

Media Release

RURAL SOLUTIONS SA



Rural Solutions SA

Headline: Bushfire rebuilding program a model for future

As Australia moves through its hazardous bushfire season, a timely report on managing such a catastrophe is eagerly awaited at the March 13-16th International Emergency Management Conference.

Helen Lamont, as Director of the Lower Eyre Peninsula Bushfire Reestablishment Program, was a key part of the Rural Solutions SA team that coordinated much of the region's re-establishment. In her conference paper, *Road from Recovery to Reestablishment*, she paints a picture of great challenge and trauma on all levels.

The Lower Eyre Peninsula bushfire was a tragic reminder of the speed and scale of such a disaster and the lives it affected.

The wildfire burned over 83,000ha in one day, crossing from one side of Eyre Peninsula to the other, consuming nearly everything in its path.

Tragically, nine lives were lost, over 42,000 livestock perished, more than 90 homes were destroyed and nearly \$17million worth of primary production lost. The total estimated bill was over \$100 million.

While the fire delivered an immediate blow to all in the area, the longer term impact was equally as challenging.

Helen Lamont and her team needed to work on several levels, working in collaboration with government agencies and the local community. Along with Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) and Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC), the team helped deal with the many short and medium term issues faced by landholders.

After helping them cope with the physical and environmental loss, as well as the emotional trauma – the team worked with its partners to help them handle the financial and continuing emotional stresses.

Short term responses included sending in teams of qualified staff to help assess stock and destroy stricken animals. Livestock agents worked fast to coordinate transport and agistment for surviving animals.

The PIRSA call centre managed a rush of calls - both offering assistance and requesting assistance. Requests and offers included stock feed, agistment, troughs, water pipes, fencing materials, bulldozers, volunteers and much more.

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Rural Solutions SA
corporate statement:

Making a difference for
our economy, natural
resources, and rural
communities

Rural Solutions SA is recognised as a leader in providing solutions across a range of demanding rural issues – affecting businesses, communities and the environment.

Our customers – include government departments (two of which are also shareholders in the business); companies from the food, wine, forestry and resources sectors; primary producers and many industry and regional bodies.

Our business – employs more than 260 rural consultants working closely with a range of partners to provide practical solutions.

Our commitment – is to work with customers to achieve positive change and beneficial outcomes.

Business contact:
Michy Kris, Business
Development & Marketing



Government
of South Australia

The Minister for Primary Industries also offered grants of up to \$2 million to assist landholders handle immediate costs, with funds being made available within 24 hours.

“The program highlighted the need to support people as individuals dealing in their own way with the tragedy,” said Helen, “and the value of wholesale collaboration”.

“The keys to success included continual focus on priorities; the continued supply of mental health information and trauma counselling; funding for initial re-establishment; sufficient facilitators for business advice and technical expertise; giving individual attention to landholders and their property and the commitment to long term support.”

Helen concluded that the overall package of support and services, including business planning workshops, helped grasp the potential opportunity to increase sustainability, viability and resilience of the affected communities.

For more info: Helen Lamont 1300 364 322, see: www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au/media/media_releases