

October 2009

Victorian bushfire survivors on the ^{road to} recovery

Dear friend,

The 2009 Victorian bushfires were a time of mixed emotions. As I moved through those devastated communities in the first few days I was overwhelmed by the scale of the tragedy unfolding around me. But very quickly, I was inspired by the Australian and international community as people rallied to help.

The response to the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal truly demonstrated the power of humanity. Red Cross raised an unprecedented \$378 million that was placed into a Trust Fund with an independent Advisory Panel established to determine its allocation. State and Federal Government donations, plus 100% of interest earned being returned to the fund, added a further \$8 million, resulting in total of \$386 million available for the people and communities affected. No deductions have been made for administration costs, including expenses associated with this letter.

As we reflect on all that has been achieved since early February, we wish to recognise the courage of the survivors and the resilience of local communities in the face of immense challenges, as well as the hard work, collaboration and incredible generosity of supporters like you.

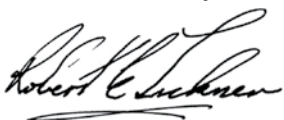
Your donation has helped families to farewell loved ones with dignity and survivors to find temporary shelter, and is now helping them to rebuild their homes, communities and lives.

It was an honour to be asked to serve on the independent Advisory Panel overseeing the distribution of funds, to help fulfil the wishes of people like you who gave so generously.

Please find enclosed more information as to how your donation is being distributed to the people and the communities affected by this national tragedy.

On behalf of the people whose lives you are helping to rebuild, thank you again for your generous support.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Tickner
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Red Cross





The Power of Humanity

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

Our immediate response

Following the Victorian bushfires, over 1,000 Red Cross people worked in relief centres registering more than 22,000 names of people affected so that worried families and friends would know that they were safe.

Red Cross also served 200,000 meals to evacuees and emergency services workers and provided more than 5,000 first aid treatments. It was due to the support of our regular donors that Red Cross was able to quickly respond to this crisis.

Your ongoing support

All donations were placed immediately into the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund. The allocation of these funds has been determined by an independent Advisory Panel comprised of community leaders. Their first priority was to deliver urgent assistance to people who had lost loved ones, were severely injured and who had lost or who could not return to their homes.

The profound distress and personal trauma suffered by children and young adults, particularly with the loss or permanent impairment of one or both parents touched many. As a result of discussions with teachers and youth workers in affected areas \$8.8 million was directed to psychological counselling.

To date, the Appeal Fund has made a total of 18,234 payments to affected individuals. Of these, 365 were for Death or Severe Injury, 4,160 were for initial Home Displacement, 6,116 for Rehousing and Recovery, 3,825 for Winter Needs, and 1,177 for Rural Property Recovery Assistance payments.

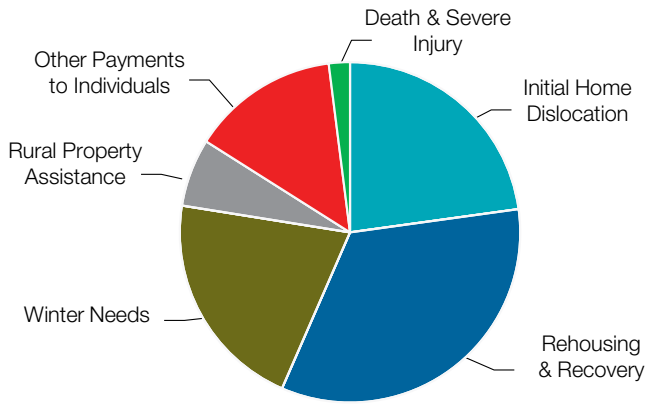
Payments to individuals and families will account for close to 75 per cent of the total fund. Grants worth approximately \$321 million have now been made available to individuals, families and communities.

‘There has been astonishing courage demonstrated by people affected by the fires, who are now starting to rebuild their homes and communities. Because of the generosity of donors, the Fund is able to provide support that will go well into the future.’

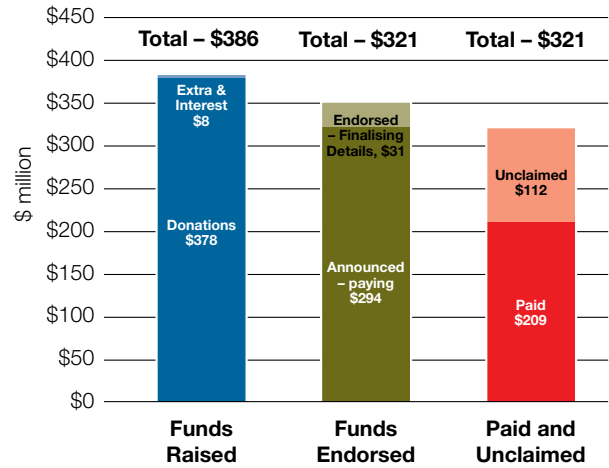
John Landy AC CVO MBE
Founding Chair*
Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Advisory Panel

*Pat McNamara replaced John Landy as Chair in September

Breakdown of payments to affected individuals



Estimated size of fund and allocations



How communities are being supported

Local governments in bushfire affected regions are now helping individuals and communities recover and rebuild through delivering services and activities as part of a \$9.1 million Community Assistance grant.

The Advisory Panel will allocate about 25 per cent of the total funds raised (equivalent to approximately \$95 million) for community projects in bushfire affected areas.

'I'd like to thank the people of Australia – and around the world – for their generosity and kindness. It's meant a great deal to me.'

Bev Rice of Kinglake lost her home to the Victorian bushfires





You are helping rebuild communities

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

The journey ahead for bushfire survivors

The Advisory Panel has begun to see a shift in priority needs and will now begin an involvement in larger community rebuilding projects. It will work closely with affected communities and the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority to rebuild and re-establish towns and villages as they begin the long journey forward.

The Fund covers every community affected by the bushfires including those in Gippsland. Looking down the road ahead, Callignee resident and local policeman Peter Olorenshaw is optimistic; 'the past is past, it's gone – but we can rebuild lives. We can make this a better community.'

Further information

Please visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal for further information on the Appeal Fund and how your gift is helping survivors in their journey to recovery.

As this publication went to print three disasters devastated the Asia Pacific region. For more information on Red Cross' response to Typhoon Ketsana, the Pacific Tsunami and earthquakes in Indonesia please visit www.redcross.org.au

This brochure has not been funded by money raised through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal.



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker