



T h e H o n . T o n y B u r k e M P

24 JUNE 2009

M E D I A R E L E A S E

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

More support to help bushfire recovery in timber communities

The Rudd Government has committed \$94,000 to help establish a community support centre for families in the timber industry who are rebuilding homes and businesses destroyed in the Victorian bushfires.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke announced the funding to help Timber Communities Australia (TCA) run the Timber Community and Forest Industry Bushfire Recovery and Rebuilding Centre in Healesville.

The centre provides a specialised service to fire-affected people and businesses and will operate until November 2009 or until demand for its services ceases.

Staff will help people identify assistance measures available through industry associations, government agencies and other relief efforts.

“The Rudd Government is continuing to help families and businesses get back on their feet as part of the long-term recovery from the fires,” Mr Burke said.

“During my visits to fire-affected areas I have met with a range of local businesspeople, including those in the timber industry and farmers.

“Since the fires, the Government has announced a range of assistance measures including a \$51 million package with the Victorian Government to help businesses rebuild; freight and fodder subsidies and more than \$10 million through Caring for our Country to help farmers and other landholders recover.

“This assistance for Timber Communities Australia is another step forward.

“I acknowledge the resilience of the eastern Victoria forestry sector, which is working hard to rebuild after around 200,000 hectares of State forest were burnt.

“Around 18,000 hectares of private plantations were also burnt and current estimates show the timber industry lost around \$600 million in resources and economic activity.

“Australia’s forestry and forest products industries, including in eastern Victoria, support more than 120,000 direct jobs and underpin regional economies.”

Chief Executive Officer of Timber Communities Australia Jim Adams said he was grateful for the Government’s support.

“On behalf of TCA, we thank the Government for its support which will greatly enhance our capacity to deliver support to the local community,” he said.

Parliamentary Secretary for Bushfire Reconstruction Bill Shorten said the Federal Government was spending more than \$213 million on rebuilding Victoria after the devastating February fires.

“This grant is another example of the Federal Government working to help rebuild communities that were affected by these fires,” Mr Shorten said.

Timber Communities Australia is a not-for profit community association that draws its membership from Australia’s forestry community.

Other forestry-related groups such as the National Association of Forest Industries, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries, the Australian Forest Contractors Association Ltd and Timber Towns Victoria have expressed their support for the centre.