

The bushfires Australia is facing are devastating. Lives have been lost, communities destroyed, property lost or damaged and people's livelihoods impacted upon.

While the immediate threat is not over yet, we want to assure the tourism industry, and those affected, that we stand with you.

There is a long road ahead, but we will be with you every step of the way.

We will work together with the industry to ensure that tourism rebuilds in the wake of this disaster and is stronger than ever before.

Many of Australia's best known tourism regions have previously faced natural disasters such as bushfires and cyclones yet bounced back in a strong demonstration of their resilience as world-class tourism destinations.

We also want to commend the industry for the incredible compassion it is showing, with many operators offering a place to sleep, eat, drink or rest to locals and travellers in need.

Our Government has established a new National Bushfire Recovery Agency with an initial \$2 billion funding allocation, to ensure families, farmers and business owners hit by these unprecedented bushfires receive the support they need as they recover.

Indicative priorities include: primary producer grants for restocking, replanting and fencing, additional support for small businesses, grants to bushfire affected Local Government Areas, a mental health package for first responders and communities, support to attract tourists back to the regions, infrastructure projects to support economic, community and industry recovery and resilience, and measures to support the environment and native wildlife.

There is always a risk that the widespread media coverage of these bushfires will also impact other regions across Australia.

We are monitoring the global media coverage and its impact on future bookings closely and assessing how to address the impact of this as the situation unfolds.

We will assist communities to get back on their feet, and when the time is right, help to attract tourists back to our regions.

Regards, Simon Birmingham and Jonno Duniam

People affected by the bushfires can claim disaster payments by calling Services Australia (Centrelink) on 180 22 66 and find more information at <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/disaster>. As soon as it is safe to do so, Mobile Service Centres will head into affected regions to assist with all Government payment services, including disaster payments