

Media release

From the Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Thursday, 20 May, 2010

\$4.8 MILLION TO HELP WILDLIFE RECOVER FROM 2009 BUSHFIRES

A \$4.8 million program will help some of our most threatened wildlife species recover from the effects of the devastating 2009 bushfires.

Visiting Traralgon today, Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings said 25 projects funded by the Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority's (VBRRA) Natural Values Fire Recovery Program would help wildlife affected bounce back, 15 months on.

The program is being funded by the Brumby Labor Government and the Commonwealth Government through the Rebuilding Together Statewide Bushfire Recovery Plan.

"We are committed to rebuilding our communities after the fires but it is important we also assist the recovery of our precious plants and animals," Mr Jennings said.

"We are working in partnership with the Commonwealth and the community to assist the recovery of animals that were affected by the devastating 2009 bushfires.

"Most plants and animals are adapted to respond well after bushfires and are recovering as expected. However, some of our most threatened species and ecosystems are at risk including the Leadbeater's Possum, Barred Galaxias and Powerful Owl."

Mr Jennings said some of the 25 new projects will assist or assess the recovery of threatened species while others will monitor the recovery of at-risk ecosystems such as rainforests and sub-alpine vegetation. These projects include management of weeds and pests, habitat restoration and prevention of erosion.

"The project to assist the Barred Galaxias shows just how widespread the impacts of fire can be. This endangered fish spawns by laying eggs under rocks in undisturbed catchments," Mr Jennings said.

"Following fire, the high levels of sediment flowing into streams can smother and kill the eggs. This new project will identify the impact of sediment in key spawning areas and develop and implement a management system for the areas.

"Many of these species were threatened before the fires and we need to make sure the long term impact of the fires doesn't push them further towards extinction."

Mr Jennings said the projects will be managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria with significant involvement of local contractors and volunteers.

Mr Jennings today also announced that applications were open for funding under the Recycling for Recovery Program.

He said groups involved in restoring the environment in fire-affected areas could apply to share more than \$1.5 million raised from the sale of scrap steel collected following the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The scrap steel was collected by construction company Grocon on behalf of the Victorian and Federal

Government during the clean up of properties destroyed in the 2009 bushfires.

Mr Jennings said that in the aftermath of the fires about 3000 properties were cleaned up, resulting in 11,650 tonnes of steel being collected and recycled from the four months of work.

“Applications are now open for Recycling for Recovery Program funding and we want community organisations such as Landcare groups to submit their funding proposals before submissions close in early June,” Mr Jennings said.

“The aim of this funding is to support community-based environmental rehabilitation projects that prevent pest animal and weed species becoming established on public and adjoining private land or to replant vegetation to prevent erosion,” he said.

The groups are expected to develop their proposals in conjunction with Community Recovery Committees to ensure they are in line with priorities identified by communities as important to their recovery. Successful applications will be announced in late August or early September.

For more information on the Recycling for Recovery Program contact the Regional Landcare Coordinator in the local CMA.

A full list of VBRRA Natural Values Fire Recovery Program projects can be viewed at www.dse.vic.gov.au/naturalvaluesrecovery