



RURAL FINANCE

DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES 2019/2020

2020 Victorian Bushfire Recovery Transport Support Program

Program Guidelines

1. Purpose

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments have established the 2020 Victorian Fire Recovery Transport Support Program under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 to provide financial assistance to primary producers that were affected by the bushfires which occurred in December 2019/January 2020 (**bushfire event**).

The support is available to bushfire affected primary producers in the local government areas of Ararat, Alpine, Ballarat, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Indigo, Mansfield, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Southern Grampians, Towong, Wangaratta, Wellington and Wodonga.

The transport support aims to assist primary producers (including apiarists) affected by the bushfire event to meet immediate animal welfare and safety needs and to recover from the effects of the bushfire event.

2. Program details

A transport subsidy of up to 50 per cent of the total eligible transport costs incurred to a maximum (or combined total – where multiple trips apply) of \$15,000 (GST exclusive) per farm business in 2019-20.

Applicants can apply for a combination of eligible transport activities to a total of no more than \$15,000 (GST exclusive).

A maximum distance of 1,500 kilometres applies per movement, except for the movement of water for which the maximum distance per movement is 500 kilometres. If stock or fodder is moved a distance in excess of 1,500 kilometres, the subsidy is paid on 1,500 km.

Eligible primary producers (including apiarists) can claim the support for eligible transport costs that directly address immediate animal welfare and safety needs, including:

- Transport of emergency fodder for stock to fire-affected properties
- Transport of stock to agistment including returning stock
- Transport of stock to sale or slaughter
- Transport of emergency stock drinking water.

When transporting livestock, owners must comply with the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock and the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. Stock must not be transported that are unfit for travel except under veterinary advice and supervision. If livestock owners need to transport livestock affected by fire they should

first consult with their veterinary practitioner or with Agriculture Victoria assessment teams through the hotline 1800 226 226.

Applicants cannot claim subsidies on transport activities that are funded through other natural disaster assistance such as the Clean-Up and Restoration Grants.

3. Eligible activities

Transporting of emergency fodder for stock to fire-affected properties

- The subsidy is available for transportation of emergency fodder from the point of purchase of emergency fodder to the affected property and applies only to the loaded portion of the journey.
 - The movement of fodder must be to a landholder's property, a travelling stock reserve or leased/agisted property.
- Fodder must only be obtained for the feeding of bushfire-affected stock. The amount purchased per order must only be for a maximum three (3) month feed period for the stock on hand, and not for long term storage purposes.
- No subsidy will be paid on the transport of fodder weighing less than 500 kilograms.
 - Loads below 500 kilograms are not eligible for a subsidy under this program.

Transporting of stock to agistment (including returning stock)

- The subsidy is available for the forward and return journeys from the fire-affected property to the location of agistment and applies only to the loaded portion of the journey.
 - The stockowner must have no prior arrangement, agreement or contract to sell or otherwise dispose of the stock to the owner of the agistment property prior to the bushfire event.
 - Subsidy is available for the forward and return journeys.
- The minimum load must be equivalent to 20 dry sheep equivalents (DSE). Loads of less than 20 DSE will be assessed on a case by case basis (e.g. transporting bulls or bees).
- The movement of stock to or from agistment must occur between the bushfire event and up to 30 June 2020.
- If the owner is forced to move stock off the agistment property due to extreme circumstances (or a shortage of feed for bees), additional claims will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Transporting of stock to sale or slaughter

- The subsidy is available for the forward journeys from the fire-affected property to the location of sale or slaughter and applies only to the loaded portion of the journey.
 - The stockowner must have no prior arrangement, agreement or contract to sell or otherwise dispose of the stock to the owner of the agistment property prior to the bushfire event.
- The movement of stock to sale or slaughter must occur between the bushfire event and up to 30 June 2020.
- The minimum load must be equivalent to 20 dry sheep equivalents (DSE). Loads of less than 20 DSE will be assessed on a case by case basis (e.g. transporting bulls or bees).

Transporting of emergency stock drinking water

- The subsidy is available for emergency stock water cartage, from the nearest practicable source to the fire affected property.

- Water cartage to stock on a travelling stock reserve or agistment property is also eligible for subsidy.
- The minimum load is 500 litres per transportation.
- The movement of emergency stock drinking water must occur between the bushfire event and up to 30 June 2020.
- Transport subsidies will not be paid for the transport of water for irrigation, domestic water usage or fixed charges related to water.

4. Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for assistance the primary producer must:

- have suffered the direct impact of the bushfires that commenced December 2019/January 2020
- be located in the local government areas of Ararat, Alpine, Ballarat, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Indigo, Mansfield, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Southern Grampians, Towong, Wangaratta, Wellington and Wodonga have a right or interest in the land property affected by the bushfires (ownership or lease)
- be classified as a primary producer (refer to definitions)
- be responsible for the cost of transport
- have re-established or intend to re-establish the primary production enterprise in the same area.

Primary producers who have applied for Clean-Up and Restoration Grants are not precluded from eligibility, but applicants cannot claim subsidies on transport activities that are funded through the Clean-Up and Restoration Grants.

In the case of leased land, only one grant may be paid to the livestock owner/manager responsible for watering stock. Under these circumstances a joint application by the owner and the lessee is to be lodged.

Subsidies are not intended to replace the need for insurance or to provide compensation for loss of revenue.

- Any transport that has been covered by an insurance claim are not eligible for a subsidy.
- Any transport that is subsequently covered by an insurance claim is to be repaid.

Any applicant found to have provided information of a fraudulent nature may be liable to prosecution and will be required to repay the subsidy.

The transport support is being delivered by Rural Finance in line with the joint State and Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

Apiarists and primary production related to bees

Eligible apiarists are eligible for a transport subsidy under all streams of transportation.

Applicants must sign a statutory declaration that the movement of beehives is abnormal to their usual management practices and is entirely as a result of the bushfire event.

Where the bushfire affected site is on:

- private land, a statement from the property owner that the land is bushfire affected must accompany each claim

- public land, a copy of the bee site licence must accompany each claim.

If the movement is undertaken by the owner for the purpose of buying bee food, receipts for the purchase of bee food are to be provided with the claim.

- Honey producers must obtain bee foods from the nearest practicable source to the bees.
- For bee food the movement may be from the location where purchased to the new site where the bees are located.

5. Definitions

Primary Producer

An eligible primary producer is one who:

- is registered as a primary producer with the Australian Tax Office and has an ABN,
- has a right or interest in the land for the purpose of primary production,
- contributes a significant part of his/her labour and capital to the farming enterprise, and under **normal business conditions**, derives more than 51 per cent of his/her individual income from the farming enterprise and therefore is running a bona-fide commercial scale operation. As a guide it is anticipated that farm turnover would exceed \$50,000 per annum under normal business conditions.

Normal Business Conditions

Normal business conditions refers to a year with no adverse climatic conditions (drought/flood/fire) in which average yields/productivity is achieved. Normal year income is based on this productivity and long term achievable community prices.

Emergency fodder

Emergency fodder refers to the purchase of fodder/feed for livestock following a natural disaster (bushfires) where there is an immediate need to acquire feed for livestock directly related to the natural disaster. This may be due to the destruction of pastures or on-farm fodder reserves.

Fodder for livestock is taken to mean any crop grown for the purpose of feeding livestock (including pasture, hay, lucerne and silage). Fodder for bees is taken to mean mature flowering bushland and trees, sugar and pollen protein replacement.

Emergency fodder is different to purchases of fodder due to dry conditions or drought.

Emergency stock drinking water

Emergency stock drinking water refers to the cartage of water for livestock following a natural disaster (bushfires) where there is an immediate need to acquire drinking water for livestock directly related to the natural disaster. This may be due to destruction of, or the inability to access, on-farm water resources (groundwater, bores and dams).

Emergency stock drinking water is different to water cartage due to dry conditions or drought.

6. Application and payment process

To apply for the subsidy, a *Victorian Bushfires 2019/2020 Transport Support Program Primary Producer – Application* form will need to be completed and lodged.

The subsidy will be paid for road transport at a rate of 50 per cent of the total amount paid to the carrier or costs for an owner driver (for owner driver provisions, see below).

Costs for transportation must be paid prior to lodging a claim application.

The application must be for movements within the six months following the bushfire events.

The application must be accompanied with the following supporting documentation:

- Evidence (photographs or other) of fire damage.
- Evidence of the Local Government Area (Shire) in which you own, operate, share or lease your primary production businesses.
 - Lease documentation
 - Rates notice
 - Share-farming contract
 - Statement from the property owner that the land is bushfire affected (for bee sites on private land).
- Proof of payment of relevant tax invoices of completed transport activities.

Applications will be assessed in order of receipt against the eligibility criteria.

Applications must be submitted by **31 July 2020**.

GST is excluded from any subsidy payment.

Payments are made by direct credit to the applicant's nominated bank account.

Completed form and attachments are to be forwarded to:

Rural Finance

PO Box 1313

Bendigo Central 3552 or governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au

Owner driver provisions

In the case of an owner/driver:

- payment will be provided in line with the kilometre rate table below
- the following evidence must be provided:
 - a copy of the registration certificate for the vehicle used for transport,
 - evidence that the vehicle is registered as a primary production vehicle for the fire-affected property
 - evidence that the owner/driver is associated with farm business
- copy of the log book entries for the vehicle used (claims under 100 kilometres do not require a log book).

Gross vehicle mass (T) and/or Gross combined vehicle mass (T)	Amount per kilometre
< 2.5	\$1.00
< 4.5	\$1.40
< 6.5	\$1.80
< 8.5	\$2.00
< 10.5	\$2.20
< 12.5	\$2.35
< 14.5	\$2.55

< 15.5	\$2.65
< 22.5	\$3.00
< 27.5	\$3.40
< 42.5	\$4.00
> 42.5	\$5.00

7. Further information

Further information can be obtained via:

Ph: 1800 260 425

Email: governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au

Fax: (03) 5441 8901

Web: ruralfinance.com.au

Postal address: GPO BOX 1313, Bendigo Central, Victoria 3552

Further financial support to assist primary producers to recover from bushfire may be available through a Clean-Up and Restoration Grant.