

# After The Fires: Part 2 - People

**25/11/2020** Following the catastrophic bushfires in Australia during the summer of 2019-2020, Porsche Cars Australia (PCA) donated a total of \$250,000 (AUD) to five charities nominated by its staff. This series of articles follows up with each organisation, to see how each is progressing with its efforts almost 12 months later.

PCA staff nominated five charities balancing aid for people, animals and land across affected areas in Australia.

On the humanitarian side PCA supported The Victorian Bushfire Appeal, the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund as well as the NSW Rural Fire Service, specifically the rebuild of the Oberon/Jenolan Caves Fire Station.

In response to the devastating bushfires earlier this year, The Victorian Government partnered with Bendigo Bank to establish The Victorian Bushfire Disaster Appeal. To date the Appeal has raised more than \$36 million.

The fund supports communities, individuals and businesses impacted by the devastating 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires, addressing immediate, short to medium and long term recovery.

Volunteer camps, housing support, food support, mental health support & rural fencing are just a few projects that the fund has supported to aid communities to recover and rebuild.

## Communities rebuild after the devastating fires

The Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) was established in 1978 to provide immediate short-term funds to Gippslanders affected by natural disaster events. The registered charity is completely funded by donations from businesses, community groups and individuals. Run by volunteers, all donations are returned to the community.

The GERF's 2020 Gippsland Bushfire Appeal was the fund's biggest fundraising effort to date raising \$10.4 million in total.

"The 2020 GERF appeal has received outstanding support within the region, all states and indeed from many countries from around the globe," said John Mitchell, President of the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF).

"We'd like to sincerely thank all of the businesses, ethnic and community groups, organisations, families and individuals who have so generously given their time, money and extraordinary support to help our

East Gippsland communities in their time of need. This is by far the biggest response we've ever seen to a GERF appeal."

More than 2,500 families or residents have received financial support from GERF as a result of this event.

\$9 million have been distributed to more than 2,100 families and residents in East Gippsland directly affected by the fires and \$1,400,000 was paid to 178 East Gippsland farmers for replacement fencing, (administered by the Victorian Farmers Federation on GERF's behalf).

More than 80 East Gippsland farmers received a total of \$300,000 for fodder (managed by Heyfield Lions Club), this was funded by donations received after the official close of GERF's 2019/20 Appeal.

## **Some progress faster than others as the weather remains a challenge**

While the East Gippsland region in Victoria started to rebuild, efforts after the fires in NSW were more challenging.

Located a two hour drive out of Sydney near the town of Oberon lies the spectacular Jenolan Caves at the edge of the Blue Mountains. During the fires the Jenolan Caves/Oberon fire station was completely destroyed.

The rebuild since the fires has been slow, with floods after the fires followed by more harsh winter weather.

Plans are however underway to optimise and rebuild the station.

If you would like to support the Victorian Bushfire Appeal, GERF or the NSW Rural Fire Service please follow the links below:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal>

<https://www.gerf.org.au/>

<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer/support-your-local-brigade>

## **Info**

Images courtesy of Bendigo Bank, Blazeaid and AWRFS as well as the Jenolan Caved Firestation, NSW

Rural Fire Service.

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