the Governments of Western Australia and South Australia to purchase materials to support volunteer re-fencing efforts. $80 000 is also been directed towards Natural Resource Management (NRM) South to support farm recovery planning and rehabilitation.

The Taskforce is also working with a range of partners to deliver the package. The Tasmanian Prison Service will provide at least two supervised crews to assist farmers with labour to fix fences; the Lions Club will assist with buying tools to be kept as a ‘tool library’ to assist other communities recover from a disaster; Rotary Tasmania and the Community Enterprise Foundation of Bendigo Bank will provide $30 000 for re-seeding in August; Rotary Tasmania will provide $50 000 for the ongoing supply of stock feed.

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) will coordinate the delivery of the package of assistance with administrative support to be funded by the State Government through the BRU.

In addition $724 316 has been provided to primary producers to assist with the clean-up and restoration of properties. While of great value to farmers, this assistance fell well short of the loss to many properties in fences, stock, fodder and property. Recovery is likely to be slow, with continued impacts felt over many seasons.

Fencing

The loss of fences is a significant and recurring theme for farmers impacted by bushfires. Fences are critical to the operation of farms, expensive to replace, can be prohibitively expensive to insure (depending on the enterprise) and are highly exposed to the impacts of bushfire.

It is estimated that about 6 000 km of boundary fences were destroyed in the January bushfires. At normal retail cost of labour and materials, this would cost approximately $8.4 million to replace.
The work of volunteers in assisting farmers to replace fences, including through the efforts of BlazeAid and the TFGA, is highly commendable. Without their support, the task of containing stock so that farmers could start the recovery process would have been almost insurmountable.

Compensating farmers for the loss of fences is beyond the capacity of the Taskforce and Governments. Solutions must be found, however, to lessen the impact on farmers for future fires. While not strictly within the scope of the recovery process, the Taskforce considers that a key lesson from these bushfires should be how to build greater bushfire resilience in the primary production sector, particularly in the context of protecting and/or replacing fences.

The Taskforce will seek advice from the BRU on options to build greater resilience from bushfires in primary producers, particularly in the area of fencing.

**Fodder**

Like fencing, fodder is highly vulnerable in bushfires and, if lost, critically undermines the capacity of a farm to recover. Also like fencing, the speed, energy and dedication of community members, organisations and the private sector to come to the aid of farmers in the days and weeks after the fires was impressive.

Distributing fodder requires knowledge of farming practice, as well as resources for coordination and distribution. There are many lessons to be learnt in this area, and the Taskforce will work with relevant State Agencies, local authorities and organisations to identify arrangements that can be built into State and local emergency plans for the coordination of fodder following future emergencies.

**Supporting aquaculture or aquaculture infrastructure**

The Marine Resources branch within the Water and Marine Resources division of DPIPWE has been working with a number of affected companies (oyster farms, an abalone farm, and a fish processor) to identify the level of impact on these businesses.

Marine Resources has initiated discussions with the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC) regarding fee relief for the affected farms, and will continue to work with TSIC to identify where the Government could provide further assistance.
Supporting Tourism
A $250,000 tourism advertising program was launched to encourage visitors to the affected regions. The two-month intrastate advertising campaign, The Tassie Comeback Tour featured local tourism businesses on TV, radio, press and social media to promote the fact that a visit to the bushfire-affected areas is as good for Tasmanians as it is for the businesses in these areas.

Tourism Tasmania is investing a further $50,000 on cooperative promotions and events in the bushfire-affected areas which have been identified through the Regional Tourism Organisations.

Supporting nature-based tourism
In most cases, trade has recovered to normal levels at all Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) sites.

The PWS Discovery Ranger program has been deployed in key areas affected by fire, and in support of key local events. Three Capes Track stage two works are well underway, with significant direct employment and local Tasman Peninsula contractors engaged. Works are programmed for the next three years, with an estimated spend of $20 million.

PWS is also working with Tourism Tasmania and the Regional Tourism Organisations to support marketing efforts targeting visitors to return to local communities affected by fire.

Supporting Business
The Federal and State Governments provided Clean-Up and Restoration Grants for small business and not-for-profit organisations. By early June, 55 applications for assistance had been received and $580,000 distributed.

The Tasmanian Government is also implementing an economic recovery package for bushfire-affected areas. The package includes:
- no-interest loan scheme for businesses that suffered direct fire damage
- investment in town planning initiatives for Dunalley and Murdunna
- enterprise and industry diagnostic support and assistance with growth strategies including help with funding applications
- facilitating whole-of-government responses to economic opportunities
- collaborating with local government to foster sustainable economic growth and regional capability
- investigating regional infrastructure needs and commercial investment attraction opportunities
investigating community service needs and assessing their viability
strategic economic development of the region consistent with the objectives of the State Government’s Southern Regional Economic Development Plan.

The 2013 Bushfire Recovery Loan Program (BRLP) provides an initial no-interest two-year term for eligible businesses. Overseen by the DEDTA, this package is worth $600 000 over two years.

The Program provides support for sustainable private sector businesses directly affected by the 2013 bushfires. Applications for loan assistance are considered from businesses located within the Sorell, Tasman and Glamorgan-Spring Bay Local Government Areas and in the district of Ellendale.

The aim of BRLP is to provide loans of up to $500 000 for the re-establishment of the business by covering costs such as:

- repairing or replacing damaged plant and equipment
- repairing or replacing buildings or critical infrastructure
- supplying up to one month of lost stock-in-trade and
- meeting essential carry-on requirements, including sustenance, essential property operations, rent and rates.

DEDTA is also providing business mentoring, and a dedicated Economic Development Officer is working in the affected region for 12 months (to be reviewed after this time).

The economic package also includes $20 000 for the Tasman and Sorell Councils for the development of their settlement plans for future development, and $30 000 for a feasibility study on a potential marina development in the Dunalley township.

DEDTA will continue to offer current services and programs and work with key stakeholders to ensure relevant business advice including workplace relations, workforce redeployments and other advice services can be delivered. Existing programs will also be tailored for bushfire-affected areas where possible.

Examples include:

- a skill development program aimed at helping business planning and recovery, focused on topics such as succession planning or marketing
- a special rollout of the Digital Ready Program delivered through one-on-one coaching and group workshops
- the existing Industry Capability Network assisting in identifying local capability and capacity to assist in the overall rebuilding effort.

A major component of the economic recovery is the creation of the Sorell Tasman Economic Recovery Group (STERG) as part of the governance arrangements for the implementation of the Southern Regional Economic Development Plan.

Chaired by Taskforce member Steve Gunn, STERG is primarily comprised of businesses, with DEDTA and BRU representation.
PROGRAM FIVE

SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL RECOVERY

Photo by: Warren Frey, Tasmania Fire Service
Aim: To support environmental recovery of affected areas by assisting landowners with information, advice and monitoring and rehabilitation projects.

Managing Weeds and Erosion

A significant proportion of the South-East Australian landscape has adapted ecologically to the seasonal impacts of bushfires. In most cases, flora and fauna recover well without intervention. Some intervention and support may, however, be required where the environment is already vulnerable, where landscapes have been adapted for productive use (e.g., to avoid erosion or weed incursions on cleared land) or where the environment is relied upon for services (e.g., where water quality may be an issue).

The State Government, through the DPIPWE, is working collaboratively with NRM South and Landcare Tasmania to progress options for property planning support for farmers recovering from the fires. Baseline information on soils and other landscape attributes are made available to NRM South along with access to satellite imagery and other spatial products. It is expected that the process of recovery planning will be progressively offered to farmers as the opportunity arises.

Weed incursion has been identified as a risk to pasture and other fire-affected land. Entry pathways include wind-borne dispersal as well as earthmoving machinery, vehicles and organic matter including fodder. Fact sheets and information sessions have been developed by DPIPWE, NRM South and local Landcare to inform land managers of these risks and the steps that they should take to mitigate the risks. Ongoing advice and support will be provided through existing networks.

Landcare Tasmania

Landcare Tasmania is coordinating post-fire volunteering. With financial support from the Federal Government’s Caring for Our Country Program, a new part-time position will provide more capacity to coordinate and integrate volunteering experiences that are valuable, safe and rewarding for participants – and strategically important, well-timed and effective for local fire-affected communities.

As well as operating the Tasmanian Landcare Fund Bushfire Recovery Appeal, the group facilitated a new ‘pop-up’ initiative called Weed Aid. Exotic weeds are highly competitive after a fire, and affected landowners can find it difficult to monitor and treat the emerging threat. Weed Aid’s objective is to work with local community and industry networks, landowners and NRM staff to support priority post-fire weed management in Southern Tasmania. Governed by local stakeholders, Weed Aid improves communication and coordination of weed related projects, facilitates surveillance and treatment involving volunteers, and raises awareness of post-fire weed issues.

Landcare Tasmania is also part of Plant Aid along with not-for-profit The Understorey Network, various community garden groups and individual garden enthusiasts. Plant Aid’s goal is to restore and regenerate landscapes and gardens in fire-affected areas and through this, to support local residents and landowners in their recovery. This initiative supports the Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House Garden Revegetation program and revegetation in other fire-affected areas where needed.

Landcare maintains a designated bushfire recovery webpage and is developing a preparedness and resources page with the support of the TFS.
Managing impacts on threatened species habitats

A total of 22 properties with ongoing conservation covenants were affected by the fires. Significant areas of habitat within the conservation reserves were burnt. DPIPWE’s Land Conservation staff have contacted all affected landholders to assess damage to reserves and associated fencing.

It is estimated that at least 26 km of fencing around high conservation value reserves was destroyed. It is known that protection from grazing in the first season after fire is critical for threatened flora recovery. DPIPWE staff are working with affected covenant holders and other partners to seek funding for reinstatement of these fences.

Consultation has occurred with the Forcett Incident Management Team and DPIPWE has received a digital layer of tracks under consideration for rehabilitation.

Monitoring water quality

The highest impacts on water quality following bushfires often result where high intensity rainfall events generate increased rates of runoff into rivers. These impacts include:

- Transport of large amounts of sediment and ash during floods following fires can result in high turbidity, low dissolved oxygen and elevated nutrients and toxins in waterways. This can lead to blue-green algal blooms and fish mortality.
- Large amounts of fire debris transported downstream during floods can cause channel scour and erosion and deliver large quantities of sediment downstream into irrigation and drinking water supply storages.
- Less shade from streamside vegetation can result in increased stream water temperatures resulting in fish mortality.

These areas are being assessed by the Weed Management Section and Threatened Species and Marine Conservation Section to advise on potential impacts resulting from rehabilitation.
IMpaCts on drinking water supplies and stock and domestic use from elevated turbidity. Increased sediment, metals and toxins. Increased turbidity can hinder disinfection of drinking water. Individual stock and domestic users will employ various methods to treat water for drinking and irrigation purposes (filtration, regular cleaning of pumps).

Despite the immediate impacts of fire, Australian aquatic ecosystems are quite resilient to bushfire and populations of aquatic fauna often recover quickly provided there is connectivity between affected and unaffected habitats. Species most vulnerable are isolated populations of fish (such as galaxiid fish species which comprise the bulk of fish populations on the Peninsula) and species that do not tolerate elevated levels of sediment (such as trout, which is unlikely to be a significant species on the Peninsula).

The level of bushfire impact is also linked to river condition before a fire. Low to moderate condition creeks and rivers that are drought-stressed are less resilient to ecological recovery than streams and rivers in good condition. The bulk of rivers and creeks in bushfire-affected areas are likely to have been in good condition although are likely to be experiencing very low to intermittent flow.

DPIPWE Water and Marine Resources Division monitors continuous stream flow and water quality at two locations on the Peninsula. These stations are located at Carlton River at Tidal Limit and Allans Rivulet at Taranna. Of these, only the Carlton River site is within the bushfire-affected area. Water quality is sampled on a two-monthly basis at this site.

DPIPWE will:
- Install continuous water quality monitoring data probes at the Carlton River site to allow more intensive monitoring of bushfire impacts on water quality for selected parameters (turbidity, temperature and dissolved oxygen).
- Increase monitoring to monthly instead of two-monthly and investigate the value of sampling parameters such as nutrients and metals.
- Undertake river health and fish sampling at selected sites in waterways in bushfire-affected areas on the Tasman Peninsula to monitor water quality impacts on aquatic fauna and potential recovery. A baseline dataset exists for many sites that provides river health information prior to the fire.
- Monitor water quality at sites where river health sampling is undertaken. Similar sampling has been undertaken by other jurisdictions following bushfires in Victoria and the ACT and this will provide valuable guidance in the development of a Tasmanian monitoring program.
Tracking Progress

It is critical that communities understand how they are progressing along the path to recovery.

The Taskforce, through the resources of the BRU, will monitor and provide regular updates on actions that are taken within each of the programs. Regular updates on progress will be provided in the recovery newsletter, Recovery News, and at www.bushfirerecovery.tas.gov.au

AARCs will also be key to keeping communities informed on progress towards recovery. The Taskforce will continue to support the work of these committees.

The Chair of the Taskforce will provide updates on the progress towards recovery to the Premier of Tasmania as requested.

A final Transition to Long Term Recovery Plan will be developed as a tool to transition out of the temporary recovery arrangements and into long-term recovery supported by the State, councils and others. The Transition to Long Term Recovery Plan will outline how key recovery activities will continue to be supported, as well as capturing the key lessons learnt from the recovery process.

This Programs for Recovery, together with the Transition to Long Term Recovery Plan, will provide a comprehensive resource for governments and communities that need to face the challenges of disaster recovery in the future.
An Open Letter from the fire-affected farmers in the Dunalley area

To everyone who has contributed to the Tasmanian bushfire recovery;

As a group of farmers in the Dunalley area, we would like to take the time to thank the countless individuals, groups, not-for-profit organisations, businesses, industry groups and government agencies who have helped us in so many ways following the devastating bushfires on the 4th January 2013.

Obviously, we can’t possibly name everyone who has contributed, but we would like to show our sincere and heartfelt appreciation for the many acts of generosity and overwhelming community support that we have been shown over the last 5 months.

We quite honestly couldn’t have made it through the last few months without the support of the Tasmanian and wider Australian community. Your thoughts and well wishes mean a lot to us, and have helped us get through what has been a really tough time.

We don’t usually like to make a fuss, but there are so many people out there who deserve recognition for their outstanding efforts (in no particular order):

Emergency response services and coordination, water carriage, communications, power restoration, essential services restoration, road restoration, health services, law enforcement, veterinarian services, wildlife assistance, volunteer labour, fencing assistance, fodder; hay and grain for stock, pasture seed, animal food, storage, collection, distribution and transportation of goods and equipment, fencing equipment, generators, chainsaws, machinery, tools, equipment, agricultural supplies, sawmilling, discounted goods and services, promotional activities, government support, industry representation, fundraising, donations, professional advice, understanding and flexibility, coordination of meetings, cleaning up of debris, moral support, food and homebaked goodies, cups of tea, financial support, business mentoring and support, sharing a laugh, a tear; and a well-deserved beer.

We’ve still got a way to go before we’re back on our feet, but knowing that we have the community’s support makes a world of difference. We’ve all been moved by your kindness, and seeing the progress of the recovery efforts is both reassuring and inspiring.

Thank you, everyone, for all that you’ve done for us, and all you will do for us as we continue our recovery from the January bushfires.

Yours sincerely,
The fire-affected farmers of the Dunalley, Copping and Carlton River area
Bushfire Recovery Taskforce
Terms of Reference

Role
Harnessing the individual talents and expertise of some of Tasmania’s leading business and community figures, the Taskforce will take a leading and coordinating role to ensure that whatever needs to be done is done as effectively as possible to rebuild Tasmanian communities.

Function
The Taskforce shall:
• Provide advice on and approve an action plan for the recovery from the 2013 bushfires in Tasmania, drawing on existing Tasmanian emergency management arrangements and plans.
• Provide a public face for the recovery process and regular progress reports and community and media information on the recovery progress.
• Provide advice to the Government on the needs of the people, groups, businesses and other organisations affected by the bushfire and appropriate responses.
• Act as a governing board for the work of the Bushfire Recovery Unit.
• Provide guidance and act as a community and expert reference group for the Affected Area Recovery Committees.
• Work with the Bushfire Recovery Coordinator, and the Chairs of the Affected Area Recovery Committees to tackle specific issues or resolve outstanding problems.
• Oversee the distribution of Appeal funding.

Membership
The Taskforce shall comprise:
• Chair, Damian Bugg, QC, former Director of Public Prosecutions
• Steve Gunn, Blundstones Chief Executive Officer
• Mayor Barry Easther, Local Government Association of Tasmania President
• Dr Ian Burke, Australian Red Cross Executive Director
• Jan Davis, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Chief Executive Officer
• Darren Hine, Tasmania Police Commissioner
• Rhys Edwards, Department of Premier and Cabinet Secretary
• Michael Stevens, Tasmanian Bushfire Recovery Coordinator.
Multi-Agency Recovery Committee
Terms of Reference

Role
The Multi-Agency Recovery Committee (MARC) supports the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce by ensuring a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to recovery activities for the January 2013 bushfires.

Function
The MARC shall:
• Coordinate whole-of-government input to the Recovery Plan developed by the Taskforce
• Identify gaps in Tasmanian Government recovery activities and make recommendations to the Taskforce in relation to appropriate recovery policies and programs
• Support the implementation of the Recovery Plan
• Build relationships with non-government recovery service providers
• Support the work of Affected Area Recovery Committees as appropriate.

Accountability
The MARC will report to the Security and Emergency Management Advisory Group (SEMAG).

Membership
The MARC shall comprise:
• the Director of the BRU (Chair)
• a representative of each Tasmanian Government agency (as nominated by the agency SEMAG member)
• a representative from Volunteering Tasmania
• a representative from Australian Red Cross
• a representative of the Australian Defence Force
• other members at the invitation of the Chair.

The Director of the BRU may delegate his responsibility as Chair if he is unable to attend a meeting of the MARC.

The MARC may invite observers or guest speakers to particular meetings on a case-by-case basis.

Secretariat support
Secretariat support will be provided by the BRU.

Frequency of meetings
MARC meetings will be held at least weekly in the early stages of recovery and as required, as determined by the Committee, thereafter.

Any member of the MARC may convene a meeting by contacting the secretariat.

Procedures
Recommendations of the MARC shall be arrived at by consensus.
Sorell/Tasman Affected Area Recovery Committee (STAARC) Terms of Reference

Role
To assist the communities of the Sorell and Tasman Municipal Areas to manage their own recovery following the major bushfires in January 2013. This assistance will be provided by providing governance of a coordinated and planned process that draws together relevant recovery partners to address the recovery needs.

Specifically this includes:
• Taking account of affected councils’ long-term planning goals.
• Oversighting and coordinating activities to meet recovery needs related to social, infrastructure, economic and environmental elements. This includes arrangements for Appeal administration and disbursement of funds.
• Providing ongoing opportunities for community participation and consultation

Function
The work of this Affected Area Recovery Committee will be characterised by collaboration with stakeholders, information-sharing and collective decision-making, as well as upholding the values and relevant processes of the Tasmanian Government.

Frequency of meetings
The first meeting of the Committee will be on Monday 14 January 2013 at Sorell Municipal Office.

The Committee is required to meet at least weekly for the first six weeks from the first meeting.

After the first six weeks the Committee will determine the future meeting frequency based on the Committee’s progress in delivering the outputs of the work program.

Membership
The STAARC shall comprise:
• Kerry Vincent, Mayor, Sorell Council (Co-chair)
• Jan Barwick, Mayor, Tasman Council (Co-chair)
• Bill Costin, General Manager, Sorell Council
• Robert Higgins, General Manager, Tasman Council
• Michael Stevens, Tasmanian Bushfire Recovery Coordinator (non-voting member)
• Caroline Bignell, Community Representative, Sorell Municipal Area
• Graham Millar, Community Representative, Tasman Municipal Area
• Bert Dorgelo, Community Representative, Tasman Municipal Area
• Mathew Healey, Director, Bushfire Recovery Unit, DPAC
• Andrea Sturges, Area Director, Children and Youth Services, DHHS
• State Emergency Service
• Federal Department of Human Services
• Dr Ian Burke, Australian Red Cross Executive Director

Procedures
A quorum is no fewer than three members including the Chairperson, the Executive Officer and one other member. Arrangements for out-of-session decisions should align with the following points:

• The Committee can make resolutions without meeting in person as long as a quorum indicates they support the written resolution.
• To indicate support, the paper containing the resolution must be signed by the quorum (hand or electronic signature).
• Multiple copies of the same paper with individual signatures are considered to be one paper.
Central Highlands Affected Area Recovery Committee (CHAARC)
Terms of Reference

Role
To assist the Central Highlands community to manage their recovery following the major bushfires in January 2013 and to seek feedback from the community and others on actions that could be taken to improve the community’s resilience to bushfire.

Specifically the purpose includes:
• Understanding the impacts of the Lake Repulse fire on the Central Highlands community.
• Considering assistance that could be made available to assist the Central Highlands community to recover from the fire.
• Provide advice to the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce and other relevant committees regarding specific needs of areas affected by the Lake Repulse fire.
• Providing a decision-making forum for the distribution of any available Federal or State funding for recovery initiatives.
• Seeking input from the community and others on what arrangements may assist to build resilience in the community to future bushfires.

Function
The work of this Affected Area Recovery Committee will be characterised by collaboration with stakeholders, information-sharing and collective decision-making.

Membership
The CHAARC shall comprise:
• Deirdre Flint, Mayor; Central Highlands Council (Chair)
• Mathew Healey, Director, Bushfire Recovery Unit, DPAC
• Ann Jones (Community Representative)
• Richard Downie (representative from the TFGA)

Secretariat support
Jan Monks, Executive Officer.

Frequency of meetings
The first meeting of the Committee was held on Thursday, 24 January 2013.

The Committee will determine the frequency of meetings based on the nature of actions agreed.

Procedures
A quorum is no fewer than three members including the Chairperson, the Executive Officer and one other member. Arrangements for out-of-session decisions should align with the following points:

• The Committee can make resolutions without meeting in person as long as a quorum indicates they support the written resolution.
• To indicate support, the paper containing the resolution must be signed by the quorum (hand or electronic signature).
• Multiple copies of the same paper with individual signatures are considered to be one paper.
The State Government’s Response

**Tasmania Fire Service**
- Up to 85,000 person hours were committed to the fires in the first two weeks (including career and volunteer firefighters as well as Forestry and Parks personnel)
- Interstate fire and land management agencies contributed 260 personnel and New Zealand 13
- 1,000 - 1,500 hours of aircraft flying time, from 25 helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. More than 350 km of fire line was extinguished and patrolled
- More than 600 warnings, updates and media releases issued to keep communities informed.

**Department of Police and Emergency Management**
- Officers evacuated locals from their homes ahead of the fire, saving lives
- Supported refuge centres and closure of roads
- Marine and Rescue and other vessel operators evacuated almost 3,000 people from the Tasman Peninsula by boat
- Provided emergency escorts for essential supply convoys
- Activated a registration system to locate people
- Specialist teams assessed damage and searched for deceased or injured people.

**Ambulance Tasmania**
- About 75 staff including volunteers, paramedics and intensive care paramedics provided emergency and medical care to affected communities
- Established statewide Incident Management Team through the State Operations Centre
- Provided community advice and counselling in affected communities
- Coordinated first aid support with other agencies
- Provided Rapid Assessment Team staff in initial stages
- Provided aeromedical response for isolated patients and resourcing.

**Department of Health and Human Services**
- Provided emergency accommodation for about 500 people
- Provided a local presence administering housing and emergency relief grants, social workers and support counsellors
- The Royal Hobart Hospital provided food for evacuees in Nubeena
- Public Health worked with Local Government on sanitation, water supply and food safety
- Coordinated the delivery of more than 1,000 personal protection packages
- Worked with St Vincent de Paul and The Salvation Army to coordinate donated goods and Salvation Army on food provision
- Operated community health centres at Nubeena, Sorell and Ouse
- Provided logistics support, food and bedding for the Hobart City Hall Community Fire Refuge

**Department of Education**
- Mobilised clean-up and rebuilding services to get the school back up and running as quickly as possible
- Provided accommodation to approximately 110 firefighters from interstate
- Provided support services to school staff and school communities.

**Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources**
- Assisted the closure of the Arthur Highway and participated in the Rapid Impact Assessment team
- Undertook safety assessments of fire-affected roads and the Dunalley Canal to ensure that they could be opened safely as soon as possible.
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
- Provided animal welfare responses and support to those suffering from stock losses.
- Provided support to a veterinary triage and referral centre for animals.
- Assisted with the coordination of fodder.
- Established a telephone enquiry service for animal welfare advice.
- Conducted an impact assessment team to identify assistance packages for landholders.
- Provided extensive mapping services to the TFS Incident Centre and to the State Crisis Centre for rapid impact assessment.
- Provided advice about carcass disposal, waste management and handling of asbestos.
- Individual contact made with all farming and fishing related businesses in affected areas and a case management approach adopted. Focused on support and counselling and advice on financial relief available.
- Provided advice on supplementary valuations to enable councils to provide rates relief (among other measures) to affected residents and other ratepayers.
- Re-establish property boundaries in fire-affected areas.

Aurora Energy
- Received 1,177 fault calls on the day of the fires.
- Over 3,000 customers were without power with approximately 100 km of lines on the ground, more than 700 poles destroyed, 80 transformers lost.
- Mobilised 180 Aurora field employees, 60 contractors and many Aurora support employees.
- 222 vehicles travelled inside the area: 1,945 separate trips and 99,586 kms.
- Only two weeks after bushfires had devastated the region, Aurora announced it had completed the restoration of its network (one feeder line and all spur lines) in south-east Tasmania: a fortnight earlier than initially anticipated.
- All power was returned to Lake Repulse (Ellendale), Bicheno and Forcett by 4 January 2013.
- Mobile generation was used successfully: the first time during an emergency.

Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Activated and staffed the Emergency Information Service and specialist website, and provided information to the public.
- Worked with the Australian Red Cross to launch the Appeal and Hazell Bros to organise the clean-up contract and register people who wished to have their properties cleaned up.
- Coordinated longer-term recovery efforts including the activation of all available grants and rapid deployment of administrative arrangements.

Department of Treasury and Finance
- Assisted in the procurement process for bushfire projects to speed up recovery works and the purchasing of required goods and services.

Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts
- Established face-to-face contact with businesses to provide mentoring, support and counselling services, as well as advice on financial relief available through the Federal and Tasmanian Governments and other channels.
- Provided visitor information to encourage tourists to stay in Tasmania and directly contacted over 2,000 tourism operators with critical information.

Department of Justice
- Worked with Hazell Bros, through Workplace Standards Tasmania, on asbestos management.
- Provided on-site safety advice at Worksafe caravan.
- Coordinated the supply of personal protection equipment and free legal assistance.

State Emergency Service
- Coordinated the standby and activation of community fire refuges, supported TFS Fire Investigation teams with rapid impact assessment, supported Police Forward Command, and assisted with sourcing and transporting equipment such as generators and bulk fuel to the Peninsula.
The Local Government Response

**Central Highlands Council**
- Supplied graders, water tank and staff to assist with fighting the bushfires
- Supported the BlazeAid camp by providing a washing trough, a TV antenna, a minimum amount of food, and the use of the recreation ground (complete with powered camping sites and an enclosed pavilion, with up-to-date kitchen)
- Supplied fresh drinking water to fire-affected properties
- Organised personal meetings with those affected by the fire
- Sourced donations and fencing materials to distribute to affected properties
- Attended and participated in public meetings with TFS and Police
- Provided the Hamilton Hall and Council Meeting Room as a staging site for TFS including phone access and daily cleaning, with office staff available weekends for incidentals
- Removed fallen trees from roads to enable access, and later removed dangerous trees on roadside verges
- Participated in Affected Area Recovery Committee
- Opened refuge site at Ouse
- Central Highlands Council Emergency Management Coordinator liaised with Derwent Valley Council to open a refuge site at New Norfolk for Ellendale Residents
- Distributed information as required
- The Mayor visited sites and was available to residents 24/7.

**Hobart City Council**
- During the emergency deployed waste management services to the Tasman Peninsula
- Provided equipment, including tree chippers and mobile toilet facilities, to the fire-affected communities
- Hobart City Council decided on 14 January to assist the recovery effort through provision of services and staff, rather than a cash contribution – however the Council also provided for a grant of up to $30 000 for a specific recovery project to be determined in consultation with affected communities in the Tasman and Sorell municipal areas
- During the emergency, established and managed a Recovery Centre at the City Hall. The Centre operated for a week assisting people evacuated from the Tasman Peninsula. DHHS, Centrelink, the Australian Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, the Tasmanian Council of Churches and the Save the Children Fund all provided services and support at the Centre.
- The Council’s Tasmanian Travel and Information Centre became a liaison point for the tourism industry and visitors. Centre staff worked to redirect tourists to alternative excursions helping to ensure visitors still had an enjoyable stay in Tasmania.
- Work to support the tourism sector in affected areas is still continuing.
**Sorell Council**

- On the first evening of the bushfires established a Fire Refuge at the Sorell Memorial Hall, at the request of the State Emergency Service
- As soon as the Arthur Highway was re-opened, conducted a clean-up on the Peninsula to remove perishable rubbish from disconnected fridges and freezers (that could have, had it not been removed, led to disease)
- Also provided general waste collection and extra green and hard waste collections
- Transported potable water to Dunalley for all of those who had taken refuge within the Hotel
- Supplied the ongoing use of facilities to support the work of BlazeAid
- Provided grounds to allow for the fodder relief programme
- Waived all building levies and fees on all bushfire-related rebuilds
- Supervised a door-to-door survey of vegetation in the bushfire-affected areas and the removal of damaged/dangerous trees
- Collaborated with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to work on a planning strategy for the rebuilding of Dunalley
- Worked with Southern Water to determine any faults or problems with the sewerage system, as well as septic tanks on properties affected by fire
- Mayor Kerry Vincent and General Manager Bill Costin represent Council on the Sorell Tasman Affected Area Recovery Committee, which was set up to represent the community’s needs and wishes (in terms of recovery and rebuilding) to the Government, the Taskforce and the BRU.

**Tasman Council**

- On the afternoon of the bushfires established a Fire Refuge at the Nubeena Civic Centre and Tasman District School, at the request of the State Emergency Services (Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority also established an Evacuation Centre at the Historic Site)
- As soon as the Arthur Highway was re-opened, provided disposal locations (bins) in fire-affected areas for the removal of perishable rubbish from disconnected fridges and freezers. Also provided free general waste disposal at Nubeena WTS during the fires for perishable rubbish
- Extra green waste collections in Murdunna and Sommers Bay with assistance from Southern Midlands, Kingborough, Clarence and Hobart Councils including the removal of dangerous trees on roadside verges
- Provided necessary infrastructure and transported potable water to Eaglehawk Neck Hall and Murdunna rest area for use by community
- Waived all planning, building and caravan fees on all bushfire-related rebuilds until at least 30 June 2014
- The third and fourth instalment of 2012/14 rates remitted in full for properties where buildings have been destroyed and remitted rates on improved vacant land based on revised land valuation from the Office of the Valuer General
- Collaborated with the Departments of Economic Development and Premier and Cabinet to work on a community development plan for Murdunna
- Mayor Jan Barwick and General Manager Robert Higgins represent Council on the Sorell Tasman Affected Area Recovery Committee, which was set up to represent the community’s needs and wishes (in terms of recovery and rebuilding) to the Government, the Taskforce and the BRU
- Tasman Emergency Recovery Management Committee established in the week of the fires consisting of emergency services providers, local service organisations and service providers chaired by General Manager of Council
- Supplied necessary equipment and staff to assist with operation of Fire Refuge, Operations Centre and bushfire response generally
- Council operated as communication hub during the period immediately after the bushfire.
Community Organisations’ Response

**Anglicare Tasmania**
The wellbeing and mental health of individuals within the bushfire-affected community have been the main focus of Anglicare Tasmania’s ongoing support programs.

For several years Anglicare Tasmania has worked with individuals whose mental health is having a negative impact on their lives, and the numbers have increased since the bushfires; anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress have all been on the rise. To deal with these concerns Anglicare Tasmania has support workers within the community to provide financial advice and mindfulness programs.

Working in collaboration with the Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House, Anglicare Tasmania is funding an interactive Playback Theatre in Nubeena which allows locals to tell their stories – it gives residents a voice and a way to release their emotions. Anglicare Tasmania has also organised a weekend retreat for fire-impacted residents so that they can get away from their problems for a few days.

**BlazeAid**
Two BlazeAid camps operated in Tasmania following the January bushfires. In the Central Highlands (Hamilton), 70 km of fencing was cleared and 127 km of fencing was rebuilt by 181 volunteers, contributing 1 266 volunteer days to 20 properties.

In Sorell, 135 properties received assistance from 598 volunteers, contributing 3 253 days of labour. More than 120 km of damaged or destroyed fences were cleared, with a further 177 km of fences rebuilt.

BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with farmers and families in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods.

**Foodbank**
Trucks stocked by Foodbank of Tasmania, and led by an emergency services convoy, drove through fire on the first days of the recovery to help feed the thousands of locals and tourists who were stranded on the Nubeena Oval. In the following month, Foodbank of Tasmania provided 1 120 000 kilos of food and 77 tonnes of stock supplies to the region.

As well as food, Foodbank of Tasmania has supplied generators, barbecues, toiletries, books, bicycles – they even made two ‘emergency’ beer runs for the local hotel (Boags one day and Cascade the next).

As the recovery has progressed, Foodbank of Tasmania continues to deliver hampers to fire-impacted families, such as those who might be falling through the cracks. In the future the organisation will also gear up to support burnt-out residents when they return to their new homes.

**Landcare**
Landcare Tasmania has created a part-time position to coordinate post-fire, Landcare-related volunteering. This will provide more capacity to coordinate and integrate volunteering experiences.

Landcare has also facilitated a new ‘pop-up’ initiative called Weed Aid, working with local community and industry networks, landowners and NRM staff to support priority post-fire weed management in Southern Tasmania.

Landcare Tasmania is also part of Plant Aid, along with not-for-profit The Understorey Network, various community garden groups and individual garden enthusiasts.

**Lions**
Lions Tasmania responded quickly to the bushfire emergency with members of the Tasman and Sorell Clubs active at fire refuges, assisting with food preparation and relief distribution.

As part of the BlazeAid re-fencing project, Lions supported catering needs for the volunteers, providing more than 3 000 hot evening meals and funded breakfast (as well as other food) requirements.
A major project delivered by Lions is the Community Amenities Unit located in Dunalley. The $150,000 facility in Bay Street (situated on land made available by, and next to, the TFS) features showers, toilets, washing machines and clothes dryers for those who lost their homes in the January bushfires. Lions have also relocated to Dunalley a tool library, used after the 2009 Victorian bushfires, which will provide a variety of tools on loan to local residents.

Lions continues to be active in the farm rehabilitation program, the replacement and repair of emergency service equipment, and in the support of community projects in fire-affected areas.

**Australian Red Cross**

Since 4 January 2013, more than 150 Red Cross staff and volunteers have helped with the Tasmanian bushfire response, supporting around 3,000 people.

Red Cross volunteers initially worked in Community Fire Refuges at Ouse, Swansea, Nubeena, Sorell, Hobart and New Norfolk, offering personal support. In addition, Red Cross ran the National Registration and Inquiry System, which helps reunite family and friends affected by disaster. Red Cross volunteers and staff registered 1,850 people who were forced to evacuate due to the fires and responded to more than 1,570 inquiries from friends and relatives across Australia seeking news of their loved ones.

Throughout the initial months, Red Cross volunteers worked closely with government agencies to deliver outreach support in fire-affected communities. They visited 442 homes providing personal support and information to those affected in the areas of the Tasman Peninsula and Dunalley.

Red Cross volunteers have continued to provide personal support and recovery information to more than 460 bushfire-affected people at the Information and Service Hubs to support the journey to recovery.

The Emergency Services team continues to work in collaboration with local communities and recovery managers at all levels to ensure longer-term recovery support matches the needs of those affected by these fires.

**Rotary**

Rotary has funded the fortnightly community barbecues at Murdunna, provided equipment for firewood/log splitting, helped to supply provisions (such as water) for distribution by the DISH and contributed food and accommodation for visiting Rotarians volunteering on local properties.

Rotary has also helped to fund wellbeing projects for firefighters, purchased a computer and printer for the Dunalley Hall and Recreation Committee, and donated funds through BlazeAid to primary producers (for fencing tools and materials used on the Tasman Peninsula and at Ellendale).

In addition, Rotary provided $21,000 for pasture re-seeding and has earmarked $200,000 for a new Community Centre at Dunalley.

Rotary also coordinated the supply of equipment from Rotary Victoria such as a truck, trailer, skid steer loader, post-hole digger and a log splitter for use by visiting Rotarian volunteers – and also distributed a 40-foot container of goods, which was donated by Rotarians in Victoria.

**St Vincent de Paul**

Responsible for the management of donated clothing and household items, St Vincent de Paul responded to the emergency by collection and distribution work at various refuge centres. Vinnies also set up a collection warehouse and assistance centre at the Hobart Showgrounds and an Assistance Centre behind the DISH.

Immediately after the bushfires, Vinnies was inundated with donations from the Tasmanian community and throughout Australia and continues to distribute these donations. Assistance is also provided in the form of vouchers for fuel and food, and account assistance.

To date, St Vincent de Paul has assisted 260 people from bushfire-affected areas.
**The Salvation Army**
The Salvation Army responded to the immediate bushfire crisis with the distribution of 19 000 meals to affected people, emergency staff and volunteers. They also provided immediate cash support, clothing, food vouchers and supplies (such as petrol).

For 17 days after the fires, the Salvos assisted 233 clients with 571 services, with average support in finance or in-kind support/goods to an estimated value of $112 740.

The Salvation Army has employed a part-time bushfire recovery worker in the region for 12 months to be available for case management support. The Salvos are also working closely with staff from other local welfare and Church groups to provide counselling services.

There is a 12-month allocation from funds donated nationally and locally from the community to The Salvation Army for bushfire relief. The Salvos have also been allocated a $30 000 grant from the Federal Government for additional emergency relief to assist people affected by the bushfires.

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**UnitingCare Tasmania**
UnitingCare Tasmania (UCT) has played a crucial, behind-the-scenes role in the bushfire recovery, caring for small communities of people by providing personal support, access to Op Shop stock, help with finding information, and advocacy.

UCT has contributed greatly in a connective role, putting the right people in touch with others, facilitating discussions, and making things happen in the background. An example of this is the use by St Vincent de Paul of the UCT Travelling Op Shop within Dunalley. This partnership has provided a base for second-hand clothing and small household items.
PHONE
1800 567 567

EMAIL
recovery@dpac.tas.gov.au

ONLINE
bushfirerecovery.tas.gov.au

DUNALLEY INFORMATION AND SERVICE HUB
160 Arthur Highway, Dunalley
(the old Post Office)