



Photo: Kristie Kearney / Wolgan Valley Eco Tours

ECOTOURISM AUSTRALIA'S BUSHFIRE RECOVERY POSITION STATEMENT

The significant impacts on Australia's natural assets from the 2019/20 bushfires have disproportionately affected the eco and nature-based tourism sector, as this industry is completely dependent on our well regarded and respected natural and cultural environment. Ten percent of our ECO certified members are in declared bushfire emergency areas and 100% of our members across Australia have been impacted by loss of bookings and revenue, or reputational damage.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR RECOVERY:

- **Scale.** While natural disaster recovery is not new to us or our sector, the scale, intensity and international impact of this catastrophe requires a significant national response for, and by, our industry.
- **Timeframe.** Natural disaster recovery requires both a quick response and a long-term view.
- **Opportunity.** Recovery should build back better to benefit communities, conservation and businesses.
- **Business survival.** Operators need support to survive until demand returns.
- **Partnerships.** Working together will produce more positive outcomes.

ECOTOURISM AUSTRALIA ADVOCATES FOR RECOVERY ACTIONS THAT:

- **Provide emergency financial relief measures** to eco and nature-based tourism operators, as regional Australia needs the industry to survive.
- **Offer flexibility in protected area licensing conditions** for affected commercial tour operators.
- **Build demand for nature-based regions and reassure the market** - e.g. by funding localised campaigns and offering tax deductions for domestic travel.
- **Develop bushfire recovery tourism products** - e.g. interpretation toolkits, guiding, citizen science and volunteering.
- **Rebuild communities as vibrant, resilient and sustainable tourism destinations** e.g. by using ECO Destination certification.
- **Repair and replace public and private infrastructure** using best practice techniques, designs and materials.
- **Hold national/regional bushfire recovery forum(s)** to share learnings, successes and plans for the future.
- **Provide significant long-term support for protected area agencies** to comprehensively manage the land, wildlife and cultural values.
- **Establish natural disaster plans and responses** to be better prepared for future significant events so that funds, support, and relief measures can be implemented immediately.

ECOTOURISM AUSTRALIA'S ROLE AND COMMITMENT

As the peak national body for eco and nature-based tourism, we will utilise our connections, resources and expertise to support tourism businesses and regions during the hardships and recovery, and lead development towards building an increasingly resilient and sustainable sector.

