



Roundtables on Bushfire Recovery

In January and February 2020, the Minister for the Environment the Hon Sussan Ley MP hosted a series of roundtables with stakeholders to inform the Australian Government's response to the impact of the bushfires on the environment. The roundtables brought together more than 200 experts from government, non-government, industry and business stakeholders from related sectors.

Minister Ley briefed participants on the Australian Government's initial \$50 million Wildlife and Habitat Recovery Package.

The roundtables were primarily an opportunity for the Minister and officials to hear first-hand reports on how the bushfires had affected environmental and cultural assets. Stakeholders were invited to provide views and advice about issues and priorities that should be considered in the Government's bushfire response. Their expert insights and feedback about on-ground realities in bushfire affected landscapes were greatly valued.

The roundtables were also an opportunity for government and other sectors to collaborate and develop shared responses and actions, with a view to avoiding duplication and maximising resource delivery to areas of highest need.

In general, the roundtables were constructive in nature, reflecting the goodwill among the entire Australia community during and immediately after the bushfire crisis to come together to help our environment recover.

15 January 2020

Roundtable 1: Environmental Non-Government Organisations

Zoos, wildlife care, natural resource management (NRM) and conservation organisations.

Participants provided practical advice on immediate priorities and logistical challenges for bushfire recovery. They emphasised the need to deliver support urgently but carefully, listening to communities and understanding the impact of recovery actions.

Information was identified as key to recovery, particularly having authoritative sources of evidence on impacts and to inform next steps, as well as best practice guidance. There was strong support for rapid dissemination of findings from the Expert Panel. Participants also emphasised the need to monitor outcomes, learn from this experience and build resilience into landscapes and ecosystems to prepare for future fire events.

Thanks to: Animals Australia, Australia Zoo, Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Land Conservation Alliance, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Birdlife Australia, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, Greening Australia, Humane Society International – Australia, Indigenous Advisory Committee, Landcare Australia, The Nature Conservancy, NRM Regions Australia, SA Veterinary Emergency Management, Taronga Conservation Society, The Wilderness Society, Wildlife Health Australia, Wildlife Victoria, WIRES, WWF, Zoos SA.

20 January 2020

Roundtable 2: Land Managers

Indigenous land managers, environmental non-government organisations, land conservancies, landcare groups, NRM groups, forest and agricultural interests.

The roundtable participants brought deep experience in caring for our landscapes and contributed practical advice on priority actions to control feral animals and weeds, manage soil borne disease, and limit impacts on water catchments and oceans.

The group discussed coordination of Indigenous knowledge for bushfire recovery, particularly around cultural burning, and the need to incorporate this knowledge into mainstream land management practices. The need to implement strong management responses across different land tenures was acknowledged.

Thanks to: ACT NRM, Australian Association of Bush Regenerators, Australian Forest Products Association, Australian Land Conservation Alliance, Botanic Gardens Australia New Zealand, Burnett Mary Regional Group, Bush Heritage, Conservation Council of SA, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, Landcare Australia, Landcare Victoria, National Farmers Federation, National Landcare Network, National Parks Association of NSW, National Parks Association of the ACT, Nature Foundation SA, Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), NRM Regions Australia, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife, NSW Local Land Services Board, OceanWatch Australia, Parks Australia, Parks Victoria, SA Department for Environment and Water, South Endeavour Trust, South Coast NRM, Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council, Ten Deserts Project, TIDE Ltd - Mid North Coast Rangers, Trees for Life, Trust for Nature, Wattleridge and Tarriwa Kurrukun Working on Country Rangers.

28 January 2020

Roundtable 3: Science

Scientists with expertise relevant to environmental bushfire recovery including plant and animal (including freshwater fish) biology, climate change, remote sensing and spatial analysis.

Participants emphasised their commitment to ensuring scientific and monitoring information is at the core of the bushfire response and made accessible to the entire community to support bushfire recovery actions. The scientists advised there is a need to resource ongoing long-term monitoring to guide preparation for future fires. In addition to biological data, there is a need for consistency in data on extent and severity of the fires to examine fire behaviour and impacts across borders.

Thanks to: Australian Academy of Science, Australian National University, CSIRO, Curtin University, Ecological Society of Australia, James Cook University, Parks Australia, University of Adelaide, University of Canberra, University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, University of Wollongong.

6 February 2020

Roundtable 4: Business and philanthropy

Environmental organisations, philanthropists, and financial and investment institutions.

Roundtable participants discussed how government, non-government and business can best work together on the bushfire recovery effort for the environment and improve the resilience of our environment in future fire events. Issues raised included the need for longer-term funding to restore the environment and the importance of valuing our natural capital to prevent biodiversity loss, land degradation and declining yields on productive land.

The discussion focused on opportunities to think beyond grants to support sustainable land management projects at scale. Stakeholders proposed impact investment bonds, concessional finance and review of potential revenue streams including land methods under the Emissions Reduction Fund and biodiversity credits. Representatives from the banking sector communicated their willingness to be engaged, referring to work already underway to value natural capital, their role in working with the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to finance renewable and energy efficiency projects and the work needed to unlock capital for sustainable land management projects, including data, metrics and project aggregators.

The roundtable was an important step forward in developing a vision for a collaborative, innovative and sustainable approach to bushfire recovery and building resilience in the Australian landscape.

Thanks to: Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network, Australian Land Conservation Alliance, Australian Office of Financial Management, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, ANZ, BHP, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Earthwatch Institute, Frontier Impact Group, Green Collar, Greening Australia, HESTA, Investor Group on Climate Change, King & Wood Mallesons, Macquarie Group, M H Carnegie & Co, Minderoo Foundation, Minerals Council of Australia, NAB, The Nature Conservancy, New Forests, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Odonata, Pew Charitable Trusts, Social Enterprise Finance Australia, TEM, Ten Deserts Project, Trust for Nature Victoria, Wylde Capital.

13 February 2020

Roundtable 5: Heritage

Heritage experts, representatives of international heritage advisory committees, Indigenous representatives, environmental organisations, state and territory governments, managers of world and national heritage places impacted by fires during 2019-20 (Greater Blue Mountains, Gondwana Rainforests, Wet Tropics, Budj Bim Cultural Landscape and Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Areas, and the Australian Alps and Reserves National Heritage Place).

Roundtable participants provided advice about the impacts of fires on heritage places, and what support is needed in future. It was noted by some that this was an historic environmental challenge due to the scale of the fires. Participants raised the need to better understand the full extent of impacts on cultural and natural values; and the importance of targeted intervention to rehabilitate and protect critically vulnerable areas (including places not burned in recent fires).

Participants noted the importance of robust management responses to assist with fire recovery including control of invasive species, erosion and water quality. All noted the value of communities sharing information and experience with each other, particularly regarding Traditional Owner

knowledge and cultural burning practices.. It was also recognised that many cultural heritage sites are not recorded or mapped in conventional ways and so are not widely known or understood.

Thanks to: Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (TAS Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment), Aboriginal Victoria (VIC Department of Premier and Cabinet), ACT Department of Environment, Australia ICOMOS, Australian Committee for IUCN Inc (ACIUCN), Australian Heritage Council, Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee, Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, Cape York NRM, Coolong Foundation for Wilderness, Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation, Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage Advisory Committee, Gondwana Rainforests Community Advisory Committee, Gondwana Rainforests Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee, Greater Blue Mountains WHA Advisory Committee, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation, Kimberley Land Council, NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, Parks Victoria, Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Council, TAS Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment, Victorian Bushfire Recovery Aboriginal Reference Group, Wet Tropics Management Authority, The Wilderness Society, World Heritage Committee.

26 February 2020

Roundtable 6: Koala stakeholders

Wildlife carers, koala scientists, veterinarians, environmental non-government organisations, zoos, Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups, Rural Fire Service (RFS), local and state governments and industry associations.

Experts provided an overview of key threats, population size and trends and impacts of the recent bushfires on koala populations and habitat across NSW, VIC, SA and QLD. Participants were briefed on Environment Restoration Fund (ERF) koala investment: \$6 million to protect koalas of South-East QLD and Northern NSW. This includes \$3 million to support wildlife hospitals at Australia Zoo, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and Queensland RSPCA, and \$3 million to undertake on-ground koala habitat protection and restoration activities in key koala habitat.

Roundtable discussions focused on the importance of both the immediate emergency response and preparedness for future events. Ongoing threats to koalas including drought and heatwaves (exacerbated by climate change), habitat loss and fragmentation, disease, loss of genetic diversity, and urban encroachment (car strikes and dog attacks) were also discussed.

Participants agreed that a nationally coordinated approach based on ongoing collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders and sectors will be key to supporting koala recovery and preparedness for future bushfire seasons.

Participants identified the need for availability of interactive mapping that is accessible, regularly updated and can be freely shared. Fire resilient habitat and refuges, as well as genetic diversity, were agreed objectives for the future.

The enormous challenges faced by wildlife carers and veterinarians who were responding to injured koalas during the 2019-20 bushfires were acknowledged, including safety of untrained volunteers, lack of cross-jurisdictional coordination, lack of protocols and regulation, and funding pressures. Lessons learned should inform an improved nationally coordinated approach that delivers more support.

Thanks to: ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, Aussie Ark, Australia Zoo, Australian Forest Products Association, Australian Koala Foundation, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Australians for Animals, Central Queensland University, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Deakin University, Dreamworld, Friends of the Koala, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park, Local Government Association of Queensland, National Parks Association, Natural Decisions Consultants, North Coast Local Land Services, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, Port Stephens Koalas, Property Council of Australia, QLD Department of Environment and Science, QLD RSPCA, NSW Rural Fire Service, SA Department for Environment and Water, Science for Wildlife, Taronga Zoo, Threatened Species Scientific Committee , University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, VIC Dept Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Wildlife Health Australia, Wingecarribee Shire Council, WIRES, WWF, Zoo and Aquarium Association, Zoos Victoria.

17 February 2020

Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains community stakeholder meeting

Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains community representatives, researchers from the Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment.

The Minister and Australian Government officials attended a locally-led discussion, convened by Western Sydney University, focused on the impact of the bushfires in their region.