



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

**STUART AYRES, NSW MINISTER FOR POLICE & EMERGENCY SERVICES
LOUISE MARKUS, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MACQUARIE
ROZA SAGE, NSW MEMBER FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAINS**

Wednesday, 7 May 2014

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRE GRANTS PROGRAM

NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services Stuart Ayres today called on organisations to design innovative projects that help the Blue Mountains community to recover after the devastating October bushfires last year.

Mr Ayres, Federal Member for Macquarie Louise Markus and NSW Blue Mountains MP Roza Sage today officially opened the Blue Mountains Bushfire Grants Program, funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments under National Disaster Recovery and Relief arrangements.

“The Blue Mountains community has demonstrated an amazing resilience in the post bushfire period and these targeted funds will make a real difference in the community,” Mr Ayres said.

“Many people living in the Blue Mountains remain vulnerable and traumatised by the bushfires.

“Some lost their homes, possessions and pets and many are still struggling to overcome fears and other emotional and financial injuries. All up, the fires destroyed more than 200 properties and significantly damaged around 100 more.

“Businesses, and in particular those associated with the local tourism industry, have also been hard hit, and for many the losses are ongoing.

“I pay tribute to Roza Sage and Louise Markus who have provided strong representation for local residents and businesses during the bushfire recovery phase.”

Mr Ayres said the \$970,000 grants program is part of the \$1.8-million recovery package for the Blue Mountains community announced on 14 February 2014. It is also in addition to the \$11.4-million already provided by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments in the immediate aftermath of the bushfires for emergency assistance and clean-up efforts.

Mrs Markus said the joint package would aid social recovery, drive economic growth and build community preparedness for the future.

“Funds will be split 50/50 between those projects that support and help people to recover and those that help the local economy to rebuild,” Mrs Markus said.

“Round one of the two-stage grants program will specifically fund social and economic recovery-focused projects or a combination of both. Round two funding will be reserved for social recovery projects which may require further time to develop.

“It is important to the local Blue Mountains community that the grants address both social and economic recovery,” Mrs Markus said.

Mrs Sage said Round One of the grants have opened with the project planning phase. Applications close at midnight on Sunday June 8.

“The Grants Program and its guidelines and processes were established with strong community consultation and input,” Mrs Sage said.

“We asked community leaders and those directly affected by the bushfires, Blue Mountains City Council representatives and recovery experts to help us design the grants program.

“We are now eager to see programs designed that meet the community’s needs by aiding in recovery and building resilience in the Blue Mountains.

“This community has proven how strong it is in the face of adversity and I have no doubt there will be a wide range of innovative ideas to ensure these grants achieve maximum benefit for the region.”

The Blue Mountains Recovery Manager and Recovery Team are now on hand to provide advice to applicants to assist them in developing their project proposals for funding.

Guidelines, supporting documents and other information to help plan applications are now available at www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/bushfiregrants. Organisations will be able to submit their applications online from Monday May 26 until the closing date.

Staff are also available at 1300 707 155 to provide information to applicants on interpretation of the Guidelines, including types of projects eligible for funding, and to provide technical assistance with the on-line application process.

MEDIA: Sophie Onikul – 0428 596 319