



Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season
 Submission to the Office of the Inspector General Emergency Management

15 October 2020

Thank you for providing Mansfield Shire Council (MSC) and the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board (RMB) the opportunity to provide feedback to the Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season.

Background – how were we affected?

The Alpine resorts of Mt Buller and Mt Stirling sit within the footprint of Mansfield Shire Council. While there are significant differences in topography, climate, community and economy between the RMB area and the municipality, there is much that the two share including bushfire risk.

When the State of Disaster was declared on 2 January 2020 there was no active fire in our immediate footprints. Much of Mansfield Shire was a significant distance from the Rocky Knob and Bluff Creek fires yet, due to the declaration of the State of Disaster, the resorts, all of the camping areas in our region as well as child care facilities were closed to visitors through the State of Disaster. Travel to the area was discouraged and media coverage added to a pronounced, and often unnecessary, negative impact on our businesses and residents.

Mansfield Shire and the RMB were not directly affected by flame during January 2020 but were severely affected by smoke, negative media and the State of Disaster. Repetitive warnings and media footage created much fear and tension in our communities.

We will be forever grateful to the CFA and DELWP agencies and volunteers for their incredible efforts to slow the Bluff Creek fire and the Ovens Abbeyard fire complex and protect our communities and infrastructure.

What did we do in the early stages?

MSC and the RMB immediately initiated a range of activities to support their impacted businesses. These included:

MSC	RMB
Dissemination of communications including updates and relief opportunities	Communications with residents, construction sites, commercial businesses and Licensed Tourism Operators (LTOs). Encouraged all visitors to leave the Mt Buller resort and evacuated the Mt Stirling resort. Arranged weekly briefings for LTOs through the ICC. Prepared fire hydrants, primed water lines, primed and tested snowmaking system (with Buller Ski

	<p>Lifts). Held daily briefings with community. Provided fire spotting support on the mountain.</p> <p>Closed both resorts to visitors.</p>
<p>Business operator impact survey</p> <p>Impact analysis information provided to Hume Region and BRV.</p>	<p>Survey of LTOs who are dependent on access to the resorts for their business (eg horse trail guides).</p> <p>Impact analysis information provided to Hume Region and BRV.</p>
<p>Attendance at REMT and RRC meetings</p> <p>Internal recovery committee meetings</p>	<p>Attended REMT and RRC meetings with DJPR, BRV, and other agencies.</p> <p>Advocated for support particularly for the LTOs.</p> <p>Advocated for events funding.</p>
<p>Responded to requests from Hume Region and BRV to provide a list of events and projects for funding to support recovery.</p>	<p>Responded to requests from Hume Region and BRV to provide a list of events and projects for funding to support recovery.</p>
<p>Tourism North East recovery initiatives – films, Roll out the Welcome Mat,</p>	<p>Tourism North East recovery initiatives – films</p>
<p>Formation of the Mansfield Business and Community Recovery Committee</p>	
<p>Development of the Mansfield Economic Recovery Plan</p>	

To what extent were relief/recovery arrangements and activities effective:

Relief arrangements

<p>Personal Relief – Disaster Recovery Allowance</p>	<p>The Disaster Recovery Allowance provides individuals that can prove they have lost income due to a disaster with income support for up to 13 weeks.</p> <p>Individuals working in the Resorts were not eligible for this payment until 7 Jan 2020, despite many losing income from the time the SOD was announced on 2 January 2020.</p> <p>It is understood that the resorts were initially omitted from this program by accident, as they are not a Local Council.</p>
<p>Business support – National Bushfire Recovery Agency \$10,000 grants</p>	<p>After advocating to the Federal Government, business crisis support became available to businesses operating in the RMB. This support was not available to businesses in Mansfield Shire. However, the impact of this funding was affected by eligibility requirements and the application processes and the Council advocated frequently for change to the eligibility criteria.</p> <p>The eligibility for this program was expanded on 11 March 2020 to include indirectly affected businesses with a registered address within SOD areas. Unfortunately, many businesses that operate within the resorts have registered business addresses elsewhere, which made them ineligible. For example, an LTOs</p>

	<p>were ineligible if their business address was outside the SOD area even though the business is completely reliant on access to the resorts to operate.</p> <p>The eligibility was later changed again to include businesses that could prove that they operate within the SOD area; however, it was too late at this stage to provide effective relief.</p> <p>Businesses also reported issues with the grant application process. One business reported that they were required to drive to the closest relief centre in Wangaratta to submit their application. .</p>
Business support - Licensed Tour Operator Support	<p>The Public Land/Resort LTOs were 100% affected from the time the SOD was announced, as they are dependent on access to parks and the resorts to run their businesses</p> <p>Mansfield and the RMB began advocating for this severely impacted group in January 2020 through the Hume REMT and BRV seeking a waiver of annual fees.</p> <p>On 30 April 2020, LTOs that operate on Parks Victoria land were advised that the Government would waive their annual fees. However, this program was not extended to LTOs that operate in the resorts until 9 June 2020.</p> <p>The waiver, when it was extended to LTOs that operate in the resorts, was appreciated, but the delay significantly affected the efficacy of this relief measure. Many LTOs also reported significant levels of distress.</p>
Business Support - Payroll tax relief program	<p>On 2 March 2020 the Government announced payroll tax relief for businesses registered in the Local Council areas included in the SOD. The eligibility criteria were later clarified to include businesses with a registered address within the resorts. It is not known whether the eligibility was later expanded to also include businesses that operate in the resorts but have a registered address outside the resorts or one of the local council areas.</p>

Recovery

Relief/recovery initiative	Opportunity for improvement
Regional Events Fund	<p>This program was announced on 2 February 2020 to support events in the 15 affected local government areas. The program was quickly expanded to include the resorts. It is understood that the initial omission of the resorts was an accident.</p> <p>In early February, the RMB submitted an application for grant funding to promote Picnic in the Park on 8 March 2020. Delays in the grant funding decision meant that the additional funds were not available in time to promote this event.</p>

Structural relief and recover issues

<p>Formation of Bushfire Recovery Victoria.</p>	<p>Whilst the establishment of a new agency dedicated to relief and recovery is supported, its creation during the incident led to confused roles and responsibilities between agencies and blurred communication lines. The nominated representative for the region had little to offer, beyond being prepared to attend meetings.</p> <p>It also took some time to understand the scope of BRVs role, particularly for municipalities that were not directly fire affected like Mansfield and the RMB.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to embedding a BRV-type entity into the emergency management framework in a way that enables it to be activated as required. This will remove confusion about roles and responsibilities and enable the BRV entity to quickly establish itself and start providing recovery support. ensure</p>
<p>Municipal recovery funding - RMBs do not receive any</p>	<p>As deemed municipalities for the purposes of the Emergency Management Act 1986, the RMBs have the same emergency management responsibilities as Local Government Authorities.</p> <p>However, to date, the RMB has not received any municipal funding from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency or the Victorian Council Assistance Fund. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding, the RMB has not been able to directly address local relief and recovery issues.</p> <p>The Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee, whilst noting municipal and local economy recovery needs, agreed not to establish a recovery committee because there were no available funds.</p>
<p>Municipal recovery funding – Impact assessment and community driven</p>	<p>Mansfield Shire Council is very appreciative of the funding support it has received through National Bushfire Recovery Agency and the Victorian Council Assistance Fund. This funding will directly support community resilience and recovery.</p> <p>However, it is noted that funding applications are often called for early in the relief and recovery phases, sometimes even before impact assessment are complete. This timing issue affects Councils ability to engage the community and local business in recovery planning before grant applications close.</p> <p>Greater flexibility in grant close dates would allow local councils to work with their communities at their pace to better support community driven recovery, without the threat of missing out on financial support.</p>
<p>Regular and timely communications</p>	<p>The RMBs do not receive communications through MAV or Local Government Victoria like most municipalities. This often leads to the RMBs missing out on important municipal-level information or receiving information through informal routes late.</p>

Recovery and COVID-19

We need to acknowledge that much of the recovery activity is still taking place or yet to begin as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Most of the bushfire recovery focus has been replaced by COVID-19 concerns although both the bushfire and COVID-19 emergencies have had an economic effect on our region and therefore the recovery planning can address both.

Allowing communities and businesses to define what they need to assist with their recovery is essential. Much of the early recovery actions were focused on events to bring people to the region and support the economy. However, it has not been possible to deliver most of these events due to COVID-19. It is unclear what type of events may be possible in the future and the extent to which smaller events might be able to support economic recovery. It's also unclear, at this stage, whether events remain the preferred approach for local communities and businesses.

The Licensed Tourism Operators that operate predominantly on Mt Stirling, Mansfield State Forest and in the Alpine National Park have reported that they feel forgotten about – lost in the combined disasters which affected them directly and equally. Where most considerations were around proportion of income lost for businesses as a result of the fires and the State of Disaster, there was little recognition that these businesses had lost 100% of their income overnight. They are still unsure what they need to do to ensure that their businesses can run in the new COVID-19 normal environment.

Businesses need information on what the COVID-19 normal future will look like so that they can plan, innovate and recover commercially.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the approach to setting State of Disaster (SoD) declaration boundaries based on local government areas be reviewed and the process amended to include advice from ICC on appropriate boundaries to protect public safety and commercial activities.

We recommend that SoD boundaries be more adaptable to allow for modifiable borders and different levels of control within those borders so those communities and businesses that are not under any risk are still able to operate as close to normal as possible.

Recommendation 2: That recovery funding processes be adjusted to allow greater flexibility in grant close dates so municipalities can work with their communities at their pace to better support community driven recovery, without the threat of missing out on financial support. The best outcomes have been noticed when an external agency does the impact assessment and the results are standardised across impacted areas.

Recommendation 3: That the Alpine Resort Management Boards, as deemed municipalities under the Emergency Management Act 1986, are able to access the same emergency management funding programs as local council municipalities.

Recommendation 4: That a business relief grant program be established similar to the Personal Hardship Assistance Program. The business relief measure should be launched whenever a SOD Declaration is made and flow quickly to businesses affected by the SOD regardless of the location of their registered business address. The application process should be simple and require minimal supporting evidence.

Recommendation 5: That business relief and recovery support programs recognise the diversity of Victorian businesses, in particular Licensed Tourism Operators, experience ad event businesses that rely on access to public land and are uniquely impacted when access is withdrawn.

Recommendation 6: That the Alpine Resort Management Boards, as deemed municipalities under the Emergency Management Act 1986, be included in formal municipality communication channels and receive the same information as councils.

Attachment 1: Anecdotal Data

COMPANY	TOWN	IMPACT	Impacted?	Accessing support?	Staff affected
Australian Sled dog Tours	Dinner Plain	Evacuated 3 times; received water. No income for 6 weeks, verging on bankruptcy with no work forecast until winter. Only returned home from Sale first week Feb, everything is burnt around them works in tourism and has no work either.	Yes	?	Information not available
Bike Now Pty. Ltd.	South Melbourne	Not impacted - only visit in April each year	No	No	Information not available
Boyd Apiaries Pty Ltd	Benalla	No direct impact	No	No	Information not available
Buckle Up Bushrides Pty Ltd	Booroolite	All tours in January cancelled. Promoted tours in Feb however not enough interest to run. Hasn't made contact with recovery support as concerned a lot of businesses/people more heavily impacted than they are. Three staff plus business owners no income for two months (to end of Feb).	Yes	No	Yes - 3 casuals and 1 owner with no income
Hidden Trails by Horseback Pty Ltd	Mansfield	Not looking to claim funding as other businesses/towns more heavily impacted. One 8 day tour was covered by travel insurance, one trip had to refund, all day trips cancelled (to end of Feb).	Yes	No	Information not available
High Country Horses Pty Ltd	Merrijig	Major loss of revenue in January. One tour has run since parks reopened. Guests still cancelling rides booked for March.	Yes	Unknown	Information not available
McCormack's Mountain Valley Trail Rides	Merrijig	Have not claimed assistance. Employ casual workers who are not guaranteed work.	Yes	No	Yes - Casuals
Outdoor Education Group	Eildon	Minimal impact, have relocated some programs to other areas in the State.	Yes	Unknown	Information not available
Tru-Blu Vic Pty Ltd. T/As Tru-Blu Trails	Merrijig	Major impact on Summer and Autumn bookings. Concerned that all campsites around area are empty. Have tried to seek Govt support however up to 70th phone call with no response or am redirected to another agency who cannot assist.	Yes	Yes	Information not available
Xventure Pty Ltd T/As All Terrain Cycles	Mansfield	Trying to keep business alive, operate from Bright as well. May not be able to operate next year. First weekend in February down 35% on the same weekend as last year.	Yes	Unknown	Information not available

COMPANY	TOWN	IMPACT	Impacted?	Accessing support?	Staff affected
MTB Adventures (Mountain Bike Tours Australia)	Williamstown North	Operates from February onwards, no impact as yet	No	No	No impact
Mansfield Bushwalks	Mansfield	<p>Operates two businesses; Mansfield Apartments and Mansfield Bushwalks (business established late 2019 scheduled to commence operations Christmas 2019 however no option but to postpone until early Feb 2020. Concerned about lack of emergency resources in area because of emergencies in Gippsland and NSW. No employment for 1 staff member for the month of January. Lack of info about High Country Comeback event in Melbourne.</p> <p>Mansfield Bushwalks- We have effectively missed our first Summer trading as there were not the tourists in the area to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make enquiries 2. Make bookings <p>Access to the National and Alpine Parks was significantly reduced or the Parks were closed from Jan 2nd to Jan 31st. 1 employee with no work for up to 2 months (to end of Feb)</p> <p>Mansfield Apartments- Jan 1st to Jan 9th 2020 – NO BOOKINGS AT ALL Jan 9th – Jan 19th - 9 Apartments booked (out of a total 50 rooms available over that period) Jan 20th – Feb 6th – 35 Apartments booked (out of a total 90 rooms available over that period) **Business is still very slow for weekend and midweek</p> <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – income has been down – we have 2 x regular cleaners who have had drastically reduced hours due to lack of bookings – we have had to re clean/dust rooms due to long periods of vacancy 	Yes	Unknown	Yes - 3 casuals
Resort Management Board - Buller Air Zone	Mt Buller	Closed for two weekends. Four casual staff affected.	Yes	No	4

COMPANY	TOWN	IMPACT	Impacted?	Accessing support?	Staff affected
Resort Management Board - Mt Stirling Café	Mt Buller	Closed for two weekends. Two casual staff affected	Yes	No	2

Total	14	14	14
Yes	11	1	
%	79	7	
No	3	7	
%	21	50	
Unknown		4	
%		29	

Casual staff

Information not available

Yes

No impact

8

5

2

57

36

15

REVENUE & VISITOR COMPARISON

Horse Trail Tour Operators x 3

Month	# participants	\$ value		# participants	\$ value		
Nov-18	1245	\$ 186,727.00		Nov-19	1164	\$ 239,500.00	
Dec-18	434	\$ 132,937.00		Dec-19	491	\$ 158,040.00	
Jan-19	430	\$ 166,728.00		Jan-20	172	\$ 26,094.00	
TOTAL	2109	\$ 486,392.00	TOTAL	1827	\$ 423,634.00	DIFFERENCE	-282 -\$ 62,758.00
Feb-19	1019	\$ 138,437.00					
Mar-19	1098	\$ 229,866.00					
Apr-19	954	\$ 1,106,648.00					
May-19	718	\$ 79,528.00					
TOTAL	3789	\$ 1,554,479.00					

Four-Wheel Drive Tour Operator x 1

Month	# participants	\$ value		# participants	\$ value		
Nov-18	3	\$ 700.00		Nov-19	2	\$ 520.00	
Dec-18	4	\$ 900.00		Dec-19	6	\$ 960.00	
Jan-19	6	\$ 1,200.00		Jan-20	0	\$ -	
TOTAL	13	\$ 2,800.00	TOTAL	8	\$ 1,480.00	DIFFERENCE	-5 -\$ 1,320.00
Feb-19	0	\$ -					
Mar-19	3	\$ 600.00					
Apr-19	7	\$ 1,400.00					
May-19	0	\$ -					
TOTAL	10	\$ 2,000.00					

Mountain Bike Tour Operators x 2

Month	# participants	\$ value		# participants	\$ value		
Dec-18	1495	\$ 69,775.00	Dec-19	472	\$ 22,060.00		
Jan-19	2125	\$ 140,025.00	Jan-20	298	\$ 24,780.00		
TOTAL	3620	\$ 209,800.00	TOTAL	770	\$ 46,840.00	DIFFERENCE	-2850 -\$ 162,960.00

* Dec figures are forecast only and relate to one operator | Participant figures relate to one operator only

Resort Management Board							
					Buller air zone		4,000
					Mt Stirling café		2400
					Total	-3137	-\$ 220,638.00

Attachment 2:



NORTH EAST FIRE IMPACT ESTIMATES 2020

Disclaimer: The following analysis on the economic impact of bushfires in the High Country Region is based on scenario modelling and may not reflect the actual localised impacts to visitation and businesses in the region. This scenario modelling was prepared to demonstrate potential impacts from the bushfires over the March Quarter 2020 to the High Country Region based on loss of visitation and visitor expenditure. Further detailed primary research into business performance is recommended to determine the actual economic impact of bushfires, following conclusion of the bushfire event.

METHOD

Tourism Research Australia data has been utilised to estimate the current and predicted impacts of the bushfire season on the regional visitor economy of Victoria's High Country. This includes estimated impacts of fires on visitor numbers, visitor expenditure, and jobs disrupted across the High Country. These estimates are scenario- based only.

This data includes visitation to each of the three Alpine Resorts within their respective council areas i.e. Mt Hotham and Falls Creek Alpine resorts are included in Alpine Shire data, and Mt Buller/Mt Stirling are included in Mansfield Shire data.

Visitation and expenditure data has been collected for the March 2019 quarter and projected forward using the Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) for the High Country region, to estimate expected visitation to the High Country region in March 2020 quarter under a 'business as usual' scenario.

A range of scenarios have been devised to understand potential impacts of the fire, using the projected 2020 figure for the March quarter. Due to some LGA's being more tourism-focused and others operating as service centres, impacts have been calculated using 3 scenarios of visitation reduction.

For the purposes of this analysis, the High Country region has been divided into tourism-focused areas and service centre areas. The economies of the tourism-focused are highly reliant on tourism, therefore it is predicted that they will be more significantly impacted by the bushfires than the service-centre areas, which have a different visitor profile of predominately business visitors and visiting friends and relatives.

Tourism-focused areas include:

- Wangaratta Region SA2 (capturing King Valley); and
- Alpine, Indigo, Mansfield and Towong LGA's (As previously mentioned, the Alpine Resorts of Mt Hotham, Falls Creek, Mt Buller/Mt Stirling are included in their respective Council areas).

Service-centre areas include:

- Benalla LGA; and
- Wangaratta SA2 (City Centre).

Based on the above breakdown, the following scenarios have been utilised:

- Scenario 1: Estimated 60% visitation/expenditure loss to Wangaratta Region SA2 and Alpine, Indigo, Mansfield and Towong LGA's, and 20% to Benalla LGA and Wangaratta SA2 (City Centre).
- Scenario 2: Estimated 70% visitation/expenditure loss to Wangaratta Region SA2 and Alpine, Indigo, Mansfield and Towong LGA's, and 20% to Benalla LGA and Wangaratta SA2 (City Centre).
- Scenario 3: Estimated 80% visitation/expenditure loss to Wangaratta Region SA2 and Alpine, Indigo, Mansfield and Towong LGA's, and 20% to Benalla LGA and Wangaratta SA2 (City Centre).

PROJECTED IMPACTS

Visitation Loss

Based on a business as usual estimate of 990,000 visitors to the High Country in the March Quarter of 2020, it is estimated that the High Country will experience a loss of between 490,000 – 630,000 visitors in this quarter, based on reduced visitation scenarios due to fire impacts.

T1. ESTIMATED VISITATION IMPACTS, HIGH COUNTRY, MARCH QUARTER 2020*

	Visitation Mar Qtr 2020	Visitation Scenarios for March Quarter 2020			
		Business As Usual (Predicted)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
			60% Visitation Reduction	70% Visitation Reduction	80% Visitation Reduction
Alpine Shire	220,000	240,000	100,000	70,000	50,000
Indigo Shire	140,000	150,000	60,000	40,000	30,000
Mansfield Shire	220,000	240,000	100,000	70,000	50,000
Towong Shire	60,000	60,000	30,000	20,000	10,000
Wangaratta Region SA2	30,000	30,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total visitors to High Country tourism-focused areas (estimates for 2020 scenarios)	670,000	730,000	290,000	220,000	150,000
			20% Visitation Reduction	20% Visitation Reduction	20% Visitation Reduction
Rural City of Benalla	120,000	130,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Wangaratta SA2 (City Centre)	120,000	130,000	110,000	110,000	110,000
Total visitors to service-centre areas (estimates for 2020 scenarios)	240,000	260,000	210,000	210,000	210,000
Total visitors to High Country (estimates for 2020 scenarios)	910,000	990,000	500,000	430,000	350,000
Estimated visitor loss to High Country			- 490,000	- 560,000	- 630,000

Source: TRA NVS and IVS, March Quarter 2019.

*Figures rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Visitor Spend Loss and Job Disruption

Under a business as usual estimate of \$299 million in visitor spend across the High Country during the March 2020 quarter, it is estimated that the High Country will experience a loss of between \$158 – \$208 million in visitor spend in this quarter, due to reduced visitation scenarios due to fire impacts.

Based on the loss of visitor expenditure, it is estimated that between 1,600-2,100 tourism-related jobs in the High Country will be disrupted in the March 2020 quarter. This does not include potential long-term impacts. Job loss impacts are based on input-output modelling multipliers, which assume a loss of 1 job per \$100,000 visitor expenditure lost.

T2. ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE LOSS AND JOB DISRUPTION, HIGH COUNTRY, MARCH QUARTER 2020*

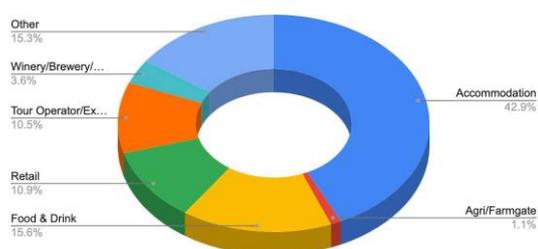
	Visitation Mar Qtr 2019	Visitation Scenarios for March Quarter 2020			
		Business As Usual (Predicted)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
			60% Visitation Reduction	70% Visitation Reduction	80% Visitation Reduction
Alpine Shire	\$106 million	\$112 million	\$45 million	\$33 million	\$22 million
Indigo Shire	\$44 million	\$46 million	\$18 million	\$14 million	\$9 million
Mansfield Shire	\$65 million	\$68 million	\$27 million	\$20 million	\$14 million
Towong Shire	\$12 million	\$13 million	\$5 million	\$4 million	\$3 million
Wangaratta Region SA2	\$8 million	\$9 million	\$3 million	\$3 million	\$2 million
Total visitor expenditure for tourism- focused areas (estimates for 2020 scenarios)	\$234 million	\$246 million	\$99 million	\$74 million	\$49 million
			20% Visitation Reduction	20% Visitation Reduction	20% Visitation Reduction
Rural City of Benalla	\$17 million	\$18 million	\$15 million	\$15 million	\$15 million
Wangaratta SA2 (City Centre)	\$33 million	\$34 million	\$27 million	\$27 million	\$27 million
Visitor expenditure for service-centre areas (estimates for 2020 scenarios)	\$50 million	\$53 million	\$42 million	\$42 million	\$42 million
Visitor expenditure for High Country (estimates for 2020 scenarios)	\$284 million	\$299 million	\$141 million	\$116 million	\$91 million
Estimated visitor expenditure loss to High Country			- \$158 million	- \$183 million	- \$208 million
Estimated visitor economy jobs disrupted in High Country			1,600	1,800	2,100

Source: TRA NVS and IVS, March Quarter 2019.

*Figures rounded to the nearest million.

Attachment 3: TNE fire impact survey interim summary of results as at Wednesday 22 Jan 2020

The following interim results have been received from the first 277 respondents to the survey being conducted by TNE with industry to better understand the impact of the current bushfire situation on businesses throughout the region, as well as the support requested by industry. Businesses surveyed are from the 9 stakeholder organisations covered by TNE.



The survey has been delivered week both via 130 1 on 1 conversations with industry and through inviting responses via various appropriate industry bodies. Respondents represent all LGA/RMB partners

Business types are indicated opposite. This sits roughly in line with the general split of High Country businesses.

Results indicate that the key week of fire activity from Jan 2 - 9 had a massive impact on business across the region.

50% of businesses lost 100% of visitation 25% of businesses lost 75-99% of visitation

Outlook predictions by businesses for the remainder of January show 72% anticipate losing over 75% of their upcoming business with similarly low business confidence for February.

While 97% of respondents have not lost assets due to the fires 25% have lost access to assets essential for the running of their business.

Key reported impacts of the fires included:

- Cancelled bookings
- Refunding money
- No tourists
- Stock that is going off
- Staff payments/staff lay-offs
- Financial stress

The key support sought for business recovery included:

- **Government Financial assistance and support (top answer by far)**
- Tax delayed payment
- Enhance regional marketing messaging for tourists to return to region - TNE specific
- Promote the region as a safe place to visit - Government specific
- Free marketing/help with marketing for cash-poor businesses - individual business-specific

Full survey reports will be made as data becomes available