



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works



VINNIES BUSHFIRE APPEAL

REPORT 2023

Vinnies is rebuilding lives and
communities across Australia



MESSAGE FROM

THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

The St Vincent de Paul Society raised \$25.9 million nationally for its Bushfire Appeal which was used to provide immediate assistance to more than 9,500 households and to provide long-term support to impacted communities.

The Society has provided immediate financial response, contributed to rebuilding and reinvigoration projects, and helped communities build resilience so they are better prepared for the next natural disaster.

As the fires were still burning, our people were on the ground distributing food, water, clothing, and everyday essentials.

We could do this because our network of members is spread throughout NSW in hundreds of cities and towns and because of extraordinarily generous donors to our Vinnies Bushfire Appeal.

However, evacuation and ensuring the safety of survivors cannot be where response to a disaster of this scale ends.

People who lost loved ones are dealing with grief, people who lost their homes or workplace need to rebuild, and many experienced trauma that will have a lasting impact.

It takes time, money, and hard work to rebuild what was lost and much of this has been going on long after public attention on the hardest hit areas faded.

To this day, our people are still on the ground helping communities.

In NSW, we raised \$9.4 million during the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal, with \$5.8 million of that going to emergency relief.

As we moved into the next phase, our Community Grants program helped fund a wide variety of projects.

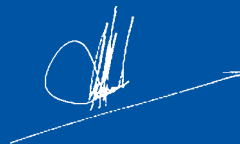
While more than 40% of the grants went to infrastructure projects, they also funded community

events, buying equipment, health projects, and bush regeneration.

In total, 76 projects in NSW were funded with one of the criteria being that they must deliver a sustainable impact.

Our Bushfire Recovery and Community Development program where we allocated \$2.2 million has built resilience in some of the worst-affected areas, involving thousands of people in dozens of communities.

The Society was entrusted with a large sum of donated money and we have been working to ensure we spent it in a way that has maximum impact both in terms of meeting immediate need and contributing to long-term rebuilding.



Paul Burton,
President,
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



Yolanda Saiz
CEO,
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



HOW WE HELPED IN NSW



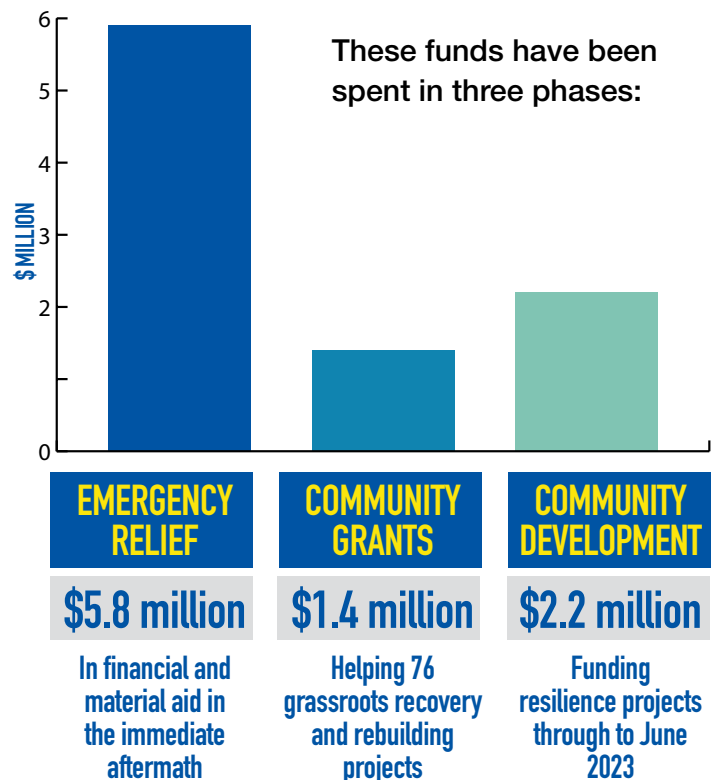
The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW raised \$9.4 million* in the Vinnies Black Summer Bushfire Appeal and has spent all of that money on immediate relief, recovery, and longer-term rebuilding efforts.

*This does not include the areas of NSW covered by the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra / Goulburn.

IMMEDIATE RELIEF

The Society has members on the ground in hundreds of communities throughout NSW and they helped provide support to people including:

- Urgent cash payments to impacted households of up to \$3,000 to supplement the Commonwealth Government's Emergency Relief Fund payments of \$1,000
- Material assistance with food, water, clothing, bedding, essential items and grocery vouchers
- Emergency hotel accommodation for people who have lost everything
- Referrals to organisations providing crisis accommodation and other specialised services
- Financial assistance with bills to help households recover



BUSHFIRE COMMUNITY GRANTS

Grassroots community projects that help rebuild and create future resilience and those that contribute to positive, worthwhile community causes were selected.

The selection criteria for the grants included that the endeavours they funded needed to deliver a sustainable impact now and into the future.

All the funding for the Bushfire Community Grants Program in NSW has been spent.

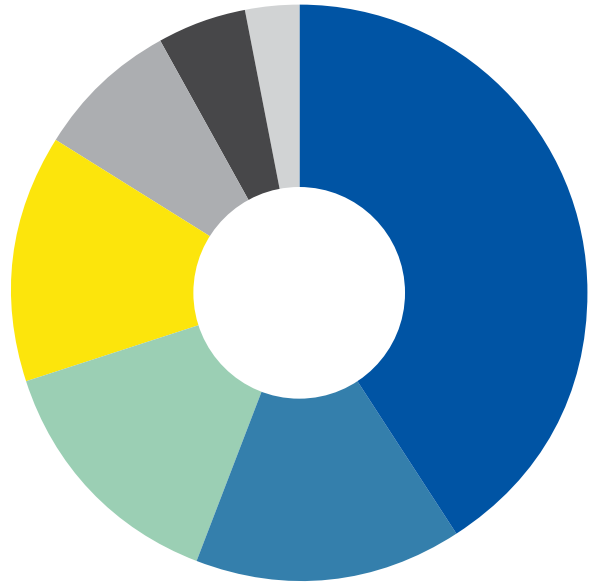
The Community Grants funding proceeded in three rounds and supplied grants of up to \$20,000 (rounds 1 and 2) or \$30,000 (round 3):

- Round 1 (opened in July 2020) provided 21 organisations with a total of \$326,013
- Round 2 (opened in September 2020) provided 23 organisations with a total of \$326,928
- Round 3 (opened in May 2021) provided 32 organisations with a total of \$674,884

Community grants funding was used for a range of purposes – everything from flying doctors and other health professionals to reach sick kids to holding special community events in bushfire affected areas (read more on pages 12 and 13).

Funding also went towards sustaining a number of support groups for people affected by the fires, helping the NSW Rural Fire Service provide training to people in the community and improve infrastructure, and refurbishing a number of community halls.

How the community grants were spent:



- 41% INFRASTRUCTURE
- 15% COMMUNITY EVENTS
- 14% EQUIPMENT AND GOODS
- 14% RESILIENCE
- 8% TRAINING
- 5% HEALTH
- 3% BUSH REGENERATION



HOW WE HELPED IN NSW

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Bushfire Recovery and Community Development (BRCD) program was active through to June 2023, building resilience in bushfire affected communities.

The aim of the program was to support the recovery process by integrating the work of local conferences and member networks with the knowledge and technical capability of the Society's Community Inclusion team.

Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates stronger, more connected communities.

Community development programs are led by community members at every stage – from deciding on issues to selecting and implementing actions, and

evaluation. Community development has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

The Bushfire Recovery and Community Development program implemented a set of activities, across six impacted local government areas (LGAs), which were designed to work together in order to improve the wellbeing and prosperity of communities and individuals. Each village and community was different and the activities looked different from one place to the next. However, what was consistent is that the activities were based on:

- research and evidence
- consultations with and inputs from the community and local authorities
- successful practices and technical expertise
- and, ultimately, community's knowledge, participation and ownership to make it successful



ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY CONFERENCES

BRCD activities were underpinned and supported by our local Vinnies conference members, who were partners with the program and continue to provide immediate crisis response and support for recovery activities and individuals in hardship.

Conference members have supported 14% of all BRCD activities.

The BRCD Program had three main objectives:

To improve community and individual resilience and disaster preparedness capacity

To strengthen community cohesion and increase individual sense of wellbeing and positive outlook

To support local environment rehabilitation, regeneration, and productivity

These three objectives applied across all LGAs we worked in and were converted into local workplans that reflected the local context, and aspirations and issues in each community. These workplans were developed in consultation with local councils, community groups and community members.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 21,000+ interactions between community members and the program
- 12,000+ people involved in activities
- 78 activities running/planned
- 29 villages involved in activities
- 19 community-based organisations are partnered with BRCD

CHALLENGES

- COVID-19 locked down communities and made community-based activities more restricted
- More disasters have impacted multiple areas since the fires, which sets back communities and the program
- Crisis fatigue has impacted many people and communities. When this happens, the program needs to take a step back and let people heal and recover

KEY RESULTS

- 1,632 vulnerable / impacted households are more informed and prepared for future disasters
- 686 community leaders' skills built in different areas of hazard reduction and disaster management such as first aid, chainsaw operation, and basic counselling.
- 3 communities have received support to build their local preparedness including defibrillators, first aid kits, satellite internet, and ember-proofing the local hall
- 22 community activities implemented, aiming to revitalise community connections
- 544 community members have gained skills and confidence in trauma management/mental health or have been referred on to appropriate services.
- 42 community-based organisations have received material investment (e.g. generators / satellite internet) and / or support to strengthen various capacities (e.g. grant writing, basic governance).
- 2556 individuals have received informal case management support from Vinnies or third-party staff
- 70+ households have been supported with shelter/infrastructure needs
- 9 land regeneration activities have occurred in 22 communities
- 43 fire + flood (double impacted) households supported to rebuild critical personal infrastructure

The Bushfire Recovery and Community Development Program has partnered with over 100 community-based organisations over the last two years, including amongst others:

KEMPSEY:

- Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre
- Wittittrin Progress Association
- Willawarrin Community Hall
- Thunggutti Land Council
- Telegraph Community Hall
- Country Women's Association Kempsey
- Millbank Town Community Hall
- RFS Bellbrook
- Men's Table

SHOALHAVEN

- Conjola Recovery Committee
- Upper Kangaroo Valley Community Hall
- Conjola Stingrays Outrigger Canoe Club
- Action 4 Agriculture

CLARENCE VALLEY

- Blinks Inc.
- Nymboida Community Group
- Country Women's Association Maclean

RICHMOND VALLEY

- Red Cross
- Women on the LAND (WADL)
- Richmond Valley Council Library

HOW WE HELPED IN CLARENCE VALLEY



Nymboida, Dundurrabin and Ewingar villages target for community development courses

Budget

\$200k



Program commenced in 2021, targeting the 3 towns

1774

Individuals participated



19
Courses



7 TAFE courses conducted
7 Local agricultural courses delivered
4 Psychological first aid courses delivered
1 Digital literacy course conducted

11



Community-based organisations supported



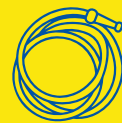
UHF radio communication networks supported

250



Emergency grab bags, 2 defibrillators, 2 first aid kits, 3 anti-choking devices distributed

500



Metres of water pipe connected to a village for firefighting

1



Preparedness pantry, sleeping equipment and commercial refrigerator for evacuation centre

20+



Community events and arts/craft workshops conducted

HOW WE HELPED IN MACLEAY VALLEY



Wittittrin, Willawarrin, Bellbrook and Millbank were the target villages for the program. Lower Creek and Telegraph Point were also supported due to their close geographical location and the high dual impacts of both fire and flood events in these villages



Budget

\$340k

Community preparedness

3 Community generators
3 Community tanks
5 Community spaces 'ember proofed' through a number of actions (GIVIT)
2 Water pressure pumps



1685
Individuals participated

Communications

3 Community wi-fi provisions, 3 internet connections established, 2 community mobile repeater boosters, 1 rfs vehicle communications unit, 4 handheld fire ground radios, 7 personal locator beacons provided to vulnerable groups and households



First aid

9 First aid courses held, 3 defibrillators installed, 8 epipens and 7 anti-choking devices provided, 11 new and restocked community first aid kits provided, 122 snake bite kits distributed



IT upgrades

3 Laptop packages provided to local RFS units, 2 desktop packages provided to local halls, 3 projectors and screens sets provided to community organisations (GIVIT), 2 drop in digital hubs created and supported



Skills and knowledge

8 TAFE courses, 4 rural adversity mental health courses, 8 reptile awareness and safety workshops, 1 train the trainer course in therapeutic drumming

Community events

Over 35 events supported in the region with 5 regular ongoing groups/events supported



Person-centred emergency plans

Vinnies supported 25+ vulnerable individual emergency management plans via a series of conversations called P-CEP



HOW WE HELPED IN RICHMOND VALLEY



Budget
\$200k

The program
commenced in
December 2021

6324



Individuals participated



6234 people across the Richmond Valley, including Box Ridge, Bungawalbin, Casino, Coraki, Evans Head, Rappville, Whiporie, Wyan and 501 people as part of the northern rivers disaster response in 2022

25



Community
events
supported

43



Asset and infrastructure grants

14 Tanks, water or pumps, 2 computers, 2 Skips bins, 1 mobility scooter, 6 food / cooking / food storage or heating support, 4 HR or MR license training, 6 property access, 3 building supplies and materials, 5 fencing material support, 1 electrician for wiring house and 2 solar panel/systems

38



Community-based organisations,
agencies and other partners

19

Courses



3 First aid, 2 ATSI mental health first aid, 1 digital mentor training, 2 basic chainsaw operation, 1 advanced chainsaw operation, 6 peer-to-peer skills swap, 3 UHF radio use and maintenance, 1 farm fencing



HOW WE HELPED IN THE SHOALHAVEN



Targeted locations Conjola and surrounds, Nerriga, Sassafras, Kangaroo Valley and villages in the Southern Shoalhaven



Shoalhaven budget

\$214k

1631



Individuals participated

10

Courses



7 TAFE courses conducted
2 First aid courses with 57 people trained
1 Digital mentors course delivered



7

Community-based
organisations
supported

4



Cultural burning events

500

Emergency grab
bags distributed



5

Defibrillators installed



3

Fire fighting water tanks
installed in community



36

Community events to
increase connections
and individual wellbeing



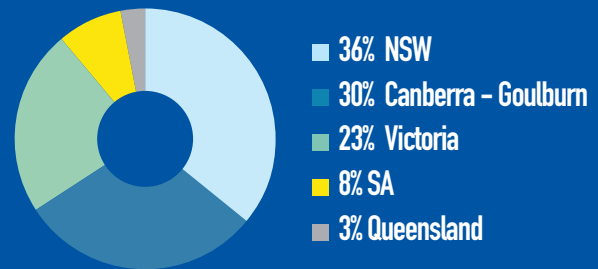
HOW WE HELPED AROUND THE COUNTRY

Nationally, the St Vincent de Paul Society raised **\$25.9 million** in the Vinnies Black Summer Bushfire Appeal.

DONATIONS RECEIVED
\$25.9 MILLION
100% SPENT

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT
FUNDING RECEIVED
\$12.2 MILLION
100% SPENT

How the donations were
distributed between the states:



9,500+
households helped



Emergency relief grants of up to
\$3,000



Donations **100% SPENT**



14,448 MEMBERS
— our network driving
our community response



12,000+ PEOPLE
involved in Bushfire Recovery &
Community Development

HOW WE HELPED ACROSS THE STATES

CANBERRA-GOULBURN

In addition to immediate emergency relief provided to over 4,000 individuals in bushfire affected areas, the Society in Canberra-Goulburn had three programs focussed on longer term recovery:

Community Grants

This program assisted 63 projects in the affected bushfire areas. It covered a broad range of projects, including infrastructure, arts, youth, Indigenous activities, and mental health support projects. Overall, \$990,000 was diligently allocated by the bushfire taskforce panel, who assessed the applications against nine criteria.

Community Development Projects

The Community Development Project has successfully implemented over 110 community projects to assist in recovery by promoting cohesiveness, resilience and preparedness in the bushfire affected communities. The five Community Development Officers (CDO) completed their roles at the end of 2022. The CDOs worked closely with community organisations including Shire Councils of Snowy Valley, Eurobodalla, and Bega Valley to deliver projects such as the building of 50 sheds in Cobargo; two vehicles for the Local Aboriginal Land Councils on the South Coast; installation of defibrillators; refurbishment and building of disaster relief centres; distribution of 100 UHF handheld radios for fire

sheds, volunteers and RFS members. The project also delivered accredited training courses including a CareFlight trauma care workshop, first aid, food handling, and chainsaw operation to 290 participants across bushfire affected regions. The Bushfire Taskforce approved over \$785,000 to bushfire-affected communities.

Sanitation Projects

This program has delivered approximately 51 toilet and shower facilities in the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla Shire Council at a cost of approximately \$500,000. The recipients of this grant are living in temporary accommodation as they wait to rebuild their houses after the bushfires.

Governance Workshops For Community Organisations

Governance workshops were presented to 12 community organisations across 9 locations in the Eurobodalla, Bega Valley and Snowy Valley Councils. Workshops provided a health check on their documentation and participants left with a clearer understanding of good governance, including risk management, legal responsibilities, funding, auspicing, the Constitution, roles and responsibilities and reporting requirements.



VICTORIA

In Victoria, the Society provided emergency, recovery and rebuilding payments for people who have experienced loss, including funds for land-clearing, water tanks, generators and fencing, as well as material assistance such as food, fuel, clothing, bedding, laptops, school uniforms education fees and other ancillary expenses.

The Society also offered one-off community grants of up to \$20,000 for recovery projects.

Additionally, \$1 million was made available towards education costs for schools and students affected by the Black Summer bushfires.

All funds raised in the Black Summer Bushfire appeal in Victoria have been distributed.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Society provided \$3.635 million in direct assistance most of which was in the form of cash grants to hundreds of households affected by the fires.

Additionally, \$70,000 worth of Vinnies Shop vouchers and grocery vouchers were distributed to help people access the items they needed in the wake of the fires.

All funds raised in the Black Summer Bushfire appeal in South Australia have been distributed.

EMERGENCY RELIEF

BELLANGRY, NSW MID-NORTH COAST

Losing their home, farm and more than 30 head of cattle when fires swept through the Mid-North Coast last November, Darren and his wife Julie spent the ensuing days scouring burnt fields and fences for the remainder of their herd.

“We got wiped out completely, we lost everything,” Darren said. “House: 100%. Sheds: 100%. All our farming things. All our infrastructure, all gone. We basically left with half a suitcase of clothes each, and that was it.”

After the fires, Darren and Julie moved into temporary accommodation provided by their insurer and gained financial assistance from Vinnies along with food and fuel vouchers.

Despite the twin crises of the drought and the bushfires, Darren is determined to rebuild his home with his own two hands and keep his farm running.

“I refuse to let it break me. I’m always positive, so the drought or the fire’s not going to take that away from me.”



LAKE CONJOLA, NSW SOUTH COAST

As the countdown to 2020 began, Ken and Lorraine were not celebrating — instead, they were fighting for their lives as fires swept through their coastal town of Lake Conjola.

Boarding their neighbour’s boat alongside two other people and a dog, the couple spent hours unable to see through a fog of smoke, as the sound of explosions left them fearful of what they would come back to.

“It was just like sitting in a 3D movie, it was just so thick with smoke and explosions,” Lorraine said. “You’re hearing explosion after explosion, and we knew we had gas bottles at our place, and just thought, is that our place going up, or is that our car? ‘Cause it just went on and on and on for so long.”

Returning to a place unrecognisable from the one they’d left hours before, their home remained standing — albeit seriously damaged and uninhabitable. Eighty-nine other houses in the area couldn’t be saved.

Vinnies has been there to assist Lorraine and Ken with much-needed financial support.

“Vinnies as an organisation has really — I mean, they’re great. You can’t speak highly enough of them,” Lorraine said.



NYMBOIDA, NSW NORTH COAST

Ross Alexander was two-and-a half hours from his property near picturesque Nymboida when the call came: “The fires have closed in and your house is going to burn down,” stammered his neighbour, “there’s no way this can be stopped.”

Ross’ dream home perched above heavily timbered valleys looking towards the New England Range. Still a work in progress, it was already a work of art, featuring Oregon beams salvaged from a demolition in Sydney, a fuel stove plumbed to heat the house, some much-loved furniture. An antique safe that would help save his personal papers.

Ross, a skilled carpenter, regarded his house as a labour of love. It sat isolated, off the grid, atop hundreds of acres of mountainous bushland, dotted with Aboriginal cave sites and plentiful wildlife.

He was in the process of having it gazetted as a protected wildlife area.

When it was safe to return, he faced devastation. The house, solar panels and batteries, and sheds were all gone. Friends have since offered to help, and support has come from various quarters, including Vinnies, but the recovery process will be lengthy.



Stephen and Helen Lynch moved to the NSW Mid-North Coast to retire eight years ago.

Building a home on a 126-acre property near Bellbrook, a timbered, hilly area west of Kempsey, the couple settled down with a ‘family’ of animals, including poultry and rescue dogs and cats.

In November 2019 Stephen and Helen were attending the annual Kempsey Cup when dark skies emerged as a result of smoke and ash from bushfires that had erupted around the town.

Managing to get back home to collect a few possessions before heading to safety, it took three weeks until they were able to return to what remained of their home.

“Our beautiful home was completely destroyed,” said Stephen.

Temporarily living in a pod while undertaking the slow process of rebuilding, Vinnies has supported the Lynches with a range of support. One of our support workers provided them with a 4WD vehicle donated by an anonymous benefactor in the area.

“Vinnies has been excellent,” Helen said, “we’re very grateful for the help you’ve provided. A big ‘thank you’ from us, and many others in the area.”

BUSHFIRE COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



Little Wings links children in bushfire-affected areas with healthcare

Little Wings' core purpose is to bring children suffering long-term, serious illness the medical and health care they need.

During the worst of COVID, instead of flying children – particularly vulnerable immunocompromised kids – to bigger cities, they started flying doctors and health professionals to the regions.

Little Wings is in the process of using funding supplied by the third round of the Community Grants program to ensure hundreds of kids get the healthcare they need.

“We’re not an emergency service – we do it long-term, so kids with cancer who have to come in every week or burns victims or whatever their diagnosis is.

“Making sure that they have consistent access to care that isn’t available in their hometown,” explains Little Wings CEO, Clare Pearson.

“This has been done primarily with John Hunter

Children’s Hospital and Royal Far West and what we do is we fly them out to deliver pop-up clinics which partner with local services.

“So, they might deliver them at a local school or the local hospital (if there is one), they might deliver them with an Aboriginal Medical Centre or a CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse] service,” Ms Pearson says.

It’s this focus on finding the right place to deliver the service that has seen attendance at the Little Wings clinics reach 100%.

“We’ve had feedback from families that, before they knew about us, were coming into the hospitals, they were missing a lot of treatments because they couldn’t afford to come or they were working on a farm or had multiple children and they just couldn’t facilitate that.

“Which, obviously, has a very big impact on that particular child but it also affects the health literacy for that entire family.

“Because it’s teaching people that health is not a priority,” Ms Pearson says.

“The program’s been so successful, I suppose, what’s happened is we’ve really learned how big the gap is.

“Whilst we were aware of the gap, we didn’t understand how significant it was.

“We’ve really learned how important the services are so we’ll continue now, we’ve made them a permanent feature in our suite of services,” Ms Pearson says.

The funding from the Community Grants program helped Little Wings reach bushfire-affected communities, where they provided treatment for children and training for local health professionals, parents, and teachers.

“Part of this is building capacity in the local community.

“On those five days that the clinics have just been done, they actually trained 30 local healthcare workers and teachers around mental health for a lot of children that had a lot of trauma and stress from the fires.

“So, they went into two newly-built schools, where the whole schools had burnt down in Glen Innes and Grafton.

“A lot of work is being done to build capacity and build those networks with local providers and local services so that if there is a problem, they know who to call and they know that person.

“In total, across the program, 225 regional healthcare workers have received direct face-to-face training over the course of this program,” Ms Pearson says.

“Little Wings doesn’t receive any government funding which is why this has been such an incredible grant for us to get,” Ms Pearson says.



Raft race rejuvenates community spirit at Lake Conjola

The Ulladulla & Districts Community Resources Centre used a Society Community Grant to hold a community raft race to bring people in the area back together after a trialling few years.

While it was brought to life using money from a bushfire grant, by the time the event took place in February 2022, the area had also suffered through a flood and the pandemic.

“I think the timing was just right,” Maria Mitchell, Manager at the Centre, says.

“They were happy to have an event but it was also that freedom and, I think, that because it was the ending of all the restrictions with COVID, as well, on top of that.

“The majority of the people out there have had their houses rebuilt and getting their lives back together and then they had an event that brought their community back together as well,” Maria says.

The raft race was chosen by a survey provided to the community.

A similar event had been held about a decade ago and there was strong support to revive it.

In the lead-up and when it came time to hold the event on the 19th of February, it was all hands on deck.

“It was a great success.

“Throughout the day we had about 350 people show up which was amazing. We had a lot of volunteers. We had the vintage cars come along for a display. We had the Conjola Fishing Club actually cook the barbeque.

“We had the lifesavers come down as well to be monitoring the raft race and make sure everything was done safely. We also had one of the community garden groups there. They gave out plants.”

Maria gives special mention to the operator of the face-painting stall.

“We had a face-painter there – she had a line up, like everything else was finished and she’s still going and I had to say to the parents, ‘Better stop there; no more people.’ She wanted to go home and she was still painting away. Maybe she should get a helper next year.”

With the event a great success and expectations set, plans are now underway for how the raft race can be made an annual event.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (PCEP)

Vinnies has partnered with the University of Sydney on a process called Disaster-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR).

Typically, in a disaster, the more vulnerable members of a community – such as those living with a chronic health condition, a disability, or socially isolated – are the most impacted and the field of DIDRR focuses on that gap.

It aims to support more vulnerable people to develop a personalised and tailored emergency plan.

We are using a tool called PCEP, which is a series of conversations about a person's readiness for a disaster, about the other people and things they rely on, about the risks in their lives, and then ideas on how to prepare for and manage the risks around them.

Vinnies is part of a broader trial of this approach (coordinated by the University) but the early results are very encouraging.

Thunggutti Land Council

One of the early partnerships Vinnies established was with the Thunggutti Land Council in Kempsey.

Vinnies supported the Land Council, which was directly impacted by the 2019 fires, with a grant to train young men from the community in both traditional and modern land management practices – the first of its kind in this area.

The training focused on traditional cultural or cool burning, and modern weed management using artificial and organic pesticides.

The group of 10 young men have continued to be supported with additional training and equipment and have now established themselves as a commercial land care/ management service called "Ngurra Mungan" (Old Camp) that is already getting work from local community and government alike.

The project has had a significant positive impact on the Thunggutti community, empowering members, creating pride in their skills, and strengthening relationships with other parts of the community.

Thunggutti Land Council CEO, Arthur Bain, said, "The Vinnies grant and ongoing support provided the seed funding for an ever-expanding opportunity to improve the physical, mental, social, and cultural health of the community.

"From the initial cultural burn at Mungay Creek, a relationship of mutual respect has been built between the Thunggutti mob and non-Indigenous neighbours."

They were able to clear the area of invasive weeds and establish a cultural walk trail, which opens up further opportunities for cultural tourism and traditional storytelling.

NGURRA MUNGAN CULTURAL WALK



You are welcome to walk with respect on Thunggutti Country.
Authorised Vehicles Only
For Permission Contact Thunggutti Local Aboriginal Council - 6567 2050





We have the technology

The Vinnies Bushfire Community Development Program is helping people affected by the Black Summer fires build up resilience, in the event of another disaster.

One of the ways the \$2.2 million scheme is doing this is by training people in better use of everyday technology to help them be aware of fires and other dangers through the use of their smartphones.

The initial training consists of two linked portions:

1. Two days of digital skills training, fully funded by the Bushfire Community Development program
2. Digital mentors training, funded partially by the Federal Government's Be Connected program and supported by The Good Things Foundation

The training was delivered by the team at The Tec Exec and Vinnies organised so that they could run these two separate topics as a package.

"It's about connecting people who have a little bit of knowledge about technology, so phones, iPads, and it can go into computers as well – breaks it right down.

"It teaches people about technology but it teaches people who know technology how to teach someone to use it," Tracey Doherty, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Coordinator of Bushfire Recovery and Community Development, said.

"We're going to have our first catch up with the mentors... just to go 'How are going, have you put any of these skills that you learnt into play in your communities, how else can we support you?'

"So, we're going to make sure that we're actually fostering that knowledge building for them," Ms Doherty said.

The training was developed in order to be understandable by people who are beginners when it comes to technology.

"It's an opportunity to be able to expand and share that knowledge of how to use digital technology but also introducing them the benefits of being able to use a smartphone when it comes to disaster preparation and preparedness and the recovery component.

"It's about staying safe and introducing things like the apps like fires near me and traffic NSW and how to pull out the information to make you more resilient in the lead-up to, during, and in the recovery from a disaster," Ms Doherty said.

"I watched people in that course flourish.

"If you fully understand the capacity and capability that your device has, then finding assistance, being able to keep you and your family safe – that sense of accomplishment because you've been able to go and find something that you've been looking for," Ms Doherty said.

"My hope is that they will then continue in the communities long after the Bushfire Community Development Program is gone.

"It's about setting these communities up for success and leaving some really useful, on the ground skills that don't require someone to be there constantly to run them.

"So, having people in the communities who can go, 'Yes, I can show you how to do this on your phone.'

"And the importance of getting them to actually do it rather than going, 'Oh here give me your phone and I'll do it for you.'"



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW *good works*

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
OUR GOOD WORKS,
GO TO WWW.VINNIES.ORG.AU
OR CALL 13 18 12**

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