



Six-month _____

Disaster Appeal Report



Response,
Recovery,
Rebuild





Hope in the heart of a blaze

A message from our national leaders

More than six months since the first of the bushfires sparked in September 2019, the words “unrelenting” and “unprecedented” come to mind. A prolonged drought that began as far back as 2017 only made the 2019-2020 bushfires more devastating than ever. We simply could not have predicted the scale of disaster that was to unfold as Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES) were deployed across the country. More than 18 million hectares of land burned this black summer, killing at least 34 people and over one billion animals.

As we reflect on the months past, amid the heat and dryness, a sense of hope and determination glimmers through. Hope can mean so many things to all of us, but when it comes to how as a community we responded to the fires, its meaning is crystal clear.

Hope is the overwhelming force that brought together Australians from all walks of life, and united us at a time when we so easily could have fallen apart.

Hope is what kept our fearless firefighters on the front line of the blaze for weeks.

Hope is what prompted individuals, families, philanthropists and businesses to give whatever they could.

Hope is what fostered this amazing ability of communities to remain resilient when confronted by adversity, and individuals to display determination when rebuilding their lives.

Just like decades past, The Salvation Army has been at the forefront during the bushfires, providing emergency relief and now standing shoulder-to-shoulder with communities as we rebuild. Thousands of Salvos responded quickly, compassionately and tirelessly, not only feeding first responders and evacuees, but also providing a much-needed listening ear.

The support we provided, and continue to provide, has been as diverse as the needs presented, from providing money for essentials and temporary accommodation, to supporting the rebuilding of homes levelled by the fires.

For the people and communities caught up in this crisis, the road to recovery will undoubtedly be a long one. The Salvation Army’s response to this national crisis has shifted from emergency response and immediate relief to medium-to-long term recovery. Our experience in dealing with disasters tells us that recovery and rebuild can take anywhere up to three years, and The Salvation Army is committed to standing by communities for the long haul.

We want to acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of the Australian public, our partners and supporters. Even while the bushfires continued their destructive path, the response from individuals, philanthropy and businesses was immediate, sustained and not surprisingly, extremely generous.

We are proud of our people for their efforts in assisting those impacted by the fires and equally proud of every Australian who continues to stand by us, knowing that The Salvation Army will be there to provide support, assistance and most importantly, hope where it’s needed most.

Janine and Robert Donaldson

Commissioners
The Salvation Army Australia



The Salvation Army's response

Since 1880 The Salvation Army in Australia has worked and advocated for the needs of vulnerable people in our community without discrimination. We believe that no one should have to do it on their own. When a disaster strikes, we're ready to meet people at their point of need.

The Salvation Army has been at the forefront of the devastating Black Summer bushfires – providing emergency and recovery relief. SAES stood alongside communities since September 2019, as fires ravaged through the country.

The unprecedented nature of the fires, particularly as they ravaged through New South Wales and Queensland in November, activated the launch of The Salvation Army's national bushfire Disaster Appeal on 9 November 2019.

Everyday Australians, businesses and Salvation Army partners donated to the Disaster Appeal.

For those impacted by the bushfires, it has been a long and nerve-wracking journey.

Evidenced through our experience and longstanding history, The Salvation Army provides a three-phased approach to support Australians impacted by these unprecedented events to get back on their feet.

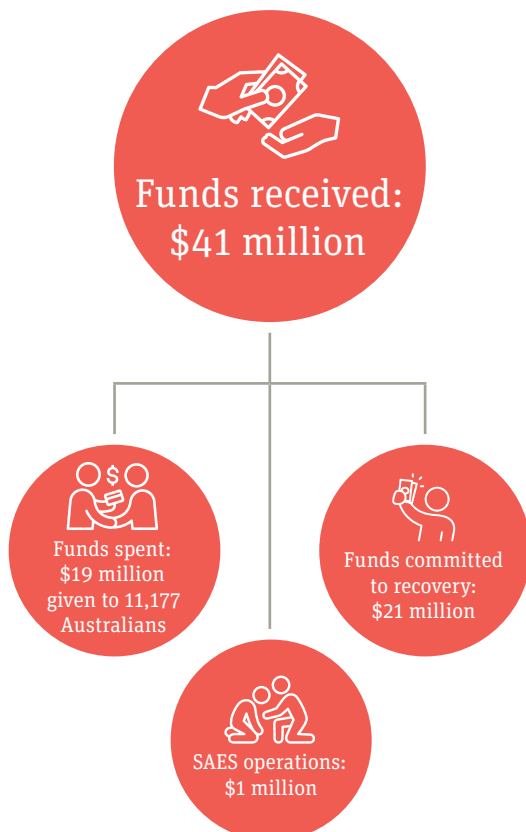
This **Response, Recovery and Rebuild** approach from our Strategic Disaster Management Plan, is coordinated nationally, but executed at a grass roots level, as needs and requirements vary.

Through this bushfire season, a network of 3,000 personnel, including trained volunteers, worked four-to eight-hour shifts on a 24-hour rotation. They provided services and support at over 290 locations, including evacuation, relief and recovery centres.

DISASTER APPEAL

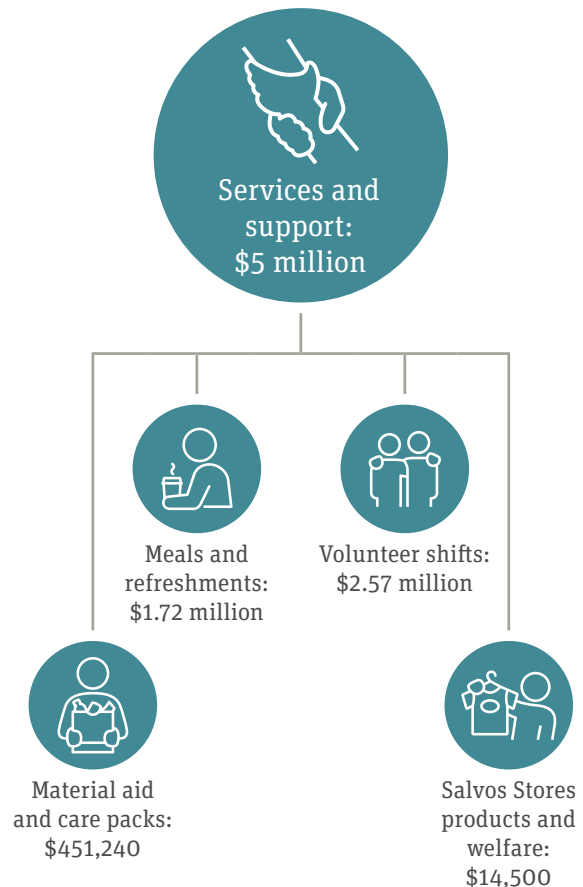
Positions The Salvation Army to help beyond the immediate support of evacuees and emergency personnel and into the sustained effort required through recovery and rebuilding.

The bushfire Disaster Appeal does not incur internal costs of fundraising or administration. The Salvation Army uses no more than 2% of donations made to the 2019-2020 bushfire Disaster Appeal for governance, auditing and reporting. At least 98 per cent of funds received will reach those who need it most.



OTHER WAYS WE'VE HELPED

SAES operate in a 24-7 state of readiness. When a disaster strikes, we immediately provide emergency response and relief in addition to other services. With the Black Summer bushfires, The Salvation Army provided services and support to the value of \$5 million¹. This has included:



¹ These are indirect expenditures, not costed to the bushfire Disaster Appeal

Responding with urgency

During this initial stage, SAES teams were deployed to affected and surrounding areas, primarily serving at evacuation centres. The Salvation Army:

- Prepared and served more than 250,000 meals and over 227,000 light refreshments to first responders and evacuees.
- Delivered daily essentials such as food, water, clothing, bedding and toiletries (personal packs).
- Provided relief to individuals and families through the provision of emergency funds.
- Connected with people and provided emotional support to those on the front line through friendly, supportive and uplifting conversations.



MEALS AND REFRESHMENTS



SAES OPERATIONS AND VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

SAES Operations: 39
Volunteer Shifts: 291

QUEENSLAND

SAES Operations: 26
Volunteer Shifts: 1,577

NEW SOUTH WALES

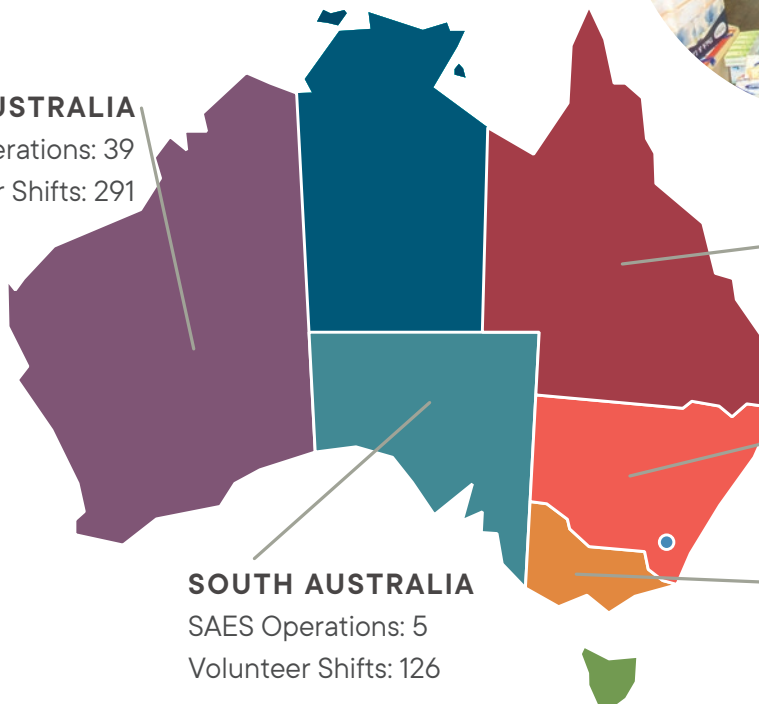
SAES Operations: 203
Volunteer Shifts: 3,459

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SAES Operations: 5
Volunteer Shifts: 126

VICTORIA

SAES Operations: 17
Volunteer Shifts: 248



Fire on all sides

Two years ago, Kaye Whitbread lost her husband. Last summer she almost lost everything she had left.

Seventy-year-old Kaye Whitbread has lived in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney for 45 years. Her heritage-listed home is more than 110 years old; a former rail-master's house that sits amongst trees, like so many homes in the area that is famous for its world heritage listed bushland.

Kaye has lived through many bushfire threats but says the 2019-2020 fires were the worst she has ever experienced, due to the drought making the bushland so dry. She and her neighbours prepared for the onset of the fire for months, from the time the Gaspers Mountain fire broke out in October. In December, it finally hit. "We were virtually trapped here, all roads were closed," she said. "We had fire on just about all sides of us."

Having had her car packed for months, Kaye (who's had two heart attacks, cancer and a stroke) took the sensible option and got in her car to drive to her nearest evacuation centre 20 kilometres away at Lithgow, only to find the road blocked by fire. Back at her home, she called her younger brother to say goodbye: "I thought I would probably die because I knew the intensity of the fire, having been in the Rural Fire Service myself for 20 years."

Kaye's brother encouraged her to ring the Lithgow police, which she did, and 20 minutes later they sent a car to her home to escort her to the evacuation centre through the fireground. "I got to Lithgow. I was there for three-nights, the fire came on the Saturday," she said. "I knew the intensity of it, I knew how bad it really was."

"Ultimately, one of my neighbours rang and said, 'Your house is okay. Everything else is burnt around it but it's okay.' ... The roof sprinklers saved it."

Once home, Kaye saw just how close the fire came. The bush surrounding her property was black and had burned on all sides. Even the ivy on her verandah post was singed and the paint on her home had bubbled, but her home had survived. The clean-up was the next challenge for Kaye and it was at that point, she said, she hit rock-bottom.

"I needed to cut the trees back," she said. "It was like an early autumn up here, with burnt leaves falling everywhere onto our rooves which is our water collection. So, the water [our drinking water] was actually contaminated."

Unfortunately, Kaye's insurance didn't cover the cutting back of branches or the removing of trees from around her home.

Around a week later, when attending a bushfire recovery information hub, Kaye found herself sitting at the local Salvation Army stand where she met Auxiliary-Lieutenant Debbie Bartlett and told her about her experiences and her situation.

"Debbie said to me, 'Could we have your bank account details?' And I said, 'What for?' and she said, 'We're going to give you some money to help you.'"

"That was just so lovely, I just broke down [in tears.]... It's been tough and it will still be tough for a while."

Kaye says she's never had to ask for help before, always having worked hard all her life, and when she started chatting with Debbie at the bushfire recovery meeting, she assumed The Salvation Army was present just to provide chaplaincy support.

"I never dreamed of [getting] financial assistance," she said. "I don't ask for charity, I just struggle through by myself, I always have... [so] it's absolutely wonderful [to have the assistance.]"



Dual focus in recovery and rebuilding efforts

The Salvation Army in Australia has been responding to disasters and other crisis situations since 1887. Every event is unique, but there is always a trail of destruction which often means months, and sometimes years, of working together with communities to bring restoration and healing.

The bushfires were unrelenting and moved incredibly quickly, as SAES teams were on standby and activated on the run across the country. What made the nature of these bushfires unprecedented was as one part of our country experienced the initial emergency and had begun to transition into recovery, another area was then experiencing their emergency.

Our immediate response focused on ensuring people's safety and dignity – the right to food and shelter. The enormous impact of these fires was initially not fully felt by people. What we saw was fear, anxiety, stress and heightened emotions – people were looking to get saved – to get out of an incredibly traumatic situation. They weren't thinking about months, let alone years from now.

Specialist financial assistance

Two of The Salvation Army's Australian Government Department of Social Services funded programs, Moneycare and Doorways also provided vital support to individuals and families during the bushfires.

Moneycare financial counsellors were active since November 2019, as they helped people navigate the complexities of insurance and debt as a result of the fires. They also provided general support and advice around grants and benefits available.

Our financial counsellors were active in impacted areas – they engaged with people at recovery centres, on the streets, in shops and at community recovery activities.

Moneycare financial counsellors:



Reached out to 1,917 people and organisations to offer assistance.

Supported 753 community members through helpful conversations and referrals.



Conducted 177 financial counselling casework sessions with community members.

The Salvation Army provides holistic support, knowing very well that rebuilding and healing can take years. Our strengths lie in nationally managing support but implementing it at a local level. That involves working directly with impacted people and communities, walking alongside them on this journey, listening and responding to needs that evolve, and partnering with other agencies as well. It's times like these we live out our vision statement, that where there is hardship and injustice, we will live, love and fight alongside others.

Recovery and rebuilding over the next few years will take on a dual approach, rebuilding as individuals and as communities. People have showcased an incredible amount of resilience during this devastating time and we will be there to help as much as we can for as long as we can. We believe there is no pit so deep that love can't reach you and hope can't help you.

Major Topher Holland

*General Manager, Strategic Emergency and Disaster Management
The Salvation Army Australia*

Doorways caseworkers and assessment workers worked closely with Salvation Army staff who delivered financial assistance. They also provided emergency relief and holistic case management with referral to internal and external support services.

Since December 2019, Doorways staff have been active in providing support for phone assessments and staffing recovery centres.





Serving at the front line

Salvation Army volunteer Elaine Middleton was one of many Salvos who fed firefighters and other emergency services personnel during the bushfire crisis in northern New South Wales.

“I spent the first week serving in the mess tent. There were often more than 200 emergency workers for each meal and we also made packs for them to take away,” she said.

Elaine recalled one morning when a group of over 300 firefighters arrived at a Salvation Army evacuation centre, tired, hungry and exhausted. They had been battling blazes all night.

“In our hearts, we weren’t just feeding them but hoped we were nurturing them in some way too,” she said.

“Working with other Salvos was wonderful – they just rolled up their sleeves and were into it. They did whatever they could for anyone, at any time, and I was really proud to wear the Salvos T-shirt.”

Establishment of a national Bushfire Recovery Team

Recovery is often the longest stage, where further financial support is provided to those who have been severely impacted by the disaster. The unprecedented nature of the Black Summer fires meant that emergency response and recovery activities were often undertaken concurrently.

In addition to practical assistance, The Salvation Army provided immediate financial assistance to affected communities. We also established a dedicated Bushfire Recovery Team that was nationally coordinated, but locally embedded. This ensured we were able to respond to urgent needs, while creating connections with individuals and families to explore longer-term support. We did this by being present at government established recovery centres/hubs, through our corps (churches), dedicated telephone lines and with the support of other Salvation Army services.

For many going through the traumatic and harrowing experience during disasters, there is an increase of mental health risks. The Salvation Army recognised the importance of providing emotional and spiritual support early and throughout disaster recovery. Our team provided counselling, held spiritual discussions with community members and carried out their requests for prayers.

RECOVERY GRANTS: FEBRUARY – APRIL 2020

The Salvation Army released the first phase of our recovery grants, which continue to be distributed to people.



Hardship recovery grant

\$126,570 distributed to 266 households

Assistance to individuals and families experiencing ongoing extreme hardship.

Significant loss grant

\$5.1 million distributed to 4024 households

Assistance to individuals and families who have suffered extended evacuation from their place of residence; extended loss of essential services (water, power); other significant property damage; or income loss if their place of work was damaged/destroyed.



Total loss of residence grant

\$4.4 million distributed to 1667 households

Assistance to individuals and families whose primary place of residence (owned or leased) has been destroyed or rendered permanently uninhabitable.



The road ahead

The Salvation Army's focus is on medium to long-term recovery, which could take at least three years and where a significant portion of funds will be used.

Research conducted by the University of Melbourne¹ following the Black Saturday fires, and our experience in working with bushfire impacted communities, has shown us secondary effects of disasters can make the recovery process challenging.

What makes disasters unique is not only the scale of tragic loss of life and injury, but these secondary effects. This includes loss of one's home, income, job opportunities, local services, social networks, and opportunities for social gatherings in places now destroyed by fires. Compounded with the impact of COVID-19, this has made the recovery process complex.

The Bushfire Recovery team continues to work with federal, state and local partners to deliver services including:

- Financial assistance and counselling.
- Dedicated phone line to help workers assess requests for financial support and deliver material aid.
- Outreach workers embedded in local communities.
- Caseworkers based in communities to deliver holistic assistance, including financial, emotional and psychological support.

RECOVERY FOOTPRINT²



New South Wales

Bega Valley Shire, Eurobodalla Shire, Mid-Coast NSW, Clarence Valley, Penrith City



Victoria

East Gippsland Shire, Towong Shire, City of Wodonga, Rural City of Wangaratta, Alpine Shire



South Australia

Adelaide Hills, Kangaroo Island

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19): With COVID-19 placing constraints on how all Australians interact, The Salvation Army has had to adapt like everyone else. To protect people and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, several government facilities and outdoor places, including recovery centres/hubs, are now closed. The Salvation Army is continuing to stand by people impacted by the bushfires, with teams assessing applications for support over the phone or online. Our teams are also in contact with government bodies, to ensure we are present in recovery hubs when they reopen.



¹ <https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/centres-institutes/centre-for-health-equity/research-group/beyond-bushfires>

² This is an indicative list with areas to be assessed as needed

Distribution of remaining funds

In Australia, there are strong laws that govern how donated funds can be used. These rules ensure that all charities are transparent and accountable to the Australian public. Because of these laws, donations given to The Salvation Army's bushfire Disaster Appeal can only be used to help people impacted by this disaster. We are accountable for ensuring that the money donated to the Disaster Appeal gets to those people who lost their homes and livelihoods during the 2019-2020 bushfires.

Thanks to your support, The Salvation Army will unify with Australians for the long haul. This includes the restoration of local communities, helping people clear up debts, rebuilding homes and lifting financial and emotional burdens.

Through your generosity, The Salvation Army received \$41 million in donated funds. More than \$20 million has been distributed so far, including \$10 million through our current recovery grants.

Of the remaining \$21 million, from May 2020, \$14 million in new grants will be distributed to bolster long-term recovery and rebuilding. The Salvation Army has also committed \$1.5 million to support families in New South Wales with temporary homes. The remaining \$5.5 million will be distributed to best meet the needs of individuals and families over the next three years.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AND MOBILE RECOVERY

The Salvation Army has committed \$1.5 million to support bushfire impacted people in New South Wales with temporary accommodation 'pods'. These self-contained provisional units are a joint initiative between the NSW Government, the Minderoo Foundation and The Salvation Army, to provide families with a home while they rebuild.

The innovative use of two Winnebagos will also enable people to connect with Salvation Army outreach workers, through a new partnership with the Minderoo Foundation.

Thanks to a generous donation of \$350,000, these Winnebagos are currently being converted into mobile offices and will make their way through bushfire impacted communities in New South Wales and Victoria.

Thank you

Thanks to the generous donations of our partners, supporters and everyday Australians, we were able to immediately mobilise support as fires tore through the country.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the significant support of Woolworths, our national disaster partner and their S.T.A.N.D program which provides Support Through Australian Natural Disasters. Through Woolworths' generous contributions, and support of their team and customers, they have raised over \$3.25 million, which equips us to stand alongside Australians who are rebuilding their lives and communities.

We would also like to thank the following generous supporters who donated in excess of \$100,000.

<i>Australian Pacific Airports Corporation Limited</i>	<i>MUFG</i>
<i>Bendigo Bank</i>	<i>Myer</i>
<i>BP</i>	<i>NewsCorp</i>
<i>Chemist Warehouse</i>	<i>PepsiCo Australia Pty Limited</i>
<i>Coca-Cola Foundation</i>	<i>Prezzee</i>
<i>Doterra Healing Hands Foundation</i>	<i>Real Estate Industry Collective Initiative</i>
<i>Gandel Foundation</i>	<i>Reece</i>
<i>General Motors Holden Pty Ltd</i>	<i>Ritchies</i>
<i>Hillsong Church</i>	<i>Scentre Group</i>
<i>Idemitsu Australia Resources</i>	<i>The Daily Edited</i>
<i>Kmart</i>	<i>The Lewis Foundation</i>
<i>La Trobe Financial Services</i>	<i>The Warehouse Group</i>
<i>Lite n' Easy</i>	<i>Toyota Motor Corporation</i>
<i>Lowe's</i>	<i>Transurban</i>
<i>Metricon</i>	<i>Vicinity Group</i>
<i>Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia</i>	<i>Westpac</i>
	<i>Woolworths Limited</i>

Recognition of Traditional Custodians

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, acknowledging their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.



The Salvation Army Australia

salvationarmy.org.au
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