

Tuesday, 6 April, 2010

## **COMMUNITIES SHARE IN CLOSE TO \$5 MILLION FROM THE VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE APPEAL FUND**

Communities affected by the devastating 2009 Victorian bushfires will share in nearly \$5 million in further funds from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund.

The Premier John Brumby today announced that funding would go to a diverse range of projects all identified as rebuilding priorities by local community recovery committees.

Mr Brumby said the projects ranged from smaller schemes such as enhancing the northern entrance of the Yinnar township to larger plans like the restoration of Gallipoli Park in Marysville.

“We will continue to stand by communities after the worst natural disaster in Australia’s history and support them as they continue to rebuild their lives, homes and communities,” Mr Brumby said.

“These are important projects identified as priorities by communities themselves and in many cases provide opportunities for local people to be involved either as contractors or as volunteers.

“Today’s announcement of the next round of community projects, funded by money so generously donated by people from Victoria, Australia and around the world, will go a long way to supporting communities achieve their goals of rebuilding stronger, brighter futures.

“This is an important part of the \$193 million Rebuilding Together plan to drive recovery in communities through the rebuilding of schools, sporting clubs, health and early childhood centres, community hubs and iconic natural sites destroyed or damaged in the fires.

“The latest round of projects reflected the need to both physically rebuild in fire affected areas but also the importance of continuing the emotional and psychological support of those affected.”

The Prime Minister and Premier announced a \$193 million package to drive recovery in communities across Victoria through the rebuilding of schools, sporting clubs, health and early childhood centres, community hubs and iconic natural sites destroyed or damaged in the fires.

The Rebuilding Together package set out the rebuilding priorities which have been drive by local communities to rebuild essential town buildings and services, to generate business growth and investment and to rehabilitate key local attractions central to their future prosperity.

Other community projects to share in the latest round of funding include local arts and cultural events; the upgrade of community centres and a bushfire education scheme. They bring to 142 the total number of projects to date to receive funding through Rebuilding Together.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretary for Bushfire Reconstruction Bill Shorten said close work would continue between the Appeal Fund and 33 local community recovery committees across bushfire affected areas would continue, to ensure the right projects were being delivered.

“Communities themselves are deciding their rebuilding priorities and articulating their plans for the future. These formed the basis for Rebuilding Together and we’re now focused on bringing these projects to fruition,” Mr Shorten said.

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Appeal Fund chair Pat McNamara said the funding reflects the projects identified provided practical support to bushfire-affected communities whilst reflecting the intention of the donors who gave so generously in the aftermath of the Black Saturday fires.

"We believe these projects reflect the intent with which donors so generously gave and go a long way to not only providing significant support to individuals but to important community generated projects," Mr McNamara said.

**The following projects have been approved:**

- Boolara Yinnar: Prepare a tailored emergency response plan for the local community - \$20,000;
- Yinnar: Upgrade and enhance the fire damaged northern entrance to Yinnar township - \$26,000;
- Murrumbidgee: Upgrade to the historic Bowman Murrumbidgee Hall which played an important part as a fire recovery centre - \$184,000;
- Jeeralang North: Make local walking tracks more accessible for the community with new maps and signs - \$27,500;
- Horsham: Construct two large shade sails on either side of the Sawyer Park Soundshell - \$42,800;
- Jindivick: Workshops to raise awareness about the importance of bushfire preparedness and being ready for other emergencies - \$25,000;
- Baw Baw Shire: Environmental regeneration program - \$30,200;
- Marysville: Murchison Street and Town Amenity Project (restore the character and amenity of Marysville through landscaping and streetscape works, lighting, tree planting and civic works including drainage, roadways, cycle and pedestrian pathways) - \$1.3 million;
- Marysville: Gallipoli Park Restoration (further projects now being developed including a playspace, sculpture and garden) - \$1.5 million;
- Marysville: Feasibility study for a proposed trail to extend across the fire affected areas of Marysville, Narbethong, Granton, Buxton, Lake Mountain, the Cathedral Ranges and Taggerty (to be known as the Five Towns Trail) - \$33,000;
- Mirboo North: Upgrade to two local community centres (the Grain Store, a centre for youth and the Baromi Centre, a meeting place for senior citizens) - \$51,000;
- Clonbinane: Series of community events to be held over the next 12 months to bring the community together - \$20,000;
- Kilmore East: Series of community events held during 2010 and the purchase of a trailer with equipment such as BBQ facilities, tools and portable toilet - \$20,000;
- Wandong-Heathcote: Improvements to the fire-damaged Junction Memorial Park including landscaping and installing BBQ and toilet facilities, tables and seating and a playground - \$250,000;
- St Andrews: Develop land management skills among local property owners so they can begin to address the longer-term post-fire environment - \$7,500;
- Strathewen: Equip the community with land rehabilitation skills and equipment to manage their properties post-fire (with the Strathewen Landcare Group) - \$25,000;
- Traralgon South: Make tracks and trails on public land in the district more accessible for community members - \$77,000;
- Whittlesea: New Memorial Hall complex to commemorate the bushfires - \$906,000;
- Whittlesea: Establish a community peer support network - \$90,000;
- Whittlesea: Develop a bushfire response education plan which includes employing of a qualified part-time educator for six months - \$45,000; and
- Whittlesea: Series of creative activities in 2010 to help bushfire-affected residents to share stories and be involved in public events that contribute to individual and community recovery - \$127,000.