

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bushfire preparations funding needs to be at least tripled

RURAL communities across Victoria need the state government to triple funding for emergency management preparedness to ensure rural communities are ready for devastating natural disasters such as bushfires and major floods.

Rural Councils Victoria, which represents rural communities across the state, has made submissions to both the Federal Royal Commission into National Natural Disasters and Victoria's Inspector-General for Emergency Management Inquiry into the 2019-2020 Bushfire Season.

RCV is calling for at least a tripling of the State Government's funding of the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program (MERP) and for significant funds from the Federal Government.

Rural Councils Victoria Chair Cr Mary-Ann Brown said:

"Preparedness is better, safer and less costly than recovery. Preparedness ensures that communities suffer less damage and more lives are saved.

"As a result of climate change, the wildfire season in the northern hemisphere and the bushfire season in the southern hemisphere are now extended and overlap. Preparedness is essentially our only viable option."

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for firefighters from the northern hemisphere to come to our assistance and hard for Australian firefighters to help Americans and Europeans in the northern summer."

Cr Brown said:

"There are varying levels of preparedness across councils in terms of their emergency management policies and procedures and rural councils often have challenges meeting emergency management obligations under Victoria's current emergency management framework."

"This is due to a number of constraints including budgets, resourcing and staffing issues."

"Given the scale of the January 2020 bushfires, and the future likelihood of natural disasters and greater intensity bushfires due to climate change, RCV calls for the \$4.9 million Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program (MERP), which provides annual funding to councils for emergency management, to be at least tripled. We are also calling for greater funding levels from the Federal Government."

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About Rural Councils Victoria:

Rural Councils Victoria represents Victoria's rural councils, supporting and promoting sustainable, liveable, prosperous rural communities. Visit: ruralcouncilsvictoria.org.au