

Disaster Recovery Update – 13 July 2021

At its meetings on [11 February](#), [24 March](#), [23 June](#), [22 September](#), [8 December 2020](#) and [27 April 2021](#), Council received detailed reports relating to the recovery efforts undertaken by Council for the community in response to the 2019-20 bushfires.

Key actions implemented by Council during the early recovery phase to support the community include:

- Assistance with Building Impact Assessments.
- Tasking Australian Defence Force personnel.
- Support with set up of headspace.
- Set up of recovery webpages on Council's website to provide a 24/7 source of truth for residents seeking recovery support – www.esc.nsw.gov.au/recovery.
- Working with media and using Council's communication platforms to provide information and interview opportunities to ensure the community is aware of recovery support.
- Worked with the Bushfire Housing Assistance Response Team (NSW Dept. of Communities and Justice) and non-government agencies and charities to identify housing opportunities and solutions, with the aim of addressing identified housing needs and gaps as a result of the bushfires.
- Advocacy for essential needs, including attendance at regional recovery meetings and meetings with Australian and NSW Government Ministers, relevant NSW authorities and companies, and appointed recovery personnel about immediate and future community needs to aid the recovery process.

Social Environment

Batemans Bay Recovery Centre and Narooma Assistance Point

Council opened, managed and staffed Recovery Centres in Batemans Bay and Narooma in collaboration of NSW Office of Emergency Management. The centre in Batemans Bay commenced on 15 January 2020 and closed on 28 March 2020. The Narooma Assistance Point commenced on 12 February 2020 and closed on 28 March 2020 (due to Covid-19 pandemic). The two services combined registered more than 6,000 households; the highest number in NSW. Council also provided free transport to the centres, using Council's Community Transport service.

Community Outreach support

Council provided outreach activities, in the form of information 'pop up' points, community catch ups and community meetings at a range of locations in our shire, reflecting the type of session people from those communities had requested during preliminary discussions and planning, under a community led approach.

Fourteen outreach sessions in fire impacted communities, were held with more than 500 residents attending, from January 2020 until March/April 2020.

Recovery Helpdesk

In late March 2020, Covid-19 restrictions forced the closure of the Recovery Centres and community outreach sessions were suspended. To continue to provide an access point for fire affected residents, Council established a Recovery Helpdesk. This service directed residents to the correct services for each particular situation including Council's rebuilding, rates and waste information. This service concluded when the Eurobodalla Bushfire Recovery Support service commenced in August 2020. During that time, more than 120 calls were received from community members.

In addition to the recovery helpdesk, Council wrote to 700+ fire-impacted residents to ensure that support continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforce key information for financial, rebuilding and mental health support and advise of the Recovery Helpdesk.

Housing

Council worked with NSW Bushfire Housing Assistance Response Team, non-government agencies and charities to identify housing opportunities and solutions. Resilience NSW in conjunction with Red Cross undertook a phone survey, on behalf of Council, to all fire affected residents to ensure that they were connected with appropriate services and resources.

The Mayor wrote to all non-resident ratepayers seeking support for emergency and longer term rental accommodation. More than 80 properties owned by non-resident ratepayers were made available for lease as a result of this action.

Eurobodalla Bushfire Recovery Support Service (BRSS)

This service is jointly funded by the Australian and NSW governments and ensures that people who have been impacted by the fires can access the recovery support they need. The service offers a single point of contact with a Case Management Officer who will provide practical and personal support to help manage recovery needs, access relevant services and assist in decision making.

The service commenced in August 2020, and has been extended to the end of December 2021. The initial complement of case managers increased by three earlier this year, with a further two new case managers to commence in July 2021 to meet demand. This will bring our team of case management officers to eleven. As at end May 2021, 636 clients are actively receiving support from the service, including eleven new clients who registered in May. Given the continued need for this service, application has been made to extend the service beyond the December timeframe.

The service recently contacted all owners of properties that were severely damaged or destroyed and who were NOT clients of the service. One hundred property owners whose properties were listed as destroyed were identified, and 143 property owners whose properties were listed as severely damaged. Of the 100, fourteen were identified as eligible for a Salvation Army grant that was due to expire and staff assisted with their application and submission. Five residents were not on the Salvation Army register and thus received the grant. The value of the grant was \$12,500 per residents.

Clients continue to receive information, advice and assistance regarding grants, mental health, legal and financial counselling services, re-building, donations through GIVIT and

other supports. The service has coordinated 1,278 separate donated items from GIVIT for our clients, including household goods, gardening equipment, furniture bedding, chainsaws etc.

One client has recently been offered a new house, free, from a home company, that was found to be unsuitable for the initial recipient from another shire. The case manager is supporting the client with decision-making on delivery and installation logistics and costs and liaison with Council's DA team regarding the relevant approvals.

Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) completed a significant amount of work up to the end of March and 50 property owners were very appreciative of the work carried out. Many have commented it has made a huge difference to their feeling of control and positive mental health; not just to their physical environment. The DRA work attracted considerable media attention, including a cross-live broadcast on a TV breakfast program. The link to photos is at - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/disasterreliefaus/albums/72157718144814477>

Part of the DRA effort included an opportunity for one of their partners, Bankstown Sports Club, to make a donation to Malua Bay facilities, which was also welcome.

Sixteen remaining jobs that could not be completed by DRA are now in the process of being done by an Arborist, thanks to funding of \$20,000 from Council's Bushfire grant funds. This work is mostly felling and piling up large trees, and some clearing of fencelines and burnt materials. Additional funds are being explored to enable completion of the more arduous clean-up work needing heavy plant; for example, clearing away and disposal of burnt vehicles.

Housing and temporary accommodation continues to be a concern among a small but significant number of clients. Rentals are rare and cost prohibitive for many. However, the BRSS continues to advocate for clients and assist when referring to housing providers and agencies.

The BRSS is engaged in a Sanitation Project with the Community Recovery Officer. This project is led and funded by St. Vincent de Paul and aims to provide flat pack style bathroom facilities housed within a shed on properties that have inadequate showering and washing facilities. The project was piloted in Bega Valley Shire, with some success, and will now be rolled out in Eurobodalla. It is hoped the project will improve the quality of life and wellbeing of recipients while they rebuild. Council's DA and Environment teams have provided advice concerning the regulatory requirements, which has been of great assistance.

On 23 May 2021, Araluen Road residents impacted by the land slips, many of whom were impacted by the fires, invited the BRSS and Council's Community Services division to a community meeting to hear their concerns and explore solutions. Council provided a BBQ lunch at the RFS Shed and heard about their concerns of using the alternate road to access services, social disconnection, and difficulty in receiving deliveries including firewood and building materials due to the tonnage limits and road closures. Consequently, Community Services initiated a Community Transport service once a week. This has already made a positive difference to residents; being able to get to Moruya and back hassle free, for medical appointments, social interaction with friends and doing business in town.

The BRSS has also sourced donated funds (through GIVIT) and has acquired on the Araluen Road community's behalf, a quality large log splitter, which will be housed and maintained at the RFS shed.

Community Recovery Officer

Council's Community Recovery Officer (CRO), funded by Resilience NSW, has worked in partnership with the Recovery Support Service, National Recovery and Resilience Agency and Service NSW to identify roles and support funding for incoming volunteer groups wishing to support bushfire impacted communities. These groups include: Disaster Relief Australia, People Helping People and Blazeaid.

Council host a monthly meetings of the Eurobodalla Bushfire Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee. The Subcommittee is a collective of up to 35 agencies working collaboratively on a range of bushfire recovery initiatives in Eurobodalla.

The CRO also works closely with counterparts in neighbouring shires to ensure that recovery planning across the region is strategic and reflective of NSW and Australian Government expectations and priorities, particularly with respect to significant amounts of grant funding that has been made available in the past 18 months.

Volunteers for Recovery Program

Council's Volunteers for Bushfire Recovery Program is providing opportunities for volunteers to make a difference and contribute to the health and wellbeing of people in our community who have been impacted by the bushfires. Council was successful in obtaining funding from COORDINARE SE NSW Primary Health Network to coordinate this program.

The program will reduce social isolation for vulnerable bushfire impacted residents by increasing opportunities for socialisation and community connectedness. People aged over 18 from all backgrounds have been invited to participate with 15 volunteers already recruited by the end of June 2021. Volunteer orientation and training in Mental Health First Aid has been delivered prior to the first intake of clients.

Volunteer roles include:

- Assist residents to access social, recreational and community activities and appointments.
- Provide social support and companionship.
- Support residents who wish to try new social, recreation, creative or vocational experiences.

Specialist training in mentoring and participatory support is also available to eligible volunteers.

Mental Health

In addition to the Eurobodalla Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee, Council hosted the Eurobodalla Mental Health Forum on 17 March 2021. 60 agency delegates attended this planning day to establish an effective ongoing mental health network. A mental health working group has now been established to deliver the specific projects and actions that were identified by the Forum.

Community Led Recovery Events

Since December 2020, the following Community Led Recovery events were organised by Council staff and bushfire recovery agencies, with assistance from community groups, agencies and associations:

Date	Event	Location	Recovery services attending	Role of services (Formal/informal)	Number of attendees
5 Dec 2020	Long Beach Community Gathering	Sandy Place Reserve Long Beach	Council Service NSW	Stall and information provision	42
8 Dec 2020	Bodalla Tea and Talk	Bodalla RFS Shed	All	Community BBQ, social event and information provision	20
10 Dec 2020	Cobowra Community BBQ	Cobowra Local Aboriginal Land Council	All	Community BBQ, social event and information provision	40
12 Dec 2020	Mogo Community BBQ	Mogo Sports Ground	Red Cross, NBRA	Stall, Community BBQ, social event and information provision	200+
16 Dec 2020	Euro Farmer's Dinner	Tilba Valley Winery	Council	Community social event, information provision	87
21, 22 Dec 2020	Give to Grow plant give away	BAS meeting rooms Moruya	Council	Plant give away and information provision	28
10 Jan 2021	Aboriginal Elders Thank You BBQ to the RFS	Narooma	Council NBRA	Community social event, thanksgiving and information provision	17

Date	Event	Location	Recovery services attending	Role of services (Formal/informal)	Number of attendees
11 Jan 2021	Euro Youth Holiday Program	Ack Weyman Oval Moruya	Council, Campbell Page PCYC	Community social event, information provision	46
12 Jan 2021	Bodalla Tea and Talk	Bodalla RFS Shed	All	Community BBQ, social event and information provision	20
12 Jan 2021	Euro Youth Holiday Program	Bill Smyth Oval Narooma	Council, Campbell Page PCYC	Community social event, information provision	34
13 Jan 2021	Euro Youth Holiday Program	Hanging Rock	Council, Campbell Page PCYC	Community social event, information provision	53
14 Jan 2021	Mogo Outreach\	Boomerang Centre Mogo	Service NSW Council NBRA	Information provision	1
17 Jan 2021	Aboriginal Elders Thank You BBQ to RFS	Russ Martin Park, Moruya	Council	Community social event, thanks giving and information provision	35
18 Jan 2021	Euro Youth Holiday Program	Ack Weyman Oval Moruya	Council, Campbell Page PCYC	Community social event, information provision	51

Date	Event	Location	Recovery services attending	Role of services (Formal/informal)	Number of attendees
20 Jan 2021	Euro Youth Holiday Program	Hanging Rock	Council, Campbell Page PCYC	Community social event, information provision	48
21 Jan 2021	Mogo Outreach	Boomerang Centre Mogo	Service NSW Council NBRA	Bushfire recovery information and grants.	6
23-24 Jan 2021	Save Our Show Event(SOS)	Moruya Showgrounds	Council Health NBRA	Bushfire recovery information and grants.	18
28 Jan 2021	Mogo Community Outreach	Boomerang Centre, Mogo	Service NSW Council NBRA	Bushfire recovery information and grants.	2
29 Jan 2021	Katungul Healing Day Roadshow	Corrigans	NBRA Council Service NSW	Community social event, information provision	300
31 Jan 2021	Aboriginal Elders Thank You BBQ to RFS	Corrigans Beach Reserve, Batemans Bay	Council NBRA	Community social event, thanks giving and information provision	46
2 Feb 2021	Salvos Mobile Service	Queen St Carpark Moruya	Salvos Service NSW	Bushfire recovery information and grants	10
3 Feb 2021	Salvos Mobile Service	Albert Ryan Park Beach Rd, Batemans Bay	Salvos, Service NSW	Bushfire recovery information and grants	8

Date	Event	Location	Recovery services attending	Role of services (Formal/informal)	Number of attendees
4 Feb 2021	Salvos Mobile Service	RFS Shed Mogo	Salvos, Service NSW Council NBRA	Bushfire recovery information and grants	20
28 Feb 2021	Club Malua First Dig Community Fair	Club Malua	DPI Council RAMHP NBRA	Whole community messaging	150
09 Mar 2021	We Recover Together BBQ	Bodalla	All	Community BBQ, social event and information provision	25
17 Mar 2021	Eurobodalla Mental Health Forum	Moruya Golf Club	All	Information provision and planning	60
21 Mar 2021	Bushfire Recovery Lunch	Club Narooma	NBRA	Information provision	300
4 April 2021	Mogo Family Fun Day	Mogo	All	Community BBQ, social event and information provision	300
6-10 April 2021	Skateboarding Workshops	Narooma Moruya Broulee Batemans Bay South Durras	Council Headspace	social event and information provision	120

Date	Event	Location	Recovery services attending	Role of services (Formal/informal)	Number of attendees
9 April 2021	Community Leaders session with Steve Pascoe	Online	Red Cross	Community leaders discussion	9
17 April 2021	Eurobodalla Senior's Expo	Moruya Library	Council Red Cross	Bushfire recovery information and grants. Recruit volunteers.	53
24 April 2021	Currents Battle of the Bands Youth Event	Moruya Riverside Park	Council Headspace Campbell Page	Mental health and recovery information	600
27 April 2021	BlazeAid Welcome BBQ	Moruya Showground Pavilion	All	Community welcome, spread the word, recruit volunteers	16
30 April 2021	We Recover Together BBQ	Nerrigundah	Red Cross Council DPI NBRA	CRO is purchasing and delivering the catering	42
02 May 2021	Reflect and Heal	Euro Botanical Gardens	Mental Health factsheets	Information	6
11 May 2021	Mogo Community Conversations	Grumpy and Sweethearts Cafe Mogo	Resilience NSW Council Red Cross NBRA	Open up dialogue, record community opinions, explore future community consultative activities	7

Date	Event	Location	Recovery services attending	Role of services (Formal/informal)	Number of attendees
15 May 2021	Eurobodalla Family Network Families Week event	Moruya Riverside Park	Council Headspace Campbell Page	Information	200
22 May 2021	Eurobodalla Volunteering Expo	Moruya Riverside Park	ESC plus 19 other stall holders	Information and referral	200
23 May 2021	Deua River resident's BBQ	Deua River RFS shed	Council	Case management support	8
25 May 2021	Mental Health Professionals Network meeting	Adelaide Hotel Function Room	Council NRRRA	Info share Presentation overview of the Eurobodalla Mental health Forum	23
8 June 2021	Bodalla Recovery Stronger Together	Bodalla RFS	All	Community recovery Social support Resources and funding	26
Total Community Outreach events					41
Total attendees at events where services and outreach provided:					3,277

Community Development activities

Council's Youth Services facilitated connection between local high schools and headspace (Youth Mental Health Service), to support wellbeing in school settings. headspace visited several schools to discuss possible recovery activities and support, both short and long term.

Two forums were held in February 2020 with Youth workers and service providers in the shire, and with young people. At the forum the participants developed ideas and identified

issues that were presented at a youth and community recovery planning session held in March 2020.

Council worked with local health providers to simplify access to mental health support and information. There are a number of services available for community members and Council assisted these providers to coordinate the resources and services available.

Council prepared evidence-based programs for community development, arts and cultural and recreational programs that provide social and economic benefits towards recovery.

The Bas hosted the Untold Eurobodalla exhibition, celebrating resilience in our community and the Library Service hosted healing workshops during 2020.

Council's Community Development team ran a Grow to Give project, with community members growing and donating plants to bushfire affected community members, with the aim of revitalising burnt gardens and providing a platform for the community to assist itself positively.

Council implemented free internet, scanning and photocopying at the three libraries for twelve months and purchased *Studiosity*, an online school tutoring program to assist shire children with educational support.

Disaster Relief Fund

Eurobodalla has been overwhelmed by generous donations to our fire affected residents. To date \$319,503 has been received. The funds were broken down into phases as follows:

- *Phase 1* - Supporting individuals whose primary place of residence was significantly impacted by the bushfires. 127 eligible applicants (172 applications received) each eligible application received \$1,350.
- *Phase 2* – Grants to lift community's spirits. 8 successful applicants (40 applications received) – a total of \$80,398 paid.
- *Phase 1 relaunch* - Supporting individuals whose primary place of residence was significantly impacted by the bushfires. 43 eligible applicants (75 applications received) each eligible application received \$1350.
- *Business Resilience Grants* – Helping local businesses with bushfire recovery. \$267,015 committed to 86 eligible applicants (89 applications received). To date, 58 applicants have returned documentation and have been reimbursed \$164,712.

Natural Environment

There has been significant impacts on flora and fauna due to the bushfires. Initial wildlife management was overseen by the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment with support from Council, WIRES and local veterinarians. Immediate actions that occurred included rescue, rehabilitation, euthanize and burial of wildlife and stock where appropriate.

Other immediate actions included advice and/or media releases on water tanks and private water supplies, impacts of ash, water quality impacts, bushfire debris on beaches, helping with wildlife management, fish kills and regrowth after bushfires.

Council continued to work closely with WIRES and Landcare volunteers on bushfire recovery. This has included support for feeding and recovery efforts, coordinating a nest box program for native fauna and monitoring the post-fire recovery of the landscape, including botanical monitoring of various plant communities to assess the recovery.

Council sought funding from a variety of grants for items such as: sediment and erosion control works; feral animal and weed control; Landcare projects; rehabilitation, revegetation; nest boxes; and monitoring and evaluation. Council also worked with other organisations that offered fully subsidised revegetation and volunteer crews to assist with the recovery of the natural environment and with the Ripper Drone Alliance, funded by Westpac and WIRES, to map and monitor sites and invasive species.

At its meeting on 14 July 2020, Council endorsed the allocation of \$1.8M in grants on projects associated with environmental bushfire recovery. A list of the projects can be found at <https://www.esc.nsw.gov.au/inside-council/council/meetings/2020/july/ordinary-council-meeting-14-july-2020/Agenda-Public.pdf>

Water quality, sediment and erosion control are significant management challenges for the catchments, town water supplies, oyster and tourism industries and recreational usage of waterways. Council participated in sharing water quality data with various NSW Government agencies to determine how to better coordinate water quality issues associated with disasters.

Council participated in a joint submission with Bega Valley Shire Council and Shoalhaven City Council to identify and priorities bushfire impacts on a catchment basis and then appropriate sediment and erosion controls and work programs. This project assisted with strategic on-ground works, funding dependent, to restore landscapes across the south east region of NSW.

Council sought funding from the NSW Government's Bushfire Affected Coastal Waterways Program, to assist with immediate and longer-term measures to protect water quality and coastal ecosystems.

Council successfully advocated for funding of \$50,000 with South East Local Land Services for immediate works on the Clyde River. This funding enabled Council worked with local oyster growers and Local land Services to establish some erosion and sediment control in critical parts of the Clyde River catchment.

Council worked alongside Local Lands Service, and continues to provide ongoing assistance to impacted rural landowners with weed and pest management.

Council continues to assist with free weed control for eligible rural properties to assist with blackberry, crofton weed, bitou bush, African boxhorn and Lantana. This program is being funded under the Australian government's Communities combating pest and weed impacts during drought program which totals \$249,988 over an 18 month project.

This assistance is mostly for heavily impacted primary production areas, and landowners of semi-rural properties and or bush blocks in primary producing areas, such as the Belowra and Buckenbowra valleys, Runnyford, Cadgee and Nerrigundah.

Council's invasive species team developed a weed control plan, in consultation with the Mogo Village Business Chamber, Local Aboriginal Land Council and South East Local Land

Services, and in May 2021, Council commenced removal of weeds from Cabbage Tree Creek in Mogo.

Additionally, Council continues to advocate for a regional approach to prioritise works across south east NSW to minimise negative environmental impacts and for this work to be funded.

Built Environment

While the emergency response was still underway, Council Environmental Health Officers and Planners assisted the Rural Fire Service in the field by undertaking the first round of building impact assessments. This early involvement and assistance enabled this work to be completed earlier than would have occurred otherwise, providing early indications of the impact of the fire. As this information was obtained, Council officers reviewed files providing data to the Public Works Advisory (PWA) around the age of buildings that were destroyed. This assisted greatly in the identification of sites that potentially contained asbestos, enabling the testing and treatment of these sites to be prioritised by PWA.

Council provided staff at the recovery centre during the first weeks of operation, specifically to assist with enquiries related to the rebuilding process. This service was also provided at Council's office in Moruya where those services are now concentrated. Council established a team of planners and support staff who focused on enquiries related to the rebuilding process, along with the processing of associated applications. As part of this service Council provided BAL certificates for bushfire impacted sites free of charge.

Council advocated from a very early stage in the recovery process for changes to NSW Government policy and regulation to facilitate temporary accommodation on bushfire impacted properties, to provide for temporary storage, for pop up shops, and to make demolition of bushfire destroyed or damaged properties exempt development (other than heritage listed properties). The NSW Government has introduced changes to address all of these issues.

Council successfully advocated to the NSW Government for changes to the Biodiversity Conservation Act and Koala SEPP, to facilitate the rebuilding of homes lost. The intention is to facilitate the most efficient process possible to enable the rebuilding of homes lost to fires and to do so in a manner whereby the homes are compliant with current standards for asset protection zones (APZ), making them safer and more resilient. In many cases this will require the clearing of land around the replacement dwelling to achieve an appropriate APZ and access.

The NSW Government fees associated with development applications (BASIX Certificate and Planning Reform Fund) have been waived for rebuilding bushfire affected properties. Council successfully advocated to the NSW Government to waive the Long Service Levy for rebuilds up to \$1,000,000.

Council investigated ways to facilitate the rebuild process in areas where due to the size and density of lots, and the existence of native vegetation, may be difficult for property owners to achieve compliance with bushfire management requirements when rebuilding. An example of such an area is North Rosedale. In such situations Council considered a precinct approach to developing solutions, through working with landowners and RFS.

The bushfires damaged two and destroyed 10 local heritage items. Council documented the impacts on the items, worked with Heritage NSW and local heritage/historical groups. Council engaged with the Heritage Advisor and worked with Laing O'Rourke and PWA to facilitate the necessary approvals to enable the efficient clean-up of the destroyed sites.

Development Applications

Immediately following the fires, Council established a dedicated Development Applications Assessment team to prioritise bushfire rebuild enquires and applications.

Council has received a total of 309 development applications, this includes modification of existing approvals, lodged for rebuild from 1 January 2020 –30 June 2021. Of the 309 applications lodged, 258 have been approved with an average turnaround time of 35.80 days.

The 258 approvals are made up of 63 outbuildings, 156 dwelling houses, 14 commercial buildings and 25 alterations. Of the 258 development applications approved, 177 have also had construction certificates determined. This is a strong indication of intention to commence rebuild. Of the 258 development applications approved 32 have had a final occupation certificate issued. The 32 occupation certificates are made up of 12 outbuildings, 16 dwelling houses, 1 commercial buildings, 3 alteration

In some cases Council has been able to facilitate rebuild without the need for a DA, and simply a construction certificate. Construction certificates can be issued by both Council and private certifiers. The total construction certificates that have been issued for the rebuilding process is 33 and 2 complying development certificate (CDC) application.

At its meeting on 23 June 2020, Council endorsed the allocation of \$200,000 from the *Disaster Recovery Funding – Commonwealth Government, Councils Affected by Bushfires*, to assist significantly impacted ratepayers, as categorised by the NSW Government, with Development Application fees. Eligible ratepayers can submit an application through the Eurobodalla Disaster Relief Fund for up to \$1,000 to assist with Development Application fees if they owned the subject property during the bushfires. To date, 92 applications have been approved, with \$75,666 being reimbursed.

Waste Management Facilities

Two of Councils three waste management facilities (Surf Beach and Moruya) were significantly impacted by fire while the third (Brou) had to be closed for safety reasons for a period of time due to the proximity of fire to the site. Council undertook works to first extinguish the fires at these sites and to then make them safe. Significant work was undertaken at Surfbeach and Moruya to get the sites open to the public.

During the fire normal waste collection services were interrupted. Council worked with our contractors Suez to provide catch-up and additional services as soon as it was safe to do so. We also liaised with other commercial operators to provide them with access to waste management facilities so as they could service their commercial clients. This was especially important in assisting businesses that needed to dispose of soiled stock. Council also provided additional green waste collection services and has been receiving domestic trailer ute loads of bushfire impacted waste and green waste for free.

Council successfully collaborated with the NSW Government and Laing O'Rourke to ensure that the bushfire cleanup waste would not adversely impact Council's ability to manage waste during and after bushfire cleanup. Council successfully advocated for the Surf Beach waste management facility to be increased with a three-metre high overtop creating an additional 100,000 cubic metres of landfill, or the equivalent of four years' capacity under normal circumstances.

759 properties have been cleared equating to 67,500 tonnes of waste.

Infrastructure

Council continues to advocate to the Australian and NSW government for critical resilience strategies to be identified, funded and implemented for public infrastructure.

This advocacy and response projects includes:

- i) continued requests for the NSW Government to fund the Eurobodalla Regional Integrated Emergency Services Precinct in Moruya inclusive of a new purpose built Incident Management Centre and Emergency Operations Centre.
- ii) seeking fundamental changes in the emergency management arrangements in NSW to have the NSW Government fund the cost currently paid by Local Government and to better integrate emergency services agencies and release funding to improve infrastructure resilience.
- iii) seeking approval to replace single lane timber bridges with single lane concrete bridges. This has been achieved with 16 of the 18 fire impacted bridges to be replaced with a concrete structure (culvert, box culvert or bridge – see list below)
- iv) seeking additional funding to provide for managing the risk from secondary tree death adjacent Council's local transport network. The extent of work associated with secondary tree death has grown significantly with numerous trees now dying as a consequence of the bushfire. To manage this on-going risk, agreement to fund this work under the natural disaster relief arrangements has been granted to the 30 September 2021. The extent of work will require this approval to be extended, with negotiations underway to secure funds under the disaster relief arrangements.
- v) advocating directly to the NSW Local Roads Conference 2020 and National Roads, Resilience and Regions Conference 2020 for improved arrangements for Local Government under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, particularly relating to the upfront payment requirements placed upon Councils to 'opt-in' and betterment.
- vi) seeking additional funding to cover the damage to roads from the clean-up of private property. Two amounts have been agreed. The first is based on the amount of waste material carted across Council roads for additional maintenance \$130,573.50 and the second is for specific damage to road pavements \$230,040 for maintenance grading and resheeting of Araluen Road, Runnyford Road, Eurobodalla Road, Cadgee Mountain Road, Nerrigundah Mountain Road, Short Street
- vii) securing funding from the Australian Government for the Eurobodalla Southern Water Supply Storage of \$51.2M to improve resilience of our region's water supply. Community associations have also joined with Council in advocating for this critical infrastructure outcome.

- viii) seeking Government funding and cooperation from providers to increase the resilience of telecommunications systems including:
 - a. additional power back-up systems to towers and exchanges as approximately 85% of telecommunication losses were due to power outage. This has been achieved.
 - b. for telecommunications structure to be made more resilient. This is now being pursued by telecommunications providers.
 - c. improved vegetation maintenance arrangements by those responsible for telecommunication sites. This has been raised both directly and via the Eurobodalla Bushfire Risk Management Committee and Local Emergency Management Committee with a positive response from both Government agencies and the telecommunications providers. Additional follow-up of the new agency personnel is continuing.
 - d. improved response to the loss of telecommunications during disasters. Telstra indicate they have increased their capability in this respect.
 - e. advocating to and working with Essential Energy to work towards improving power pole resilience to Mount Wandera telecommunication towers.
- ix) seeking improved resilience of the power supply network working with Essential Energy and Governments, particularly power to critical infrastructure sites. These discussions are continuing.
- x) Discussions have also been held with businesses who service the whole of the community such as fuel service stations to seek self-initiated improvements to their resilience to the loss of power. At least one service station has installed a permanent on-site generator to enable continuity of business and provision of fuel during power outages and two others were re-wired to receive a generator during the response to the bushfires.
- xi) Council continues to advocate to the Australian Government to incentivize power back-up and telecommunications systems for all aged care providers to better care for our most vulnerable during disasters. At least one aged care provider has since installed permanent on-site power generation. Health NSW are now working directly with aged care providers in respect to self-initiating action to improve the resilience of aged care facilities.
- xii) seeking funding to allow Transport for NSW to improve the resilience of the Kings Highway and Princes Highway. Both highways have had significant works undertaken during 2020 since the bushfires and further is being planned to commence shortly. Transport for NSW have also agreed to considering resilience as a key consideration in future works along these highways
- xiii) advocate to and work with Forestry NSW and National Parks to restore access across the broader unsealed road network under the care of these agencies
- xiv) successfully advocating for a more resilient road solution around the major landslide site on Araluen Road at the 22km mark. Work commenced on 5 July 2021.

- xv) Undertaking additional resilience work in conjunction with road safety projects and removal of fire impacted trees on key local roads.

Despite the many additional challenges of seven natural disaster floods since the bushfires, works have been undertaken on permanent repair or reconstruction of the following bridges:

- a. Clarkson Bridge, Wagonga Scenic Drive, Narooma (repair complete)
- b. Rosedale footbridge (replaced with a composite structure)
- c. Four Gums bridge, Belowra Road, Belowra (replaced with pipe culverts)
- d. Cheese Factory Bridge, Eurobodalla Road, Eurobodalla (replaced with a concrete bridge)
- e. Sinclairs Bridge, Eurobodalla Road, Nerrigundah (replaced with a concrete bridge)
- f. Gulph Creek Bridge, Nerrigundah Mountain Road (replaced with a concrete bridge)
- g. Comans Bridge, Gulph Creek Road, Nerrigundah (replaced with concrete box culverts)
- h. Old Tomakin Road Bridge, Mogo (replaced with concrete box culvert)
- i. Pigeon Gully Bridge, Araluen Road, Merricumbene (replaced with concrete box culverts)
- j. Reedy Creek Bridge, Eurobodalla Road, Nerrigundah (replaced with a concrete bridge)
- k. Peach Tree Bridge, Eurobodalla Road, Nerrigundah (replaced with a concrete bridge)
- l. Belowra Bridge, Belowra Road Belowra (replaced with a concrete bridge)
- m. Sitters Ditch Bridge, Belowra Road, Belowra – (replaced with piped culvert)
- n. Belimbla Bridge Belowra Road, Belowra – (replaced with a concrete bridge).

The following bridges will be completed in 2021 subject to weather and access being achieved:

- a. Old Bolaro Mountain Road – to be replaced with a concrete structure - design in progress.
- b. Murphys Bridge, Eurobodalla Road, Nerrigundah – will be replaced with a concrete bridge. Procurement of bridge components underway. Expected to be replaced in 2021.
- c. Kennys Creek Bridge, Araluen Road, Moruya west – contract let, access to site impeded. Access likely to be restored by November 2021 subject to weather and other project risks at the 22km mark.
- d. McGregors Creek Bridge, Araluen Road – contracts let, access to site impeded. Access likely to be restored by November 2021 subject to weather and other project risks at the 22km mark.

In addition to the above bridge works, Council is/has rebuilt the following rural bridges:

- i) Bradburys bridge on Araluen Road was damaged in the flood and has been replaced with a concrete bridge funded under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) funding (complete)
- ii) Codys bridge, Larrys Mountain Road, Moruya west has been replaced with a concrete bridge funded from Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (complete)
- iii) the two major causeways immediately south of Nerrigundah village on Eurobodalla Road have been damaged in the multiple flood events. Proposals have been submitted to Transport for NSW to fund extensions on the southern causeway and to replace the northern causeway with a concrete bridge under a cost sharing arrangement.

Council has also secured funding to replace a further eight timber bridges in concrete under the Fixing Country Bridges program round one, as reported to Council on [8 June 2021](#) for the following bridges:

- all five timber bridges on Wagonga Scenic Drive
- Potato Point bridge
- Silo Farm bridge
- Tilba bridge

The current schedule is to replace the first six of these bridged during 2021-22 subject to achieving associated NSW Government approvals and reasonable weather.

Council's website has comprehensive information and images: esc.nsw.gov.au/recovery

The seven natural disaster floods have caused extensive and problematic damage to our local road network, particularly to the unsealed road network. This damage is a result of the declared natural disaster floods in February, July, August, October and December 2020, and March and May 2021. Each event required extensive immediate repair and clean-up work, with resources diverted from recovery to this immediate response work to allow access for the community.

The extent of damage and solutions to repair some of the more problematic sites is still under investigation, with these recovery works expected to extend well into 2022-23. Additional temporary and specialist resources have been engaged to manage this recovery program. The physical work will be undertaken by a mixture of temporary staff engaged for flood recovery work and contractors, with funding under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

The full extent of infrastructure response and recovery works funded under the NDRRA on the local transport network alone from the bushfires and floods is still being assessed, is climbing with the most recent March and May flood events.

Council also received significant road safety and stimulus funding including for the major upgrade of George Bass Drive at Lilli Pilli and Tomakin Road. These projects and the associated ancillary road safety works are improving and resilience of these key growth corridor routes. The works are also providing a significant economic stimulus through

external funding, employing numerous additional workers, sub-contractors and utilizing local businesses during project delivery.

Other infrastructure damaged in the bushfires includes:

i) Water and sewer

Repairs have been affected to damaged water and sewer infrastructure where required. Replacement of sewer pods in Rosedale will proceed in conjunction with the rebuilding on each lot to give landowners greater flexibility in the choice of rebuild.

ii) Eurobodalla Region Botanic Gardens

Work continues to restore the natural environment and replacement of fire damaged property. Development and Construction Application have been issued and construction has commenced. Timbers from some of the damaged bridge structures have been recycled and incorporated into rebuilding footbridges within the gardens.

iii) State Emergency Services – Batemans Bay

Council is working with the SES on replacement options. In the meantime, temporary housing and storage arrangements are in place for the Bay unit of the SES.

Agriculture

Council continues to work with Local Land Services, Eurobodalla Farmers Network and the local agricultural sub-committee to resolve recovery issues within the agriculture sector.

Council is coordinating, along with the NSW Government and Minderoo, temporary on-farm accommodation for landowners while they rebuild. To date, 47 housing pods have been approved and delivered.

Fencing

The initial BlazeAid camps at Moruya and Belowra ceased on 30 October 2020, after building 151,000 metres of fencing and clearing 100,000m of fencing since January 2020. This work was undertaken on 263 properties. BlazeAid estimates this volunteer fencing saved the community \$1,060,000. The Moruya camp recommenced operations in March 2021 and have completed 44,000m of fencing and cleared 23,850m of fencing. The camp is due to disband in July 2021. It is very unusual to have two BlazeAid camps occur in the same locality, so the Eurobodalla has been fortunate to enjoy the support of BlazeAid and its volunteers.

The BRSS are currently employing options to assist community members with both purchase of fencing materials and labour to erect fencing, with the aim of completing any residual works required by the community.

Economic Environment

In response to the highway closures caused by bush fires in December 2019, Council surveyed business to gain an understanding of the impact on our local economy. This assisted in informing early discussions with representatives from both the Australian and NSW Governments. Subsequent to council opening its survey the NSW Government opened a small business survey to collect data on the impact of the fires on business. Council actively encouraged local businesses to complete the survey to increase the understanding of Government of the economic impacts of the fires. The results of this survey have further

informed our understanding of the impact on small business and assisted with advocacy on behalf of the business community.

Council increased the frequency of business and tourism newsletters over the fire and recovery periods to keep business informed of Council activities, available support and services, marketing activities and other relevant information. Personal contact was also increased along with increased service of customer enquiries and support via phone and more frequent meetings with the Presidents of our local business chambers was undertaken and programmed into the future. Council also worked with event organisers around postponing, rescheduling and supporting events both existing and proposed over the fire period and in response to the fire. During the fire period we worked with event operators to ensure contingency plans were in place to ensure participant safety. Council was also able to work with organisers of a surf boat carnival being held in Mollymook to be relocated to Long Beach due to adverse surf conditions. This was well received by the event organisers, participants and community.

Council's tourism marketing throughout the fire period and following has been flexible, authentic and realistic to ensure not only the safety of the visitors and residents but to ensure visitor's expectations were realistic. Council implemented a number of marketing campaigns as part of the recovery process, including a Instagram campaign into Canberra to support visitation over the Canberra Day long weekend a Visiting Friends and Relatives Campaign which was launched late March/Early April 2020.

Council s worked with Government agencies, Business Council of Australia and other groups to support, coordinate and promote a range of activities including:

- The approval of and establishment of a pop-up mall for eight fire impacted businesses in Mogo along with temporary accommodation for the Mogo LALC
- Fly-in squad business turnaround forums and vouchers
- Business Connect, Service NSW Concierge, and Small Biz Bus services
- Facebook Australia workshops
- Birdsnest Retail Recovery Tour
- Promotion of food producers to Head chefs at Parliament House and Government House
- Training (20 packages) for RSA/RCG food handling to assist in addressing skill shortages
- Facilitating filming permits for: Netflix US filming doco, BBC TV filming of Mogo, Grand Design, The Voice, Sky News – Paul Murray, the Today Show and Sunrise.

Council worked with local industry and attended the Illawarra Caravan Trade Show promoting the Eurobodalla. We have also worked with media including Today Show, Sunrise, and Good Food Guide facilitating connections with local product to assist in promoting the Eurobodalla.

Work was also undertaken on a range of projects to assist with longer term recovery through product development, including:

- Mogo Adventure Trails Hub Masterplan
- Observation point and Coastal Headland Walking Trail
- Short walks and food trail
- Review of Scenic Drives
- Working with regional partners on Capital coast Walk and Great South Coast Drive.

Eurobodalla participated in an initiative driven by Ernst and Young (EY) and the Department of Regional NSW (RNSW) to establish a *virtual business drop-in centre* in our Shire. The initiative started with EY having discussions with RNSW about delivering tailored and intensive support for communities originally affected by bushfire and in particular the small and medium sized business in the southern region. The drop-in centres provided free, tailored support needed by local businesses to help them move from the immediate bushfire response phase into a mid-term recovery phase. During the 17 weeks of the program there were over 500 interactions with separate businesses, 131 businesses were directly supported and approximately \$544K of additional funding was identified. Blending EYs skills with local knowledge on the ground is what has contributed to the success of this program.

The EY virtual business drop-in support service was so successful it was extended for an additional seven weeks during August 2020.

Council received funding from the Australian Government Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Program of \$340,000 for Narooma Oyster Festival, Tilba Festival, Eurobodalla Food Trail, Observation Point Coastal Walk, River of Art and Taste of Eurobodalla. This funding provides an opportunity to support tourism products and local events that had been impacted or cancelled as a consequence of the bushfires.

At its meeting on 23 June 2020, Council allocated \$200,000 from funding received from the Australian Governments Disaster Recovery Funding to support small to medium local businesses that have been impacted with up to \$5,000 in the 'Eurobodalla Business Resilience Grants Program' to assist with marketing, e-commerce, business expansion, business development and business based events.

The recent Spendmapp data continues to show good economic growth in Eurobodalla
Spendmapp data for Eurobodalla for the period January to June on a three-year comparison:

	<i>January</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>
<i>2019</i>	<i>\$86.8m</i>	<i>\$54.4m</i>	<i>\$63.8m</i>	<i>\$68.1m</i>	<i>\$57.0m</i>	<i>\$54.6m</i>
<i>2020</i>	<i>\$62.2m</i>	<i>\$63.5m</i>	<i>\$71.1m</i>	<i>\$48.4m</i>	<i>\$60.2m</i>	<i>\$70.8m</i>
<i>2021</i>	<i>\$100m</i>	<i>\$69.7m</i>	<i>\$73.8M</i>	<i>\$80.3M</i>	<i>\$77.3M*</i>	<i>\$72.8M*</i>

**Forecast figures to 30 June 2021*

Further, Council has used its communications platforms to share important recovery information with the community, with the focus on providing media-friendly content to ensure the broadest possible reach. Content covers a range of information, from specifics

about recovery centre operations, to stories about bush regeneration, and the practical assistance on offer.

67 recovery-related media releases have been distributed since 17 January 2020, and 57 Facebook posts. An additional 19 Facebook posts relate to COVID-19 and 5 relate to wild weather and floods.

Council published a special addition of Living in Eurobodalla, its printed newsletter for residents, in May 2020 to pay tribute to the community's resilience during the fires. Recovery updates have continued in each quarterly addition since.

Council's recovery webpages – esc.nsw.gov.au/recovery - collect the range of recovery information in one convenient place for the community. Topics include social and practical support, clean up and rebuilding, financial support, information for businesses, actions and inquiries, restoring infrastructure. Resources are updated regularly.

11 Eurobodalla bushfire recovery newsletters have been distributed to subscribers and hard copies provided around communities. Information is contributed from all relevant service providers and government agencies. Subscribe at: esc.nsw.gov.au/recovery