



AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE & NATURE RECOVERY FUND

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WWF-Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and their continuing connection to their lands, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and their emerging leaders.

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organisations, with over five million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

WWF-Australia National Office

Suite 3.01, Level 3, Gadigal Country
45 Clarence Street Tel: +61 2 8000 0303
Sydney NSW 2000 hello@wwf.org.au
PO Box 528 wwf.org.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund (AW&NRF) was established in response to the country's unprecedented 2019-20 summer bushfires, which devastated over 18 million hectares and affected more than 3 billion animals. Launched by WWF-Australia (WWF-Au), the fund aimed to provide emergency help for wildlife, restore habitats for people and nature, and prepare Australia for future challenges.

We engaged RM Consulting Group to conduct a thorough evaluation of the impact of the fund and the work it enabled. The report highlights the findings and showcases some examples of the work made possible by our supporters.

As we look to the future, WWF-Au plans to build on the learnings from these bushfire recovery achievements by using proven conservation methods, improving how we track progress, and continuing to support Indigenous and community-led projects. We are committed to staying prepared, encouraging new ideas, and making a lasting difference for both the environment and local communities.

Thank you for your generous support, which has been vital in achieving these milestones. Your support is making a real difference in protecting Australia's wildlife and landscapes as we work together to Regenerate Nature by 2030.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Thanks to the contributions from generous partners and supporters worldwide, the bushfire response achieved remarkable success.

\$51 MILLION

raised for wildlife and nature recovery

254 PROJECTS

were delivered in three phases: wildlife response, habitat restoration for people and nature and future-proofing Australia.

WE FORMED 190 PARTNERSHIPS

with organisations working on-the-ground and prioritising First Nations groups, who were critical in achieving impact.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Thanks to the contributions from generous partners and supporters worldwide, the bushfire response achieved significant success.

HABITAT RESTORATION:

Over 400,000 hectares of habitat under restoration and over 757,000 trees planted.

SPECIES RECOVERY:

Conservation efforts targeted 73 animal species. This included installation of 282 nest boxes for greater gliders and glossy black cockatoos, vaccinating 436 koalas against disease, and reintroducing three species to protected areas.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

22 community partnerships formed, 14 community-led regeneration projects supported and over 700 vets were trained in emergency wildlife treatment.

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT:

85 Indigenous organisations were supported. The Indigenous Women's Rangers Environmental Network (WREN) grew by over 205 women and 10 Traditional Owner groups helped apply cultural fire practices across 2.5 million hectares.

BUSHFIRE RESPONSE ACHIEVEMENTS

PHASE #1: WILDLIFE RESPONSE

From emergency rescue to long-term recovery for Australia's wildlife.

In response to the bushfires, WWF-Au launched the first phase of the recovery fund to quickly help wildlife and set up long-term recovery efforts. This phase focused on two main themes: wildlife response and landscape

recovery, and species recovery and adaptation. It was designed to provide immediate disaster relief, such as emergency rescues, veterinary care and food drops, while also investing in longer-term, science-based conservation to help animals and habitats recover and adapt.

Spanning New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), South Australia (SA) and Western Australia (WA), the phase evolved from crisis response into a coordinated

national effort to restore ecosystems, build resilience, and empower communities and Indigenous groups to lead recovery in fire-affected areas.

Together, these efforts supported 85 projects with over \$12 million in funding.

Your support enabled a swift response, saving the lives of our native animals, restoring habitats and giving Australia's wildlife a fighting chance.

Thanks to your generous support, here's what was achieved:



EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION

WWF-Australia partnered with Indigenous communities to co-design conservation approaches that respect Traditional Knowledge and cultural values. This included on-Country workshops, such as those with the Gudjuda Aboriginal Corporation, that built skills in ecological monitoring, GIS mapping and sensor camera use. These collaborations ensured more inclusive conservation outcomes and strengthened community leadership in species recovery.



EMERGENCY WILDLIFE RESPONSE AT SCALE

44 projects and \$5 million invested to support over 40 wildlife care groups. More than 700 vets were trained in emergency animal care, and mobile wildlife hospitals treated over 2,100 animals, including 119 threatened species.



BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK OF CARE

A network of 372 wildlife carers and vets was formed to strengthen Australia's capacity for future wildlife emergencies.



CREATING SAFE HAVENS AND RESTORING HABITAT

Across 41 projects with \$7.3 million in funding, over 145,000 hectares of habitat were restored. Three predator-free areas were set up, allowing species like eastern quolls and long-nosed potoroos to be reintroduced to areas where they had become locally extinct.



SCIENCE-LED RECOVERY AND INNOVATION

Over 1,200 sensor cameras tracked species recovery, guiding conservation decisions. AI processed more than 7 million images, and drone seeding technology was trialled for koala habitat restoration.



NEST BOX INSTALLATION

234 'Next Generation' nest boxes were installed in Tallaganda (NSW) and East Gippsland (Vic) for greater gliders, and 48 artificial nest hollows were placed on Kangaroo Island (SA) for the south-eastern glossy black cockatoo.

PHASE #2: HABITAT RESTORATION FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

Building resilient ecosystems for a changing climate.

As Australia moved from emergency response to long-term recovery, the second phase of the fund focused on restoring damaged landscapes, strengthening environmental protections and preparing communities for future climate challenges. This phase brought together four key themes: landscape restoration and protection, strengthen nature laws, global climate disaster emergency and stabilise climate change. Together, these themes supported 95 projects with over \$12 million in funding.

Your support helped restore what was lost, protect what remains, and build a more resilient future for nature and communities across Australia.

Here's what your generosity made possible:



RESTORING HABITAT AT SCALE

Over 1,200 hectares of koala habitat were restored and more than 306,000 trees planted for food and shelter. The Koalas Forever project restored 479 hectares in the Northern Rivers (NSW) region and created 20 new Land for Wildlife Agreements covering 1,565 hectares.



COORDINATED ACTION ACROSS PRIORITY LANDSCAPES

Through the Cores, Corridors and Koalas project, WWF-Au and partners planted trees, controlled weeds, and installed nest boxes across fire-affected regions in Qld, NSW and Vic, benefitting koalas, greater gliders, and yellow-bellied gliders.



STRENGTHENING NATURE LAWS

The bushfires showed us that Australia's environmental laws needed improvement. By working with more than 80 organisations, WWF-Au pushed for better protections. This led to six major policy reports, a Stop Work Order in Tallaganda State Forest to protect greater glider habitat, and improved legal status for native species.



FLAGSHIP REFORESTATION THROUGH TWO BILLION TREES

The Two Billion Trees initiative aims to save and grow two billion trees by 2030. It is already delivering large-scale reforestation, protecting koala habitat and advocating for stronger landclearing laws. This long-term work is part of WWF-Au's commitment to restoring nature at a large scale.



AMPLIFYING INDIGENOUS CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

Indigenous and Pasifika voices were amplified on the global stage through the Oceania First Voices (OFV) Forum, which brought together 98 leaders from five Pacific regions. The forum gave these communities a bigger voice in climate discussions, helped share Traditional Knowledge for climate solutions, supported global advocacy and provided flexible funding for community projects. To date, three OFV Regional Forums have been held, with the most recent in July 2025.



PARTNERSHIPS FOR CLEAN ENERGY

In collaboration with Original Power, WWF-Au supported Indigenous communities to participate in and benefit from the federal government's Solar Stimulus Package. This partnership helped build capacity and ensure equitable access to clean energy opportunities.



INNOVATING FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

WWF-Au developed Renewable Superpower Scorecards to benchmark clean energy leadership across states and launched the Koala Friendly Carbon model, which combines habitat restoration, carbon farming and landholder incentives.

PHASE #3: FUTURE-PROOFING AUSTRALIA

Empowering communities and reimagining conservation for the future.

The third and final phase of the fund focused on building a more resilient, inclusive and regenerative future. With 74 projects supported and over \$14 million in funding, this phase centred on two transformative themes: Indigenous engagement and innovation and engagement. It marked a shift in WWF-Au's role, from implementer to enabler, by embedding Traditional Knowledge systems into conservation, supporting bold community-led solutions, and fostering long-term partnerships grounded in trust and self-determination.

The fund and WWF-Au's bushfire response was more than a recovery effort—it was a bold step toward a future where conservation is inclusive, community-led and grounded in both science and culture. Your support made this possible.

The following impacts were only possible thanks to you:



DEEPENED PARTNERSHIPS WITH FIRST NATIONS

Through 34 projects, WWF-Au supported Indigenous fire management, on-Country Knowledge sharing and community-led monitoring. A standout initiative is the Indigenous Women Rangers Environmental Network (WREN), which established Indigenous women ranger coordinators in WA, NT and Qld, while also supporting women in NSW, ACT and Tas. WREN provides a culturally safe space for women to build skills, share Knowledge and lead environmental stewardship. It recognises the critical roles women play in caring for Country and ensures their voices and priorities are heard in shaping conservation and policy.



SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION

In partnership with Mimal Land Management, the University of Qld and the Strong Women for Healthy Country Network, WWF-Au launched a major research initiative on Indigenous women's leadership. Six women were trained as research associates, and with support from an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant, the project is expanding nationally to train more Indigenous researchers and produce a landmark publication.



CREATING LONG-TERM IMPACT

WWF-Au made an ongoing commitment to deliver 50% of projects in collaboration with Indigenous communities. This commitment, along with the hiring of an Indigenous content producer, appointment of an Indigenous Board member and the inclusion of Indigenous Australians among WWF-Au's Governors, has embedded invaluable perspectives into the organisation's leadership and operations.



CATALYSED BOLD, COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

40 projects were supported with seed funding and expert guidance to develop scalable, locally driven conservation models. These included initiatives such as [CERES Urban Forestry Service](#) and the [Biocultural Indicators project](#), which are now integrated into WWF-Au's ongoing work. A standout example is the [Marlinja Community Power Project](#), led by Original Power, to create an Indigenous-owned solar microgrid in the remote town of Marlinja. This enabled a transition from unreliable and costly diesel generators, which exacerbated social and economic inequities to renewable energy. The community-owned solar grid keeps benefits and power in the hands of communities, demonstrating how clean energy solutions can advance self-determination and long-term sustainability.



A FOCUS ON STRATEGY

Innovation is now core part of WWF-Au's strategy. Born from this phase was the [Innovate to Regenerate program](#), which supported scalable, locally driven solutions that addressed climate change, biodiversity loss and social equity.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The remarkable success of the fund is a testament to the power of partnerships and collaboration. Through the generous support of our donors and the tireless efforts of our partners, we have created positive and lasting impacts for wildlife, nature and communities across Australia. Every collaboration was carefully chosen to reflect shared values, deep expertise, and a commitment to equity and innovation. In a disaster of this scale, no one organisation can meet all of the needs across the country and these relationships helped us respond to the crisis.



© Peter Hammond

A cornerstone of our success has been the deep and meaningful partnerships formed with First Nations. Working closely with 85 Indigenous organisations, these partnerships have enriched our work and empowered communities to lead and participate in conservation efforts on their Country.

The fund also helped build powerful alliances that extended our reach and amplified our impact, exemplifying how collective advocacy can lead to real change.

With your support, we can continue to achieve great things and make a lasting difference. Thank you for being a part of this journey and for your unwavering support.



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CASE STUDY 1

SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE OF THE KANGAROO ISLAND DUNNART

In Phase #1, wildlife response, WWF-Au partnered with Kangaroo Island Land for Wildlife to protect the Critically Endangered Kangaroo Island dunnart. The fires devastated more than 90% of the dunnarts' habitat, burning over 211,000 hectares in just 49 days—nearly half of the island's total area. This rapid and widespread destruction posed an immediate threat to the survival of the species, prompting urgent conservation action.

With vital funding from our supporters, WWF-Au and partners acted quickly to launch a targeted monitoring and recovery program. Sensor cameras were installed and captured images of dunnarts in three new locations, offering hope and valuable insights into their behaviour and habitat use. The data gathered helped guide practical conservation strategies, including the installation of artificial shelters to protect the animals from predators and harsh conditions.

Partnerships with local landholders helped safeguard the dunnart and strengthened community engagement in conservation. By working closely with volunteers and landholders, WWF-Au built a network of committed individuals dedicated to protecting Kangaroo Island's unique biodiversity.

Your contributions made it possible to take these critical, practical measures to protect wildlife in the wake of ecological disasters and make a difference for the Kangaroo Island dunnart and other vulnerable species.

CASE STUDY 2

INDIGENOUS FIRE MANAGEMENT

Cultural Fire is a vital practice for both Indigenous communities and the broader Australian landscape. It is a form of caring for Country that strengthens cultural connection, supports biodiversity, builds ecological resilience and reduces fuel loads that contribute to extreme wildfires. Revitalising these practices is a matter of cultural survival and a critical strategy for sustainable land management and disaster risk reduction.

In early 2020, WWF-Au supported the Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) in restoring Cultural Fire practices across the South Coast of NSW. The region had been severely impacted, with over one million hectares burned across Bega Valley, Shoalhaven and Eurobodalla. Bega LALC had been leading this work since 2017, and with additional funding, they expanded their efforts, building strong partnerships with agencies like the Rural Fire Service, NSW Fire and Rescue, and local councils. These collaborations helped train

traditional fire practitioners and build local capacity for safer, more resilient land management.

In parallel, the Firesticks Alliance led a broader movement to embed Cultural Fire into conservation and recovery efforts. In Phase #2 of the fund, from late 2020 onwards, they delivered programs to First Nations communities that had previously struggled to access support. Their approach ensured that all interested Indigenous Peoples could reconnect with traditional fire practices. The program supported Yuin-led ecological monitoring in places like Murrah Flora Reserve and Biamanga National Park, using innovative tools such as drones and thermal imaging. Priorities were defined by the Firesticks Alliance, thus supporting self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. This work has strengthened connections to Country, raised awareness among local graziers and fire authorities and positioned WWF-Au as a trusted partner in community-led conservation.



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CASE STUDY 3

KOALAS FOREVER

One of the standout successes born from our bushfire response is the Koalas Forever program, a flagship effort dedicated to doubling the number of koalas across eastern Australia by 2050. The program was launched in response to the devastation of the bushfires, which affected over 60,000 koalas nationwide. In NSW alone, an estimated 5,000 koalas, around 17% of the population, were lost, and more than 1.9 million hectares of habitat were destroyed. These losses, combined with ongoing threats from habitat destruction and climate change, made urgent action essential.

A cornerstone of the program's success has been its partnerships with local communities, Traditional Owners and Indigenous ranger groups. The Koalas Forever Northern Rivers Recovery Hub, launched in 2023, has restored over 633 hectares of habitat and established 20 new Land for Wildlife Agreements. This work is guided by strong partnerships with groups, including the Jagun Alliance Aboriginal Corporation, Minyumai Land Holding Aboriginal Corporation and Githubul Rangers. These groups have led cultural burning, habitat restoration and knowledge-sharing activities that are central to the program's success.

Community involvement has been key. Local landholders and grassroots organisations like Bangalow Koalas have helped plant over 127,000 trees in the Northern Rivers. In January 2025, three koalas were spotted in a previously treeless field, just two years after restoration began, offering hope for the species' recovery.

Since its inception, Koalas Forever has facilitated the planting of more than 306,000 habitat and food trees, restored over 1,200 hectares of habitat, and reconnected vital wildlife corridors. With your continued support, Koalas Forever is helping ensure a thriving future for one of Australia's most iconic species. Your dedication has been instrumental in making this progress possible. The goal remains to double the koala population by 2050, and with continued support from our donors and partners, this vision is within reach.

MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF FUNDING

The fund attracted a total of A\$51 million in funding from various sources.

Funding was allocated across the eight program themes over five years (2020 to 2025). The highest proportion of funding was allocated equally to the Indigenous engagement as well as species recovery

and adaptation themes (19%), followed by the innovation and engagement theme (18%), then the landscape restoration and protection theme (14%).

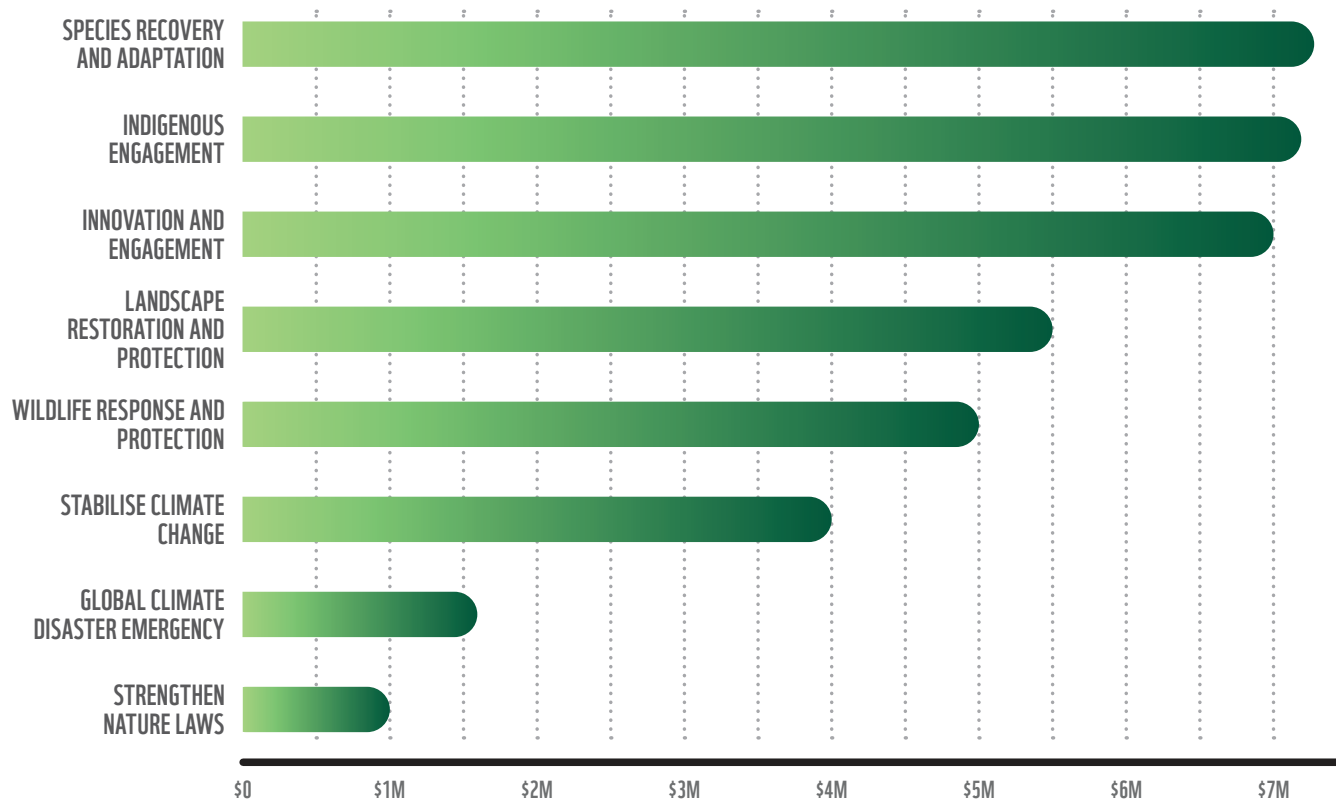
We organised our funding into three main phases to make the biggest impact possible.

PHASE #1: emergency response focusing on wildlife rescue and rehabilitation (immediate)

PHASE #2: protecting remaining wildlife habitat and restoring damaged landscapes (mid-term)

PHASE #3: long-term recovery focusing on building landscape resilience through large-scale ecosystem restoration (long-term).

FUNDING ALLOCATION BY PROGRAM THEME



Throughout the program, we adapted our funding as needs changed. Our flexible approach meant projects could adjust to challenges like floods and COVID. Working with partners and volunteers helped us multiply your impact for Australia's wildlife and wild places.

To ensure your donation had the most impact, WWF-Au checked that all of its partners receiving support from the fund met rigorous due diligence criteria, including: A reputation for efficiency, effectiveness, solvency and strong track record, capacity to scale response based on the donation (i.e. that any donation will lead to additional benefits); able to assist with science-based recovery in the future.



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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Australian Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund was born out of crisis and powered by generosity. Its legacy is one of transformation. In response to the bushfires, donors like you helped WWF-Au mobilise a large-scale, coordinated response that not only rescued wildlife and restored landscapes but also reshaped how we approach conservation in Australia. Now, as we close the fund, we're taking its most powerful ideas forward.



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Over five years, the fund supported 254 projects across eight key themes. It helped build new partnerships, trial innovative approaches and empower communities to lead their own regenerative solutions. These efforts laid the groundwork for our ambitious, long-term vision: Regenerate Nature by 2030.

Our current strategy is WWF-Au's bold commitment to healing Country, Sky and Saltwater—our three pillars of work shaped through deep engagement and listening on Giramay Country, where WWF staff collaborated with Indigenous Elders, rangers and community members. Our strategy draws directly from lessons and successes during the bushfire response.

Inclusive Conservation is embedded across our strategy, with all projects required to meet minimum Indigenous engagement and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) standards. Our long-term goal is for 50% of projects to be in collaboration with Indigenous communities and at least 20% of WWF-Au projects to be Indigenous-led, reflecting our commitment to equity, cultural safety and self-determination.

The fund also helped WWF-Au evolve as an organisation. It showed us the power of flexible funding, milestone-based delivery and co-designed projects. It highlighted the importance of cultural safety, staff well-being and adaptive management. By shifting our emphasis from direct implementation to an enabling role, we strengthened our position as a facilitator—building enduring partnerships and empowering community-led initiatives with long-term impact. This evolution was further shaped by the breadth of our collaborations, which span community groups, Indigenous organisations, businesses and innovators. The diversity of these partnerships and learned insights



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now guide how we work, not just in emergencies, but in everyday conservation.

Looking ahead, we're focused on scaling what works. That means continuing to restore habitats, protect threatened species and support Indigenous-led conservation. It means deepening our partnerships, investing in community resilience and advocating for stronger environmental protections. And it means staying ready for crises so that we can respond swiftly, strategically and with care.

Your support made all this possible. Thank you for standing with us in a time of crisis, and for helping shape a future where people and nature thrive together.



THE CRITICAL DECISIONS
WE MAKE TODAY WILL
SHAPE AUSTRALIA'S
TOMORROW.

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Working to sustain the natural
world for the benefit of people
and wildlife.

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WWF-Australia National office

Suite 3.01, Level 3,
45 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box 528
Gadigal Country

Tel: +1800 032 551
hello@wwf.org.au
[@WWF_Australia](https://www.facebook.com/WWF_Australia)
wwf.org.au