

2018/19 Tasmanian Bushfires Community Recovery Fund Evaluation Project Final Report



Acknowledgements

The project underpinning this report was conducted by the Disaster Resilience Research Group at the University of Tasmania by:

- ▶ **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR STEVEN CURNIN**
Director of the Disaster Resilience Research Group
- ▶ **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BENJAMIN BROOKS**
Director of the Disaster Resilience Research Group
- ▶ **EBBA HERRLANDER BIRGERSON**
Research Assistant at the Disaster Resilience Research Group

Overall direction was provided by the Project Steering Committee:

- ▶ **CHRISTOPHER HEARD**
Recovery Funding Coordinator, The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Office of Security and Emergency Management
- ▶ **ANGELA BARRINGTON**
Manager Community Development, Huon Valley Council
- ▶ **MICHELLE GLEDHILL**
Manager Economic Development, Huon Valley Council
- ▶ **PROFESSOR LISA GIBBS**
Director, Child & Community Wellbeing Unit, Centre for Health Equity, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne

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The input of all participants in preparing this document was of great benefit to the project team. However, the content of this report and its conclusions remain the joint responsibility of the team.

Disaster Resilience Research Group, February 2022



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Table of contents

Executive summary	2
Background	5
..... Governance	6
..... Recovering from concurrent disasters	6
Approach	9
..... Framework	9
..... Case studies	12
..... Interviews	12
..... Surveys	13
Findings	14
References	16
Appendix 1: Case studies	19
..... Dover Green Space	20
..... Geeveston Township	22
..... Timber Industry	24
..... Tahune Adventures	26
Appendix 2: Survey data	29



■ Above: Huon Valley. [ANDREW WILSON](#)

■ Cover image: Dover township. [HUON VALLEY COUNCIL](#)

Executive summary

As the effects of climate change continue to accelerate and become more observable, there have been more striking cases of communities suffering from concurrent disasters. Tasmania offers an example of this with communities recovering from the bushfires of 2018-19 while simultaneously responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to understand the impacts of concurrent disasters on community recovery processes and how these can be considered in the design of future recovery programs.

This project was aligned with the outcomes-focused intent of the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements and explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the intended recovery outcomes of the jointly-funded Community Recovery Fund using the Huon Valley region in Southern Tasmania as a case study. These intended recovery outcomes are:

- ▶ Local businesses are supported by tourism opportunities promoted in fire-affected areas
- ▶ Businesses and communities have access to appropriate recovery assistance and supports
- ▶ Communities have access to recreational heritage and natural assets of importance
- ▶ Community infrastructure is restored with appropriate consideration to changing needs and best practice

The Huon Valley region experienced significant social and economic impacts due to the concurrent disasters over the last 3 years. This project considered these outcomes broadly in the COVID-19 context with reference to the 2018-19 bushfire recovery experience, recognising that the trajectory of recovery through concurrent events precludes an analysis of 2018-19 bushfire recovery in isolation.

The community that participated in this project revealed that there were significant socioeconomic challenges in the Huon Valley region during this period. These included not only the financial challenges experienced by businesses that sustained physical damage to infrastructure from the 2018-19 bushfires, but also

In the future, adopting a truly grass roots community led approach to recovery in the context of concurrent disasters can only enhance societal disaster resilience.

the knock-on-effect this had on people's jobs. This was compounded by a sharp decline in the region's tourism industry as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent border closures. These financial consequences led to social challenges such as increased uncertainty and isolation.

Nevertheless, the community, both businesses and individuals, rose to the challenge and identified new opportunities. Local businesses demonstrated support for their employees and embraced new models to maintain and diversify their workforce, leveraging the financial support offered by Government. Importantly, these concurrent disasters also enhanced social cohesion that, in turn, revitalised the community's affinity with the local natural and cultural environments.

Three out of the four Community Recovery Fund outcomes were identified in this project. Tourism opportunities were promoted in the region and financial assistance was provided to local businesses and the community, which also facilitated the enhancement of local natural assets. Encouragingly, the Huon Valley community that participated in this project identified that both their preparedness for future bushfires and pandemics had increased significantly after experiencing these concurrent disasters. This project has highlighted that there are many factors that interact and influence disaster recovery, but the strength of the affected community is paramount to any recovery efforts. In the future, adopting a truly grass roots community led approach to recovery in the context of concurrent disasters can only enhance societal disaster resilience.



- Above: Municipal recovery meeting. **TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT**
- Below: Deep End Farm in the Huon Valley. **DAVID ROLPH**

- Above: Governor General thanks Huon Valley community. **HUON VALLEY COUNCIL**





- Left: Tahune bushfire. [TFS](#)
- Below: Launch of the Arve Big Tree Augmented Reality initiative. [HUON VALLEY COUNCIL](#)

- Below: Tasmania Fire Service crew. [WARREN FREY / TFS](#)



Background

On 9 April 2019, the Prime Minister approved a Community Recovery Fund of up to \$9.9 million under Category C of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The Community Recovery Fund is jointly funded by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments on a 50:50 basis, contributing up to \$4.95 million each.

These intended recovery outcomes are:

- ▶ Local businesses are supported by tourism opportunities promoted in fire-affected areas
- ▶ Businesses and communities have access to appropriate recovery assistance and supports
- ▶ Communities have access to recreational heritage and natural assets of importance
- ▶ Community infrastructure is restored with appropriate consideration to changing needs and best practice

Under the joint funding agreement, funds were allocated for an evaluation of the Community Recovery Fund. The intention at the time the Community Recovery Fund was established was to complete this evaluation during the 2020-21 financial year, when most projects supported by the Community Recovery Fund were due to be substantially completed.

The occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic from late in the 2019-20 financial year required a significant reallocation of Tasmanian Government resources, disrupting the scoping and design of the evaluation. More significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted the community recovery being supported by the Community Recovery Fund. Resource and skills shortages and restrictions on activities forced Community Recovery Fund projects to be delayed or adjusted. In addition, communities affected by the 2018-19 bushfires have local economics that are heavily reliant on agriculture and tourism, sectors that were hit hard by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Red Cross recovery efforts. TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT



The Tasmanian and Australian Governments, in collaboration with relevant local governments, supported project owners to deliver the intended measures under the Community Recovery Fund. However, they also recognise that the recovery trajectory of communities affected by the 2018-19 bushfires was significantly changed by the concurrent event of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this has implications for the meaningful evaluation of the Community Recovery Fund's intended outcomes.

A modified scope of the evaluation for this project was developed by the Office of Security and Emergency Management at the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet in consultation with the Australian Government. The Tasmanian and Australian Government negotiated to undertake a research project rather than an evaluation of specific measures under the Community Recovery Fund, noting that identifying the effects of specific recovery measures would not be possible in the context of the concurrent event.

This project explored the impacts of COVID-19 on recovery outcomes for the communities affected by the 2018-19 bushfires, with a focus on communities in the Huon Valley region which experienced significant social and economic impacts. This project provides valuable learnings regarding the impacts of concurrent disasters on community recovery processes and how these can be considered in the design of future recovery programs. While focusing on a specific region in Tasmania, the authors envisage that this project will provide nationally relevant findings valuable to other jurisdictions regarding the impacts of concurrent disasters and how communities recover.



■ Boiler feedstock shed adjacent to veneer mill at the Southwood wood processing site. PHOTOGRAPHER / TFS

Governance

A steering committee was established to provide governance and oversight of the project. Members of the steering committee represented the following organisations:

- ▶ The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Office of Security and Emergency Management
- ▶ Huon Valley Council
- ▶ University of Melbourne
- ▶ University of Tasmania

The University of Melbourne were invited to join the steering committee to provide subject matter expertise based on their 10-years Beyond Bushfires research project.

The steering committee met on a quarterly basis and the chair was rotated between the four organisations. The following topics were discussed at each steering group meeting:

- ▶ Project milestones
- ▶ Key risk for the project
- ▶ Monitoring and reporting

Comprehensive minutes from all steering group meetings were distributed to the members.

Recovering from concurrent disasters

A disaster is a collective stress event, occurring at a community level, that overwhelms the response capability of that community. It is physical, psychological, and social (Winkworth et al., 2009), often including destruction of property, injury and/or loss of life, which negatively affects a large group of people. Disasters can trigger disruption to key societal features, like social networks, community cohesion, jobs and income, food supplies, goods and services, transportation, and communication, with negative flow-on effects for communities and individuals. These events can induce psychological and emotional stress to individuals, families, and communities, which can produce adverse short- and long-term outcomes. For example, research has reported poor mental wellbeing after disasters with high prevalence of psychological problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Norris et al., 2002). The consequences of disasters can continue for significant periods of time (Winkworth et al., 2009), but these events can also produce positive growth and make room for new opportunities and possibilities, stronger social cohesion, resilience, and fuller appreciation of life.

Local communities are the first and last responders to any disasters and play the most important role at each stage of the disaster cycle (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004). As such, communities need to be an integral part of the recovery process.



■ Firefighters taking a break. WARREN FREY / TFS

Disaster recovery

Disaster recovery is both an outcome and a process (Winkworth et al., 2009) and many factors can impact on the community after a traumatic event. Recovery is a holistic and interrelated process: social recovery links with rebuilding of infrastructure, economic activity, and culture (Tierney & Oliver-Smith, 2012). It should be driven by the affected community, and the role of community members in recovery and resilience needs to be recognised throughout the process (Pescaroli, 2018). Local persons have greater insight to the community's context and needs, can facilitate the community's understanding of processes, function as mediators, and are experts on how to provide assistance (Miller & Pescaroli, 2018). Community-led recovery utilises a framework of 'community capitals' that interact with one another and influences recovery. Recovery capitals include the following elements: natural, social, financial, cultural, political, built, and human.

The natural environment can pose barriers to recovery, such as lack of service in remote locations (Sorensen & Epps, 1993), but connection to nature can increase post-disaster mental health and wellbeing (Block et al., 2019; Boon, 2014). Similarly, social support and connection to the community, such as involvement in community groups, can enhance recovery, wellbeing, and mental health (Aldrich, 2012; Iwasaki, Sawada & Aldrich, 2017; van Kessel, Gibbs & MacDougall, 2014). Financial assistance is necessary but should be responsive to local needs and accessible in a timely and sufficient manner in order to be helpful (Dibley et al., 2019; van Kessel et al. 2014). Cultural cohesion, shared history, and a sense of collective identity can also facilitate recovery (Moreton, 2016; van Landingham, 2017). It is imperative that the process is community-led and incorporates community participation, knowledge, and agency, as local decision-making and community voice produce better recovery outcomes (Himes-Cornell et al., 2018; van Kessel et al., 2014). Physical damage to infrastructure can impact wellbeing, a community's sense of identity and connection, as well as financial security, and rebuilding is vital to re-establish routines and a sense of place (Gibbs et al., 2015; van Kessel et al., 2014). Finally, providing support to others, for example through volunteering, is another activity that can empower individuals in their recovery, which needs recognition and support from governments (Winkworth et al., 2009).

2018-2019 Tasmanian bushfires

The summer leading up to and during the 2018-19 bushfires was one of the hottest and driest summers in history. January was Tasmania's (and Australia) hottest month on record (Hague, 2021), which contributed to the long-lived bushfires. Dry lightning on 15 January in Tasmania ignited 70 bushfires, and a bushfire near Riveaux Road in Southern Tasmania spread rapidly towards the Huon Valley region. Geeveston and other areas of the Huon Valley were threatened for several days in January and February 2019. On 24 January 2019 an evacuation centre was set up in Huonville, which remained open for nearly two weeks and accommodated up to 700 people daily (Keating & Handmer, 2020). Additional firefighters and support personnel were brought in from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and New Zealand to support the fire crews from Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service, and Sustainable Timber Tasmania. Multiple, large bushfires burned over 200,000 hectares across the western half of Tasmania from the end of December 2018 until early March 2019, representing 2.6% of Tasmania, and 95,000 hectares burnt in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. There were no deaths due to the bushfires, but some deaths, illnesses and injuries were attributed to the smoke (Hague, 2020). Six houses, along with several sheds and outbuildings, were destroyed in this disaster. The bushfires impacted on individuals, the community, businesses, and entire industries. Individuals reported adverse mental health, with persons reporting that the length of the event and the evacuation was traumatic (Keating & Handmer, 2020). Businesses closed due to the impact of the bushfires, with accumulating effects on both business owners and employees. There were substantial impacts on the tourism, forestry, wine, and honey industries, with disruption to forestry operations, the destruction of the Tahune Airwalk – a major tourism drawcard for Southern Tasmania, and smoke tainting grapes and honey in the Huon Valley region.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic first came to light in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Australia confirmed its first case on 25 January 2020 in Victoria, and Tasmania's first case was documented on 2 March 2020, with its first death recorded on 30 March 2020. On 17 March 2020, Tasmania declared a public health emergency. The state government imposed restrictions on social gatherings, reasons to leave the home, and a brief 6-week lockdown, followed by a more recent snap lockdown in October 2021. Tasmania closed its borders to all non-residents on 20 March 2020 and borders remained shut to all other states until October 2020, when they reopened to some jurisdictions. Many of the restrictions were eased from June 2020, except for social distancing and hand sanitising. While Tasmania experienced low case numbers until the end of December 2020, and only two short lockdowns, the state government was swift in implementing restrictions and border closures in response to national outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen the disruption to schools and universities, with a move to online learning and home schooling; aged care facilities; restaurants; sporting events; and businesses (PESRAC, 2020). This has also included the move to online service delivery for essential services. The latter has provided greater access and flexibility for some Tasmanians, but for others it created challenges due to low digital literacy levels, and also removed connection with other humans (PESRAC, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the mental health and wellbeing for many people. While Australia has, relatively speaking, had low case numbers, research indicates that anxiety and stress can be brought on through media reporting and perception of risk (Blendon et al., 2004). Further to this, mental health decline can also be a result of losing personal autonomy, social connectedness, and income (Brooks et al., 2020), and a preliminary study indicate increased alcohol consumption during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (Neill et al., 2020). Recovery from a major traumatic event like COVID-19 is particularly challenging as its process is not linear: there is no clear beginning, middle, and end. Different rules and information between Australian states and territories can lead to confusion (Berger & Reupert, 2020). In addition, feelings of uncertainty can be brought on as not everyone will reach 'recovery' at the same time. Many Australians experienced catastrophic bushfires in the months preceding the pandemic, which further compounds feelings of distress (Berger & Reupert, 2020).

Concurrent disasters

Concurrent disasters, or multi-hazard events, are events that overlap in time and space before recovery is achieved from a previous event (de Ruiter et al., 2020; Quigley et al., 2020). Vulnerability to the subsequent hazard can depend on the amount of time that lapses between events, and the impacts from two consecutive events are different to the impacts of two static events. The impacts of a second event build on the impacts from the first event and is therefore usually greater than for two separate events. Successful recovery from concurrent disasters is reliant on increased communication, trust between the public and government, and continuing support to and from responders' recovery (Jerolleman, Laska & Torres, 2021). In Australia, the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020) advised that concurrent disasters will become more frequent and further supports that each event can add to the damage caused by a previous disaster, resulting in compounding impacts on communities. It further suggests that disaster risks need to assess the very real risks of multiple hazards occurring concurrently, rather than at an individual hazard level. Crucially for this project, recent research has highlighted the need for a stronger focus on the recovery process from concurrent disasters (Quinn et al., 2020).



Approach

There is little evidence exploring how communities recover from one disaster while simultaneously responding to another disaster. Therefore, to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the recovery outcomes of the 2018-19 bushfires, the project adopted two different but intrinsically linked data collection methods.

The first type of data collection was a series of in-depth interviews with members of the Huon Valley community that sought to understand how the community felt they were impacted by the 2018-19 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic.

The second type of data collection was a survey that was distributed to the Huon Valley community that sought to understand how the broader community felt they were impacted by the 2018-19 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. This survey allowed for a wider population of the affected community to express their views and contribute to the project.

Ethics to conduct this project was approved and granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network (Project ID: 24921).



■ Huon Valley recovery volunteers. TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT

Framework

The project used an established framework to guide the development of the questions for the in-depth interviews and the survey. The Recovery Capitals (ReCap) framework was used for this purpose. The ReCap framework uses the concept of 'capitals' to understand how factors interact and influence recovery in disasters, and how resources can be utilised to support wellbeing. ReCap uses a community capitals lens consisting of seven capitals to understand wellbeing outcomes: (1) Natural; (2) Social; (3) Financial; (4) Cultural; (5) Political; (6) Built; and (7) Human. Under Tasmanian Government policy frameworks such as the State Recovery Plan (2021), recovery is managed under four domains: (1) Social; (2) Economic; (3) Infrastructure; and (4) Environmental. The following table illustrates the synergies between ReCap and the broader policy context.

ReCap	Tasmanian Government Recovery Domains
Natural	Environmental
Social	Social
Financial	Economic
Cultural	Social
Political	Social
Built	Infrastructure
Human	Social

Each of the ReCaps used in this project can be applied at an individual level, a family/household level, and a community level, which interact with each other on local, regional, and macro levels. What follows is a brief synopsis of each capital as per the ReCap framework.

Natural

Natural capital refers to natural resources and beauty, and the overall health of ecosystems. This includes air, land, soil, water, minerals, energy, weather, geographic location, flora, fauna, and biodiversity. Damage to nature and the surrounding environment can have a knock-on effect for people living in an area impacted by a disaster as they may no longer feel connected to the environment, particularly for persons with strong connection to land, such as local Aboriginal people. This lack of connection to the environment can result in people relocating from the area. Alternatively, many people also feel better when they spend time in the natural environment, even if the environment is only commencing its recovery from a disaster.

Social

Social capital refers to the connections, reciprocity and trust among people and groups. Three types of social capital exist: bonding (strong ties between people, such as family and friends), bridging (looser ties between a broader range of people), and linking (ties connecting people with those in power, such as decision-makers). Disaster recovery is strongly influenced by how much connection and participation there is within affected communities, and social ties can be beneficial after significant events. Community cohesion can enable cooperation within and between disaster affected communities, supporting them to respond to the needs of different community members.

Financial

Financial capital refers to the availability of and access to resources, including savings, income, assets, investments, credit, insurance, grants, donations, loans, consumption and distribution of goods and services, employment, and economic activity. Financial strain may contribute to reduced wellbeing and mental health after disasters. Those impacted by a disaster can suffer from financial hardship, so it is important that people have access to not only their regular income, but any savings, insurance pay-outs, government grants, and donations.

Cultural

Cultural capital refers to the way people understand and know the world and how they act within it. It includes ethnicity, habits, language, stories, traditions, spirituality, heritage, symbols, etc. People in communities identify with a range of diverse groups such as the local Aboriginal people, different ethnic backgrounds such as migrants, persons with disabilities, distinct cultures or religious affiliations, and different sexual identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. It is important that people feel included as cultural cohesion and shared history can enhance recovery.

Political

Political capital refers to the power to influence decision-making in relation to resource access and distribution, and the ability to engage external entities to achieve local goals. Community-led recovery is best achieved when community voices are heard, and local decision-making is complemented and supported (rather than overpowered) by external groups such as governments and agencies.

Built

Built capital refers to the design, building and maintenance of physical infrastructure. Physical damage can impact assets such as homes, vehicles, fencing, equipment, machinery, sheds, or public institutions such as schools or community halls, and critical infrastructure such as information technology, communications such as mobile and internet reception, water, and energy. Such damage after a disaster can impact the wellbeing of communities. Physical infrastructure can be critical to preparedness, response, and recovery.

Human

Human capital refers to people's skills and capabilities, including the ability to access resources and knowledges. It includes education, physical and mental health, physical ability, knowledge from lived experience, and leadership capabilities. This can influence how persons are affected and any change in that status can affect the speed and quality of the recovery process.

The Community Recovery Fund and the ReCap Framework

The ReCap framework analysed the Huon Valley community's recovery in the context of the 2018-19 Bushfires Community Recovery Fund. Measures under the four Community Recovery Fund objectives were designed to support recovery across multiple recovery domains, and the objectives are also strongly aligned to the ReCap framework.

Community Recovery Fund Objective	Examples of measures to address objective	Alignment with ReCap
Local businesses are supported by tourism opportunities promoted in fire-affected areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Economic and Community Recovery Grants program ▶ "Love Autumn in the South" marketing campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Natural ▶ Financial
Businesses and communities have access to appropriate recovery assistance and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Economic and Community Recovery Grants program ▶ Forestry Recovery Officer ▶ Economic Recovery Officer ▶ Community Recovery Officer ▶ Psychological first aid training and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Social ▶ Financial ▶ Cultural ▶ Political ▶ Built ▶ Human
Communities have access to recreational heritage and natural assets of importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Economic and Community Recovery Grants program ▶ Restoration and reinstatement of assets within and around the Southwest National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Natural ▶ Social ▶ Cultural
Community infrastructure is restored with appropriate consideration to changing needs and best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Economic and Community Recovery Grants program ▶ Restoration and reinstatement of assets within and around the Southwest National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Natural ▶ Social ▶ Cultural ▶ Built



■ Above: Tahune fire. WARREN FREY / TFS

Case studies

Through consultation with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Huon Valley Council it was decided that the project would encompass four case studies to capture the recovery process and outcomes. The four case studies were chosen based on discussions with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Huon Valley Council, who helped identify potential sites. It was agreed by the Steering Committee that the following four case studies would be used for this project:

1. Dover Green Space
2. Geeveston township
3. Timber industry
4. Tahune Adventures

All four case studies received some type of Government funding. The Dover Green Space project received direct funding under the Economic and Community Recovery Grants program. Two projects funded under the Economic and Community Recovery Grants program were in the township of Geeveston or its immediate vicinity, and members of the Geeveston community had access to broader community recovery support. Forestry and Economic Recovery Officers were appointed under the Community Recovery Fund to support the local timber industry. Finally, Tahune Adventures received direct support from the Tasmanian and Australian Governments and is a key part of the tourism sector supported by the advertising campaign under the Community Recovery Fund.



■ Evacuation Centre in Huonville. TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT

Interviews

Semi-structured interview questions were developed to identify changes in recovery outcomes through different timelines. The timelines were:

- ▶ before the 2018-19 bushfires
- ▶ after the bushfires
- ▶ before the COVID-19 pandemic
- ▶ and now

A total of five questions were developed to facilitate discussion and each question included prompts based on the ReCap framework.

A list of potential participants was provided to the project team by the Huon Valley Council and contact was made with each participant through phone and email to assess their willingness to participate. The project involved members of the research team embedding themselves in the local community and staying in the Huon Valley for a week to conduct face-to-face interviews. Any interviews that could not be conducted during this period were conducted at a time convenient to the participants over the phone and face to face in Hobart. Interviewees also provided names of other persons who might be interested in participating. A total of 23 people were interviewed. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and data was de-identified prior to the thematic analysis.

The interview data was analysed to identify common themes within each of the four case studies. The final four case studies provide a glimpse of how the community of the Huon Valley recovered from the 2018-19 bushfires while simultaneously responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Included in each case study (located in the appendix) are direct quotes provided by the community members involved in this project. Each case study aligns to several capitals in the ReCap framework.

TABLE 1. How the case studies align to the ReCap Framework

Case study	Recovery Capitals						
	Natural	Social	Financial	Cultural	Political	Built	Human
Dover Green Space	✓	✓		✓			
Geeveston township		✓	✓				
Timber industry			✓			✓	✓
Tahune Adventures			✓		✓		✓

Surveys

A survey was developed based on the ReCap framework and included statements that sought to explore the recovery from the 2018-19 bushfires and their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys were distributed online, via the Huon Valley Council’s social media platforms and local community Facebook groups, and hard copies were provided to certain locations throughout the Huon Valley (Geeveston, Dover, Huonville). The research team also visited Geeveston on two occasions and attended two community events where they encouraged engagement with the survey and provided QR codes that linked to the online survey. These mixed methods to recruit survey participants resulted in a total of 85 responses to the survey. The interpretation of the survey data (located in the appendix) includes a summary of the question from the survey followed by a summary of the results.



■ Geeveston Feast. OSBORNE IMAGES



■ Tahune fire. WARREN FREY / TFS

Findings

There is no doubt that the concurrent disasters of the 2018-19 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic have had an impact on the Huon Valley community. The personal stories from the participants interviewed for this project, combined with the information provided by the broader community in the Huon Valley region via the survey, not only identified social and economic challenges in these trying times, but also opportunities.

The economic impact of the 2018-19 bushfires certainly affected businesses in the Huon Valley region. Some local businesses, such as those in the timber industry and Tahune Adventures, suffered financial losses due to the damage of their physical infrastructure during the bushfires. Fortunately, there was minimal damage to community infrastructure in the affected region. However, businesses in the region also suffered additional financial losses as they were unable to operate immediately after the bushfires due to the damage sustained. In addition, some of these larger local businesses and increasingly, smaller local business operators, suffered a loss in revenue due to reduced tourist activities in the surrounding region after the bushfires. Local businesses were supported by Tasmanian Government tourism campaigns such as the travel voucher scheme that encouraged Tasmanians to holiday in their home state, thus contributing to the outcomes of the Community Recovery Fund. The financial implications of the local businesses also had a direct impact on the local community. Due to a lack of operations and reduced number of tourists, businesses were forced to lay off staff resulting in job losses for some members of the local community.

Unfortunately, financial hardship for the Huon Valley community, and especially those living in the township of Geeveston, did not end following the 2018-19 bushfires. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns meant that just as some businesses in the tourist industry were beginning to get back to normal, they once again had to reduce their operations due to a lack of tourists.

A large majority of the community participating in this project stated that they suffered from reduced hours because of both disasters. In addition, people's financial position was very strained during COVID-19 compared to the bushfires. This worsening of the community's financial situation could be contributed to the long-term impacts of recovering from one disaster while simultaneously responding to another disaster.

Nevertheless, businesses also used these challenging conditions as an opportunity to support their employees and the affected communities by maintaining a skeleton workforce where practical, encompassing new models to diversify their workforce, and leveraging the financial support offered by Government.

The role of Federal and State Governments and the financial assistance provided was imperative to overcoming the financial challenges associated with both disasters. Businesses and communities had access to appropriate recovery assistance and support as per the outcomes of the Community Recovery Fund. Although financial assistance mechanisms were welcomed by the community, they were not without their own issues. Processes to seek financial assistance after the bushfires sometimes stigmatised those requiring support as they had to queue in public to receive any benefits, thus highlighting their situation to other members in the local community. Conversely, during COVID-19 these processes were online, yet community members participating in this project indicated that they were more satisfied with the financial assistance received following the bushfires than during the pandemic. This could have been due to many members of the community, especially the older population, having reduced digital literacy skills. The economic implications from the concurrent disasters of the 2018-19 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic invariably impacted the community's social circumstances.

Undeniably, during the recovery from the 2018-19 bushfires and throughout the response to COVID-19 pandemic, the community in the Huon Valley region experienced social challenges. Members of the community involved in this project identified financial

Targeted information provided in the preparedness phase for any potential future disaster should include details of how the recovery efforts will occur.

hardship and social isolation that challenged the way the community survived. However, the participants that were involved in this project also saw this as an opportunity to increase people's belongingness to the community where they live. Already a tight-knit community, the residents of the Huon Valley enhanced their support networks during these concurrent disasters by 'looking out for each other'. People receiving support from someone in their local community increased after the 2018-19 bushfires and this continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrating enhanced social cohesion. This created a real sense of place amongst the community that created opportunities to pursue initiatives that would not only benefit the community's social connectedness, but their affinity with their local natural and cultural environments.

Community concerns about the landscape and environment significantly increased after the 2018-19 bushfires and was maintained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This presented some communities with the opportunity to rejuvenate projects. With Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments funding, the community in Dover were able to bring to life a project that sought to capture the natural environment whilst encompassing the local indigenous heritage, through the Dover Green Space. This project achieves another objective of the Community Recovery Fund by providing communities access to local natural recreational facilities.

The opportunities identified throughout this project demonstrate what local communities, businesses, and Governments can collectively achieve to enhance recovery after and during concurrent disasters. However, upon evaluating the Huon Valley community's experiences after the 2018-19 bushfires and during the COVID-19 pandemic, many participants in this project perceived that the influence of community recovery was more influenced by external parties than community groups. This would support contemporary approaches to disaster recovery that seek to embrace a truly grass roots community led approach (Australian Red Cross, 2021; Quinn et al., 2020).

Importantly, this project offers a brief insight into the Huon Valley's preparedness for future disasters. Those involved in this project felt that their bushfire preparedness had improved significantly after the 2018-19 bushfires. This affords the opportunity for local communities, businesses, and Governments to collectively adopt more targeted bushfire mitigation and preparedness activities soon after the bushfires in tandem with a long-term strategy (Winkworth et al., 2009). Targeted information provided in the preparedness phase for any potential future disaster should include details of how the recovery efforts will occur. This can assist in helping the community understand theirs and others' responses to trauma resulting from the disaster that can contribute to reducing levels of stress in the disaster recovery period (Randrianarisoa, Richardson, Brady, & Leguy 2021). Equally, community members also indicated that their preparedness for a pandemic was extremely low prior to COVID-19 but has now increased, highlighting a requirement for the continuation of proactive, consistent, Government driven health information (Berger & Reupert, 2020). This supports recent research investigating the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia that identified coordinated public health campaigns promoting both mental and physical health in a clear, accessible, and factual manner, would have been helpful earlier in this pandemic (Berger & Reupert, 2020).

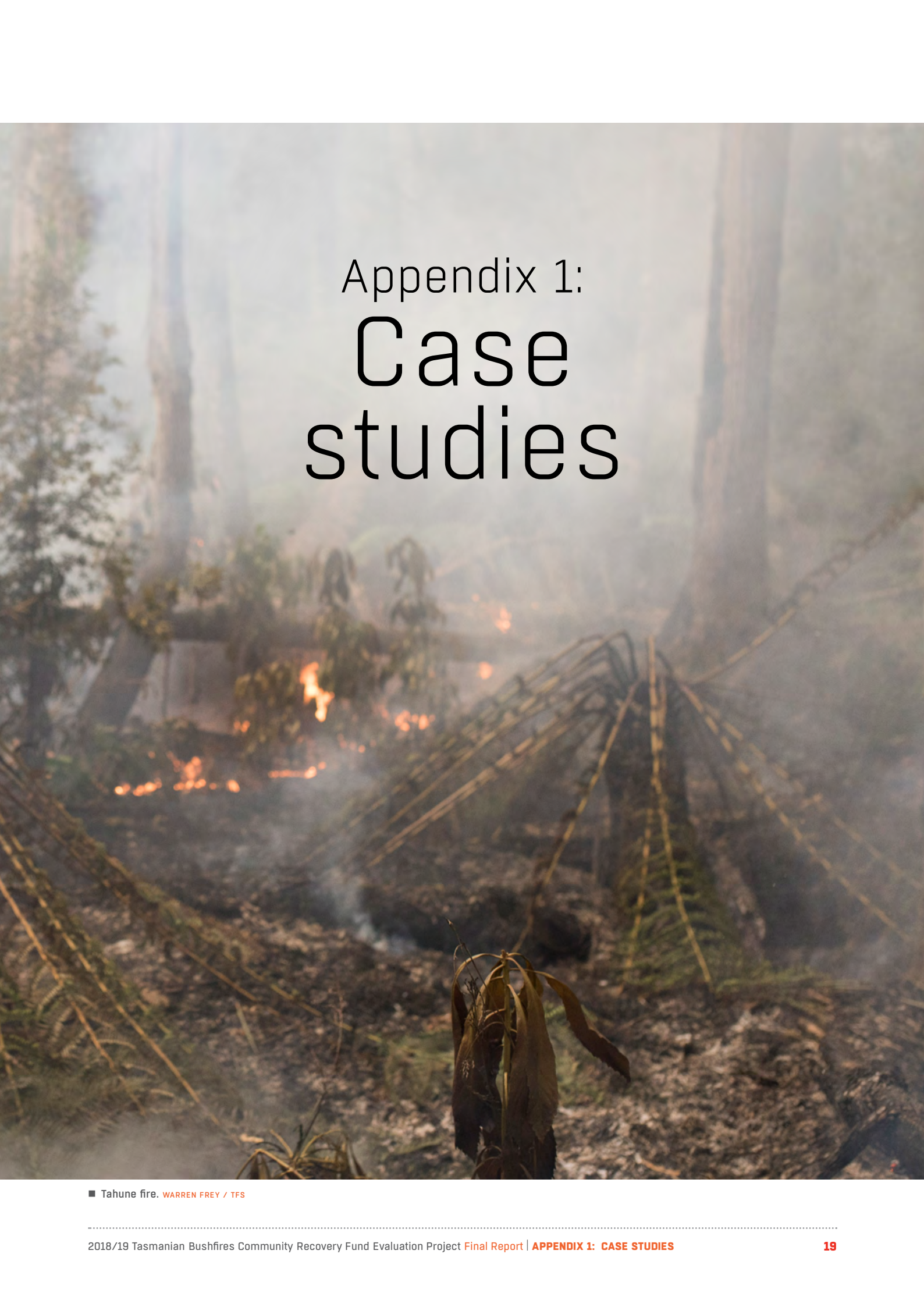
Evaluating the socioeconomic implications of a community that has endured the concurrent disasters of the 2018-19 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic is critical as disasters become more frequent because of climate change. Listening to those that are living through the recovery of one disaster while responding to another disaster has highlighted the challenges faced by the community, but also the opportunities it has created. Learning about the impacts of concurrent disasters on community recovery processes, and how these can be considered in the design of future recovery programs, will contribute to enhancing disaster resilience, both locally in Tasmania and across other Australian jurisdictions.

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A photograph of a forest fire. The scene is filled with thick, grey smoke that obscures much of the background. In the foreground, there are charred tree trunks and some green ferns. In the middle ground, several bright orange flames are visible, rising from the ground. The overall atmosphere is one of destruction and danger.

Appendix 1: Case studies

■ Tahune fire. WARREN FREY / TFS

DOVER GREEN SPACE

Dover is a small town located in Southern Tasmania. It has a population of 486 and is an 80-minute drive from Hobart. Dover is primarily a fishing village, with abalone, crayfish, and the largest Atlantic salmon fish farm in the Southern Hemisphere. The region is also suitable for fruit growing, particularly apple orchards. Dover sits at the head of Esperance Bay and provides a base for exploring the south-west Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, including Hartz Mountains National Park, Hastings Caves and Thermal Springs, as well as Ida Bay historic railway.

Recently, Dover has had to recover from the 2018-19 Tasmanian bushfires and simultaneously respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These concurrent disasters have seen Dover physically cut off with the only road access from Geeveston forcibly shut during the bushfires. The town has experienced continued isolation with the closure of Tasmania's borders in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in a significant loss of tourism and impacts on businesses. Nevertheless, during these trying times the community of Dover has also demonstrated the strength of social connectedness and created an opportunity to use their cultural heritage to enhance the local natural environment with the development of the Dover Green Space:

That [Dover Green Space] was one of those little blessing in disguise. We wouldn't have gotten the money to do that if it wasn't for that [Community Recovery Fund]. The space has been on the radar for community groups for more than a decade. We now have a pleasant space.

Before the 2018-19 Tasmanian bushfires, Dover was thriving economically with increasing business growth from tourism, salmon farming, and aquaculture. Fortunately for the community, employment in these industries had always been available. Most shops and cafés in Dover were open and the community was well serviced.

The Esperance Medical Centre and Dover Pharmacy are examples of how well the town was serviced. The importance of these health facilities beyond their day-to-day operations during both disasters was also evident as both were critical for information sharing and a focal point for the community.

Whilst the 2018-19 bushfires did not reach Dover, the road to Geeveston and further north was forcibly closed. This impacted supply chains as well as residents' ability to return home. To overcome the problems with the supply chains, food and medical supplies were delivered to the town by boat from Greater Hobart where the supplies were taken to the local school for distribution. The school created a 'Woolworths in Dover' where food was allocated to ensure there was enough for everyone. Contributing to the ongoing supply of food was a community initiative that was set up in the aftermath of the 2018-19 bushfires. The Dover and South Action Group Emergency Food Pantry was established to assist and support community members with emergency food deliveries. This initiative continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and still operates today. Other community initiatives included local business owners that helped locals with emergency accommodation requirements.

One such example is the Driftwood Cottages and local Airbnbs that let those living alone and elderly persons stay for free to provide physical and mental support:

[there were] Business owners and accommodation places down here that were just putting people up. You know, like a lot of people who lived around the Coast Road. Single, elderly people, and stuff like that. It was fantastic, the businesses were just bringing everyone in, putting them up in their units and rooms . . . because it was safer for them to be in here than to be cut off on the Coast Road.



■ Far South Map. HUON VALLEY COUNCIL

The 2018-19 bushfires had an impact on hospitality and tourism due to a significant reduction of interstate tourists. However, Tasmanians came to support the region spending money locally and Tourism Tasmania also used the region for events which was seen as positive by community members. There was an overarching feeling in the community that just prior to the pandemic, Dover was back to normal. However, the pandemic soon changed all that. COVID-19 certainly impacted the town and especially businesses and their employees. This was most notable in the accommodation services that had to close for extended periods. Nevertheless, and as was witnessed during the 2018-19 bushfires, businesses were keen to support their employees and JobKeeper was vital in allowing them to do so.

The social connectedness of the community was evident as residents rallied around and remained connected throughout the initial lockdown restrictions via a range of virtual methods including a 'Zoom Happy Hour'.

However, older persons in the community were worried about the pandemic and specifically the role of the pharmacy. The pharmacy in Dover was pivotal as a focal point and forum for information during the 2018-19 bushfires. During the pandemic it once again provided medical and emotional support to its community.

However, residents raised concerns around how rural pharmacies are considered during disasters so they can remain open and maintain a lifeline for their communities to feel safe and informed.

As Dover enters the summer of 2021 and public health restrictions are lifted, the town is returning to its former self. There are no vacant shops, and the real estate market is booming as more people move to the area. The ability of the local community to pull together during concurrent disasters is evident in their collective vision to build a special and unique place for the town. The Dover Green Space was a project jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This location signifies the importance of the local environment and culture and has provided the community with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Completed in November 2020, this local natural attraction infuses artwork from Reuben Oates, a local Aboriginal person, together with display boards containing information from the Huon Valley Council on Indigenous history and regional tourist highlights.

CASE STUDY 02

GEEVESTON TOWNSHIP

Geeveston is a small town in Tasmania's south, about an hour's drive south of Hobart. Historically a timber town, it is today driven by tourism and boasts several attractions including the Geeveston Town Hall Visitor Centre and the Heritage Park with its Platypus walk. The greater area is also the gateway to the southern forests that contain some of the biggest trees in Australia, and the Hartz Mountain National Park that includes the Tahune Adventures.

Geeveston, like many towns in the Huon Valley region, is still recovering from the 2018-19 Tasmanian bushfires while simultaneously responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. These concurrent disasters have resulted in financial and business challenges due to lack of tourism, in addition to the trauma associated with experiencing another catastrophic bushfire, and loss of the natural environment. Nevertheless, the residents of Geeveston identified opportunities to strengthen their community spirit, resilience, and preparedness for future disasters.

Geeveston was experiencing growth prior to the 2018-19 bushfires with increasing tourism and residents having secure employment in forestry and aquaculture. The town was 'comfortable and secure' with new cafés and a new Visitors Centre opening, resulting in no vacant commercial premises available in the town. However, some non-tourism businesses were struggling and considered closing. Despite this, Geeveston remained strong and connected, with many social groups and regular events such as the Geeveston Feast and craft gatherings.

The 2018-19 bushfires had a significant impact on the Geeveston population, both emotionally and financially. Many residents experienced emotional trauma, particularly those who faced the devastating 1967 bushfires and war veterans:

[the bushfires] Brought back a lot of memories for the people who had gone through the 1967 bushfires.

A lot of triggering. Quite a few vets live here, Vietnam vets, so the helicopters, the smoke, the sirens . . .



■ Geeveston. OSBORNE IMAGES

The 2018-19 bushfires created thick smoke impacting the air quality, and people did not want to venture outdoors. As Geeveston is reliant on tourism, and with the bushfires occurring during the peak tourist months, tourist attractions closed, and many people lost their jobs. During this time there was also an increase in family violence, a rise in drug and alcohol use, and consequently, people felt like they were 'just surviving'. Residents noted that following the bushfires, mental health worsened in the community.

To address the worsening mental health in the community, the Huon Valley Council received funding to enlist a trauma expert for counselling which gave the community an opportunity to process the event. Nevertheless, an increased need for support services after the 2018-19 bushfires was evident as workloads intensified without extra funding to match the increase. While some felt there was a lack of financial assistance after the bushfires to fully meet the community's needs, increased funding for support services was available during COVID-19. This extra funding was important as it increased the capacity for both crisis and educational outreach initiatives, especially for family violence:

Our family violence service got extra funding, and the government has given us that for another year as well . . . It's increased our capacity and it's allowed us to focus on, not only crisis service, but more outreach. More healthy relationship stuff. Going into schools talking about healthy relationships. It's just awesome.



■ Geeveston Feast. OSBORNE IMAGES

The ability to access financial assistance, particularly emergency payments, was evident after the 2018-19 bushfires and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accessing financial assistance after the bushfires was problematic as people had to physically line up for payments which was seen as potentially creating stigma and judgment. In addition, many did not have the emotional strength to deal with how to access support and therefore missed out. Others did not understand advice how to access bushfire emergency payments:

The way it was written sounded like we weren't eligible, but I called the number and they told me to disregard that and apply anyways (sic).



■ Geeveston. OSBORNE IMAGES

Ultimately, people felt there was less financial assistance available after the bushfires than there was during the pandemic. Geeveston residents felt the online financial processes in place for assistance during COVID-19 was more readily accessible than was available after the 2018-19 bushfires. Nevertheless, electronic systems proved challenging for those lacking digital literacy. There was a feeling in the community that financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the JobKeeper payments, provided the opportunity to lift people out of poverty. Conversely, many people felt a real concern for how the cessation of JobKeeper might impact those currently living under the poverty line.

Despite the financial challenges experienced by the community, they continued to rally around and support each other after the 2018-19 bushfires and during the COVID-19 pandemic. One example was the group Geeveston Cares that was set up in response to the bushfires to ensure that community members 'did not fall through the cracks'. The benefits of this group continue as Geeveston Cares still operates, sending flowers, cards, and gift cards to people in the community, and in turn supporting local businesses. While social distancing restrictions were in place during the height of the pandemic, people became more physically isolated, but the community remained connected through grocery and meal delivery services and business owners regularly checking in with people while they were shopping. This increased social cohesiveness, that continued after the bushfires and during the pandemic, exemplifies the community's resilience and desire to genuinely enhance the lives of everyone in Geeveston.

CASE STUDY 03

TIMBER INDUSTRY

Tasmania has a long history in the timber industry, especially in the Southern part of the state. In the Huon Valley region, Ta Ann Tasmania had a mill and Neville Smith Forest Products also have a mill. Neville Smith Forest Products is the largest producer of Tasmanian oak timber employing over 120 Tasmanians and creating employment opportunities for some of Tasmania's most remote communities.

The timber industry, like many industries in the Huon Valley region, was still recovering from the 2018-19 bushfires while simultaneously responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the Ta Ann Tasmania mill in the Huon Valley closed in November 2020 due to several financial implications, including the extensive infrastructure damage sustained to the mill in the 2018-19 bushfires, reduced log volumes, and the impacts of COVID-19. However, Neville Smith Forest Products took this opportunity to identify new ventures and created more full-time employment sourcing personnel from the local area.

Prior to the 2018-19 bushfires, the timber market was strong, and the Neville Smith Forest Products mill in the Huon Valley region was at its peak with a stable log supply and workforce. Ta Ann Tasmania's workforce was also stable with 40-50 people employed, comprised of local Huon Valley residents.

Both mills were heavily impacted by the 2018-19 bushfires. However, Ta Ann Tasmania suffered more extensive damage to its infrastructure, which meant they remained closed for 16 months and this was a key contributor to its closure. As a result, about 40 people were made redundant. This was emotionally challenging for those employees, but some did move to other industries, such as healthcare, transport, and aquaculture. Conversely, Neville Smith Forest Products experienced 7 months of no cutting and lost about 20% of its workforce. However, COVID-19 presented new challenges, especially with re-engaging employees due to the associated impacts on the market and supply chain, which created irregularities in workhours. This was demoralising for employees with some choosing

to receive JobKeeper and stay at home as it provided a more consistent income.

The Neville Smith Forest Products mill in the Huon Valley suffered less damage than the Ta Ann Tasmania mill after the bushfires. This was attributed to the opportunity to take preventative measures, such as fireproofing the site prior to the bushfires, and the active firefighting on site in the initial stages of the fires:

We established that with the right risk mitigation and fatigue management that we can do that. It's the reason we survived to be honest. We cleared a massive area, had sprinklers on every roof.

The loss of the Neville Smith Forest Products site in the Huon Valley region was devastating for both the business and the surrounding community. The re-establishment of infrastructure included a long and monotonous insurance process with premiums increasing exponentially for much less coverage. Nevertheless, Neville Smith Forest Products took the rebuilding as an opportunity to restructure and make improvements, especially around staff welfare. The business offered counselling to their staff after the bushfires, and while people still comment on the event, it is with appreciation that they are grateful the business 'did what they did'.

Following the bushfires and before the pandemic, Neville Smith Forest Products employees returned to work motivated, and the company was on track to have their best production year pro-rata ever. The company was experiencing great engagement with their team and all casuals had returned to the workforce. However, the impacts of COVID-19 changed all that and the ramifications were soon felt throughout the company. The introduction of JobKeeper and lack of consistent work because of severe market fluctuations, saw Neville Smith Forest Products lose approximately 30% of their workforce. Management at the company also pointed to the demoralising impact of the pandemic on workhours



■ Southwood mill near Huonville. NEVILLE SMITH FOREST PRODUCTS

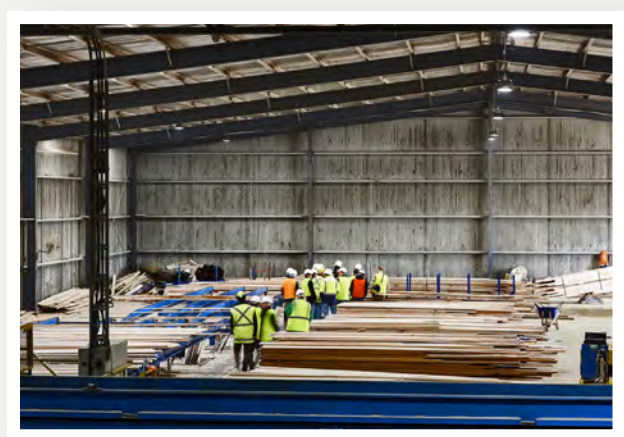
that resulted in the relocation of some remaining employees to different mills so they could remain in work.

Unfortunately for Ta Ann Tasmania, the impacts of the bushfires together with severe market fluctuations, meant that the uncertainties of the pandemic were the final straw for their mill in the Huon Valley resulting in its closure:

It has just been a rollercoaster. You sort of get the business on a solid footing and then it re-emerges again. [COVID-19] Hits you again.

Despite the challenges presented to the timber industry during the 2018-19 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, Neville Smith Forest Products have seized opportunities to create new ventures and particularly those contributing to people’s skills and capabilities. The company has recently started a second shift in its mill in the Huon Valley region which saw the recruitment of an additional 28 people, predominantly from the local area. In addition, they now have an emphasis on employing people with diversity to create a multicultural workforce, and also recruiting more women. Finally, the company has entered

a partnership with Oakdale Enterprises, a not-for-profit organisation that provides work and training opportunities for people with disabilities, to encourage more persons living with disability to apply for positions. Despite the financial consequences of these concurrent disasters, the timber industry has demonstrated organisational resilience while embracing the needs of their employees and surrounding community.



■ NEVILLE SMITH FOREST PRODUCTS

CASE STUDY 04

TAHUNE ADVENTURES

The Tahune Airwalk, now Tahune Forest Adventures, opened in July 2001 in the Tahune Forest, about 29 km from the township of Geeveston and approximately a 1 ½ hour drive from Hobart. The aim was to create a link between tourism and forestry, which the area has historically relied on. There is a treetop walk overlooking the Huon and Picton Rivers and this offers three walks, there is also a Cable Eagle Glider across the Huon River, as well as river rafting and accommodation. The 'Airwalk' is a major drawcard for Tahune Adventures. At 619 metres long, it is situated 30 metres above the forest floor, and has a platform 50 metres above the riverbank, with views to the mountains of the World Heritage Area. The facility also offers a range of local food and produce. While visiting numbers were high in its opening year, with about 150,000 people visiting, numbers dropped over the next 15 years with 74,000 visitors recorded in 2016. That same year it was sold to a private operator, and in 2019 Tahune Adventures was projected to attract 100,000 visitors:

We were really excited at the end of 2018, coming into 2019, because it was really shaping up to be the best summer the place would have had in probably 15 years. And our numbers in that December and January was up something like 30% on the previous year.

The 2018-19 bushfires had significant impacts on Tahune Adventures, with 45 firefighters living on site for a week. Once the fires were extinguished, engineers, arborists, concreters, and other contractors worked for 13 months to reopen. The site was still recovering from the 2018-19 bushfires and had only been opened for three weeks when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Tasmania. The site reopened on 28 February 2020 and closed again in March 2020. Once restrictions eased, it opened again in July 2020 for weekend operation and was allowed to operate 7 days with limited hours from Boxing Day 2020.

The closure of Tahune Adventures had significant impacts on the business as well as the local communities:

With our airwalk being shut for so long... That was a big drawcard for people driving through Geeveston. The ongoing impact from that... the fallout, was quite significant, because there was this perception I think, especially interstate, that all Southern Tasmania was on fire and a charred little mess, and why would anyone visit. And I think the fact that the Tahune Airwalk had been taken out just really reinforced that image. That had a huge negative impact on us for a while.

After the 2018-19 bushfires, there came a real sense of optimism of the Airwalk's reopening, but also some uncertainty as to how it would be received with the different environment. However, in its brief reopening between February and March 2020, Tahune Adventures quickly became busy. A marketing strategy was employed that focused on the natural aspects of the fires, and there are plans to set up interpretive artwork around the bushfires and how the forest feels today. Marketing to Tasmanians was a key focus before the bushfires but became even more vital with the arrival of COVID-19, when Tasmanians were the only market.

The support from Government after the 2018-19 bushfires and during both the COVID-19 pandemic was instrumental to Tahune Adventures' reopening. Federal Government provided the JobKeeper payments and the State Government supplied grants, low interest loans, and introduced the Tasmanian Travel Vouchers as a tourism incentive. While staff had to be stood down during its closure, except for one manager remaining as part-time and skeleton staff being kept on as casuals to work on the site, many staff members returned to Tahune Adventures when it reopened.



■ Under the Airwalk. JENNA HAMMOND

The return of a healthy workforce was seen to be attributed to retaining a core group of locals throughout the closures and making sure the staff were looked after and supported. At the end of December 2020, Tahune Adventures was allowed to resume seven-day operation, which was seen as an opportunity to support the local communities:

We made the commitment to remain open for two reasons: to try to keep our staff together, and secondly, and equally as important, to create the feeling and the environment that the Huon Valley is open to tourism.

There is no doubt that the 2018-19 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for Tahune Adventures. However, these challenges have also created opportunities to rethink business models. For example, the creation of the Tahune Adventure Pass and the site now being dog friendly, have been well received by visitors. The financial impacts of both disasters were devastating for not only Tahune Adventures, but its staff and the surrounding community. Nevertheless, a proactive approach by Government in providing financial assistance allowed the business to support its staff, both financially by ensuring some staff remained employed, and developing the ability to quickly stand up and stand down operations, thus contributing to their organisational resilience.



■ Top: Tahune Adventures Airwalk entrance, January 2019. TFS ■ Above: Tahune Adventures Airwalk entrance, January 2022. TAHUNE ADVENTURES

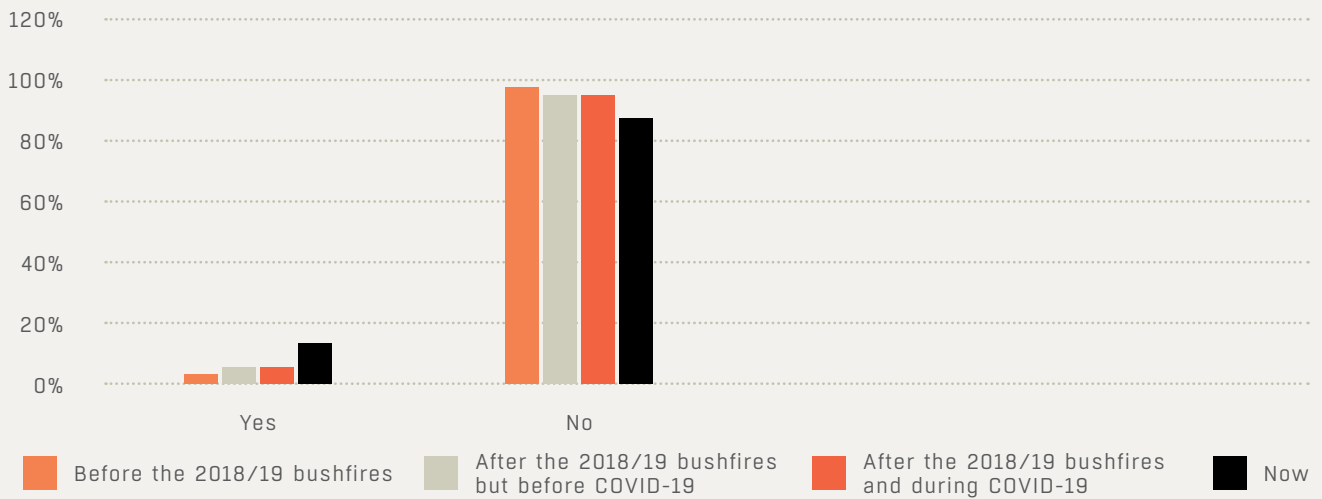
Appendix 2: Survey data



Survey data

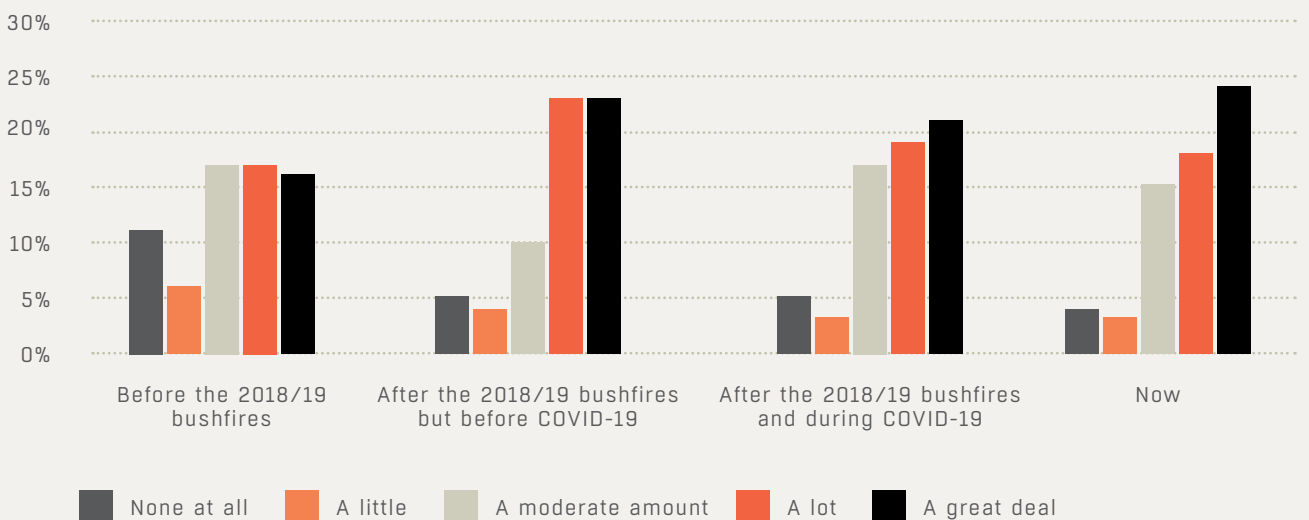
Summary of the question: Did you consider leaving the Huon Valley community (or job) and relocating?

Summary of the results: Since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a small increase of people considering leaving the Huon Valley region.



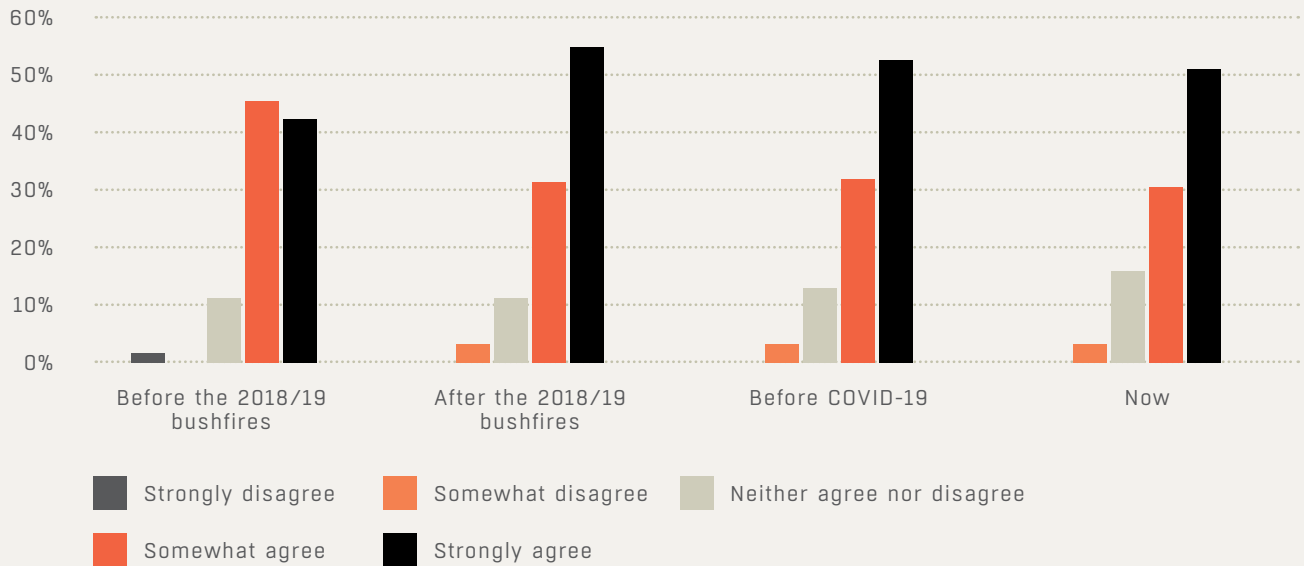
Summary of the question: To what extent did/do you feel concerned about the health of the local environment and landscape?

Summary of the results: Concerns about the landscape and environment increases after the bushfires and is maintained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic but concerns decrease as the environment recovers.



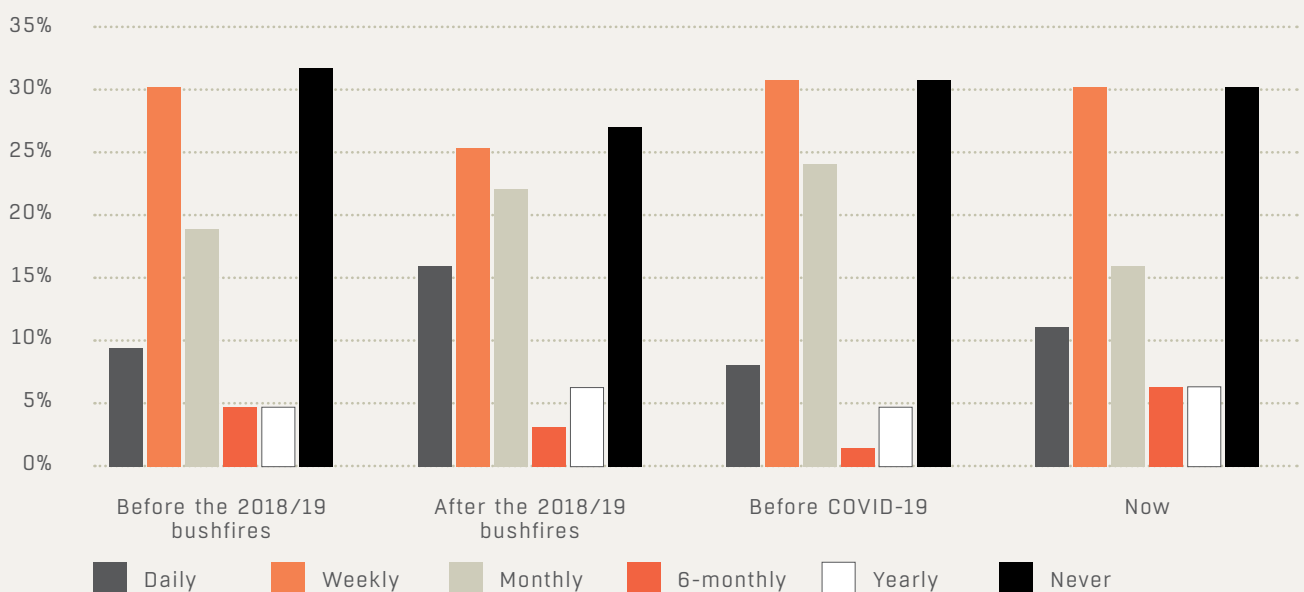
Summary of the question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I feel like I belong to the Huon Valley Community".

Summary of the results: The data suggests that disasters can increase people's sense of belongingness to the community where they live.



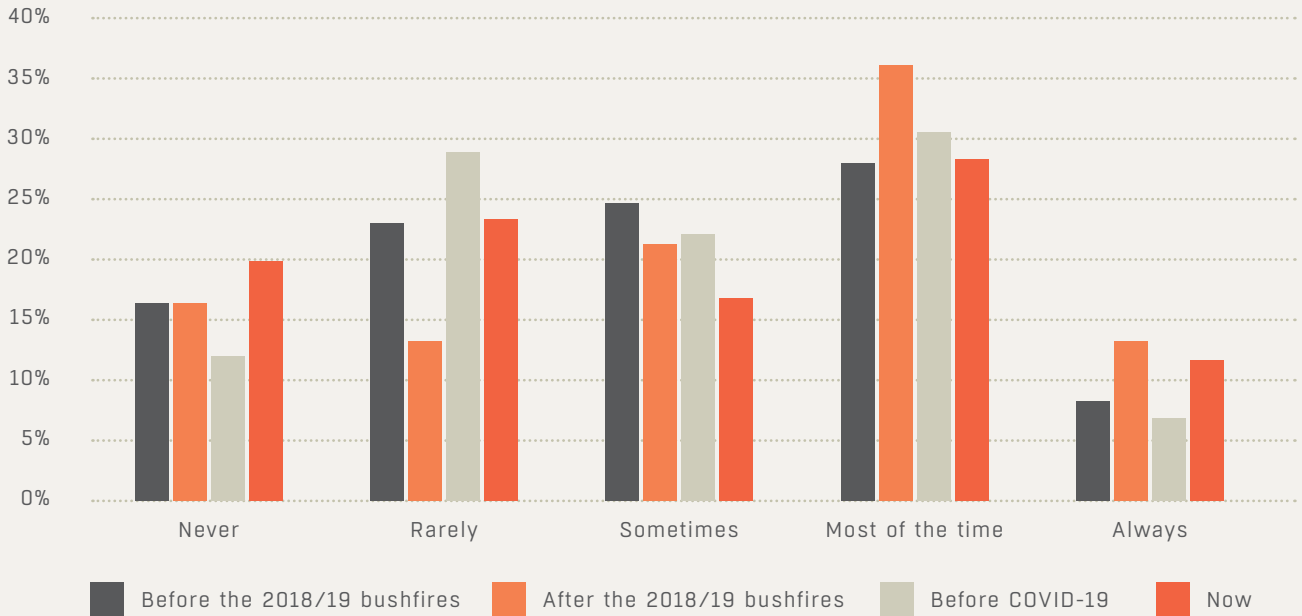
Summary of the question: How regularly did you receive practical or emotional support from someone in the Huon Valley Community?

Summary of the results: People receiving daily support after the bushfires increased, but the support people were receiving weekly through the COVID-19 pandemic has remained unchanged.



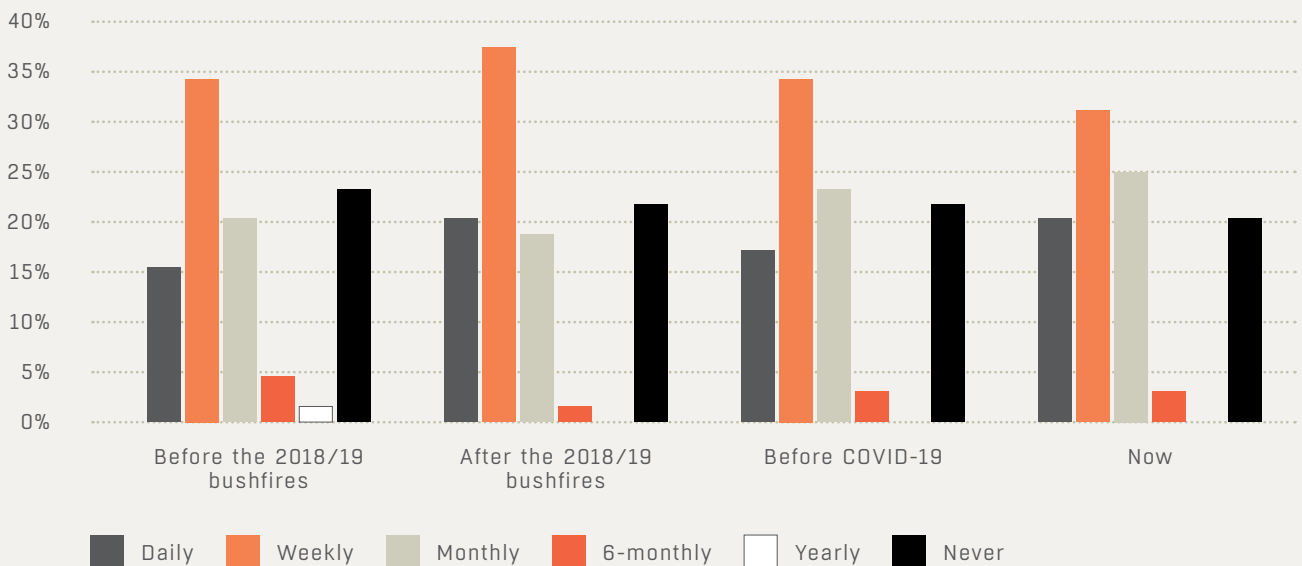
Summary of the question: To what extent was this support available when you needed it?

Summary of the results: The majority of people felt that that support was not available throughout the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.



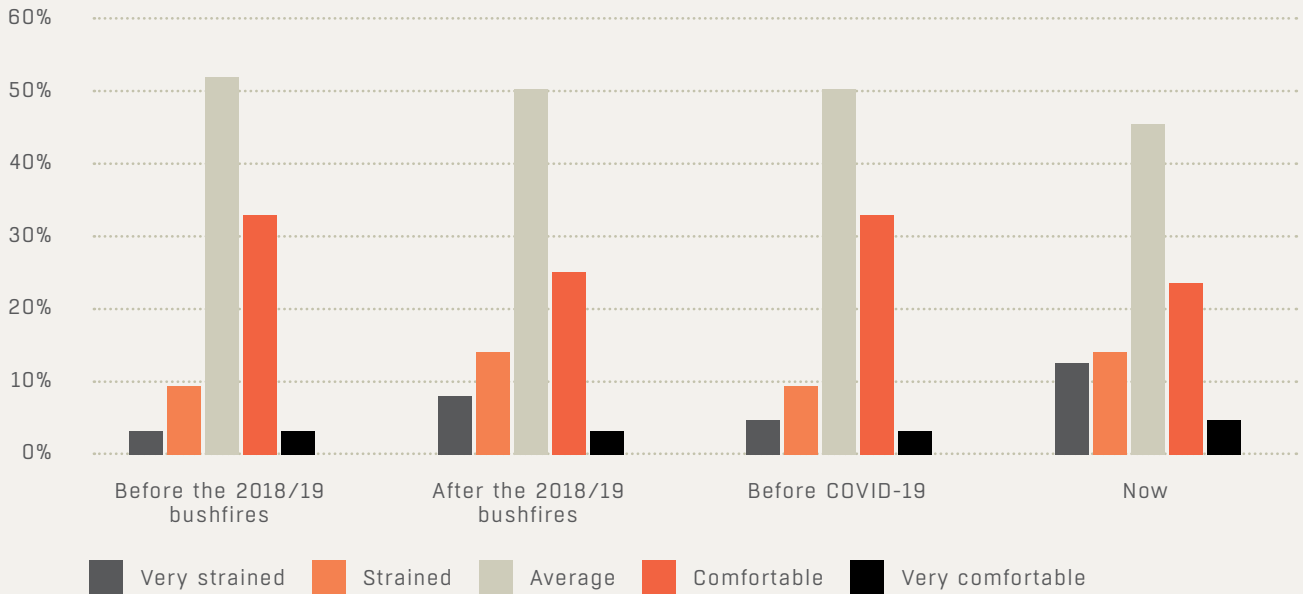
Summary of the question: How regularly did you provide emotional or physical support to someone in the Huon Valley Community?

Summary of the results: People’s patterns of providing emotional and physical support to someone in the Huon Valley community did not actually change throughout the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.



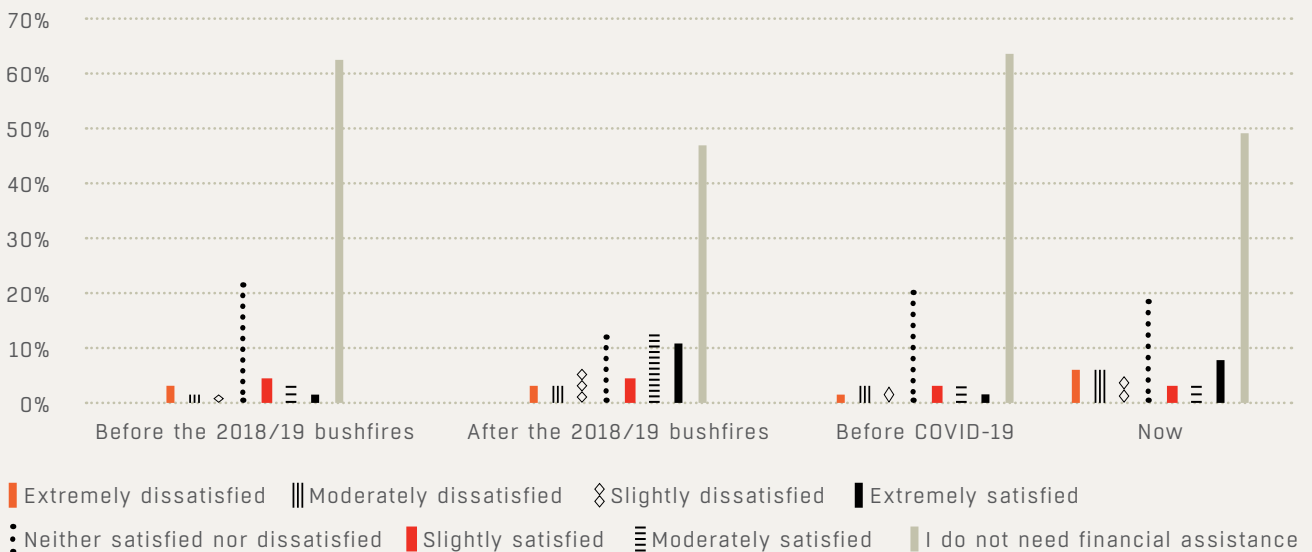
Summary of the question: How would you rate your financial situation?

Summary of the results: The proportion of people who felt their financial situation was strained or very strained peaked after each disaster. The number of people that were very strained was higher after the COVID-19 pandemic than the bushfires.



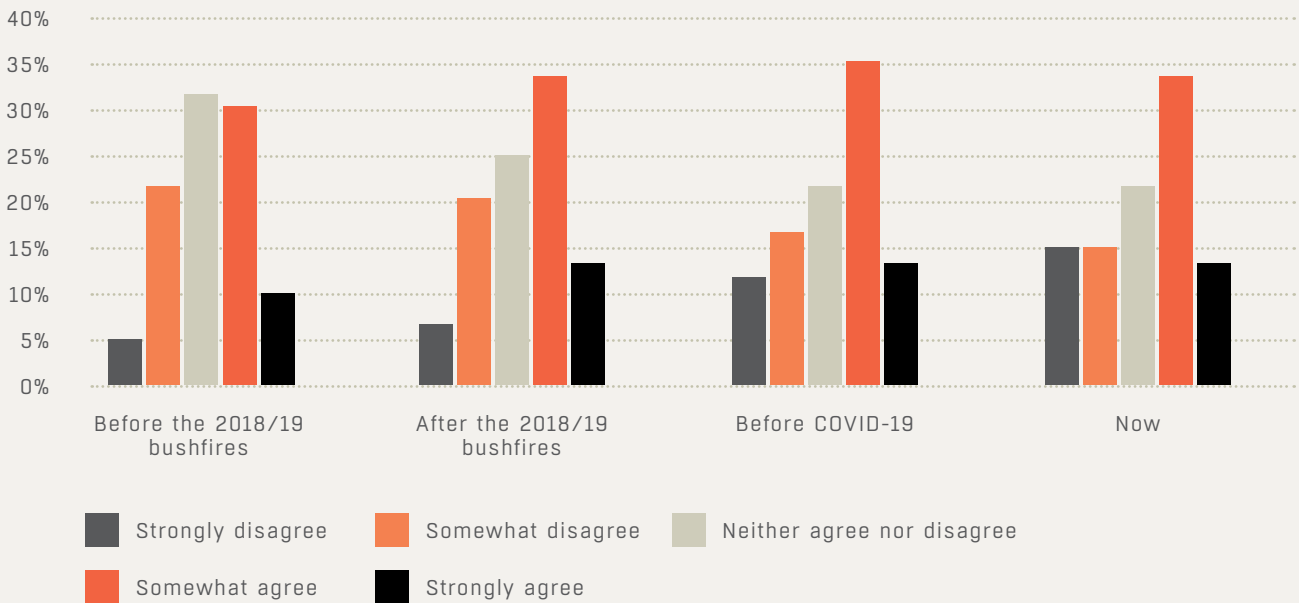
Summary of the question: How would you rate your experience of seeking and/or receiving financial assistance (e.g., from the government, from community organisations such as the Red Cross, St. Vincent de Paul, The Salvation Army, etc., or other sources, such as family or friends)?

Summary of the results: The majority of people surveyed did not require financial assistance, but a proportion did require financial assistance immediately after the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.



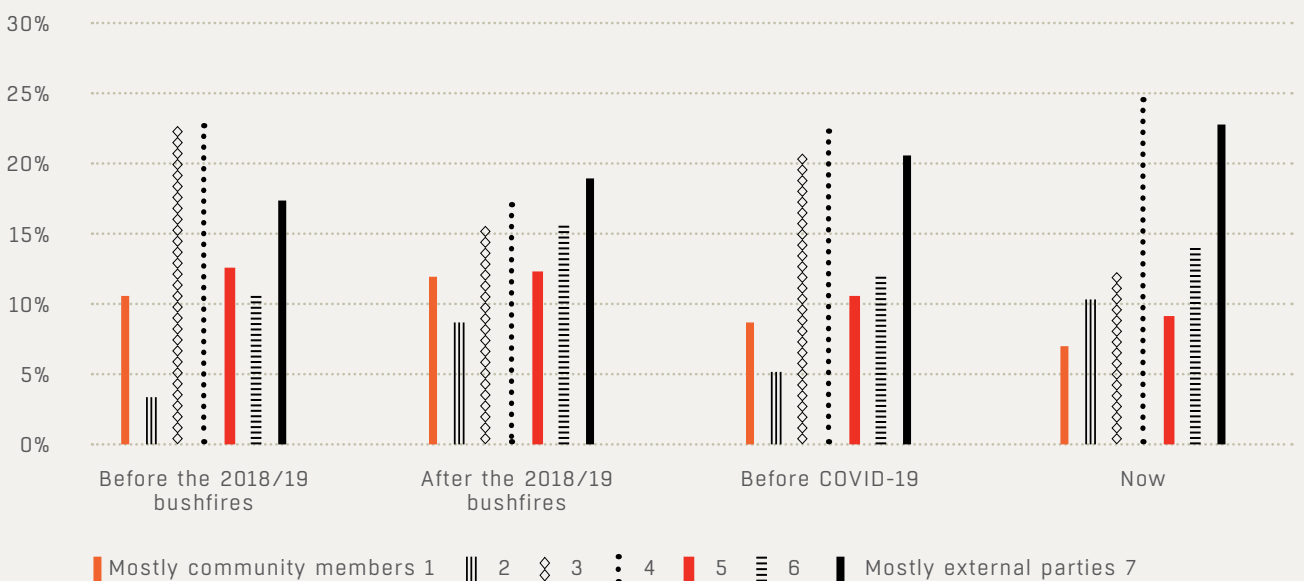
Summary of the question: To what extent do you agree that your views are respected in the Huon Valley community?

Summary of the results: Those members of the community that strongly believed that their views were not respected has slightly increased over the disasters. However, those who believe that their opinions were respected has remained stable.



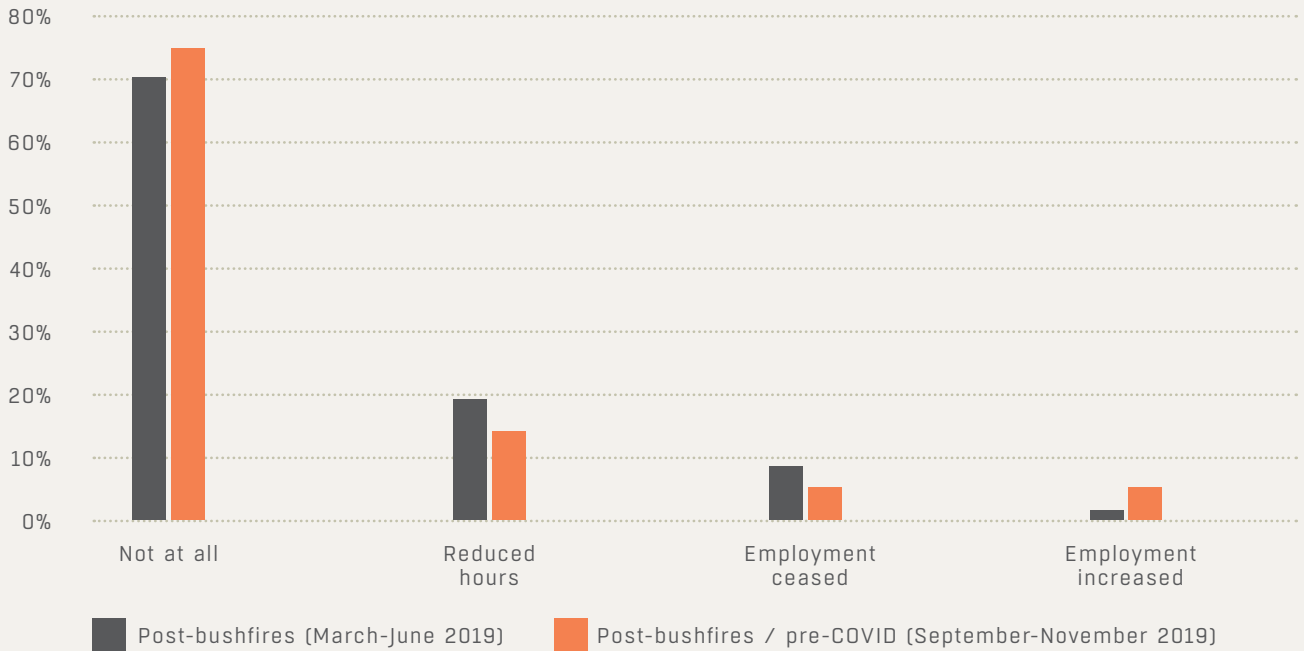
Summary of the question: To what extent do you think decisions affecting local recovery have been influenced by community members and local organisations versus others (e.g. State government)?

Summary of the results: The influence of community recovery is increasingly perceived to be more influenced by external parties than community groups.



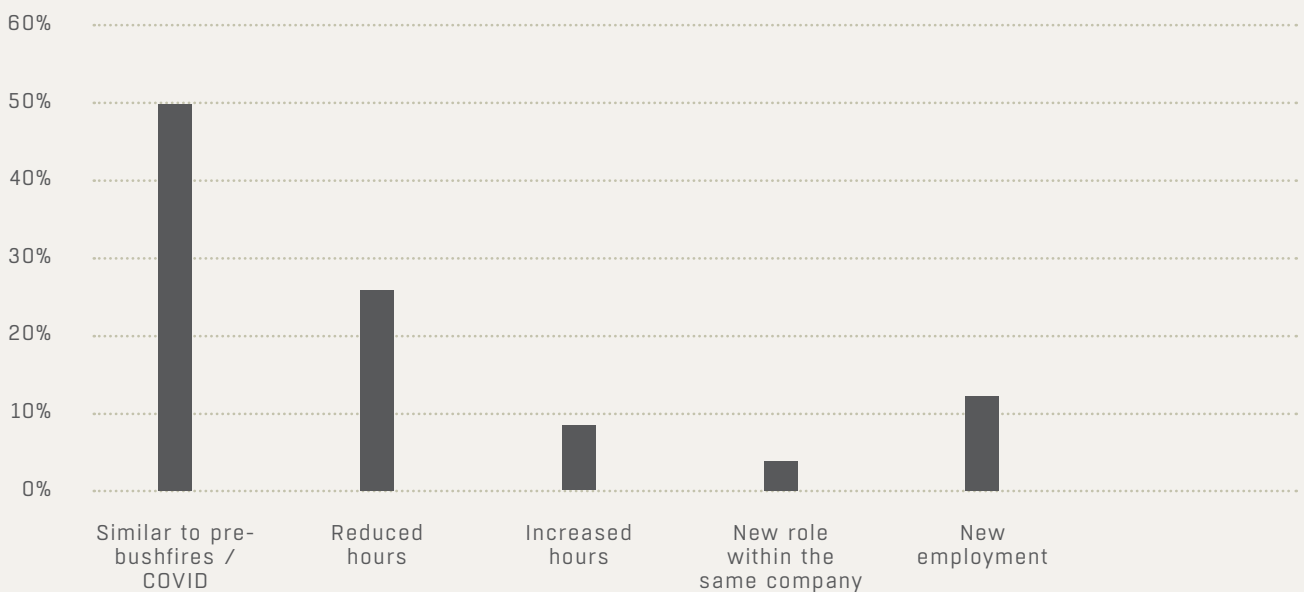
Summary of the question: How was your employment (funded/unfunded) affected during the following times?

Summary of the results: The majority of people stated that their employment status was unchanged pre and post bushfires.



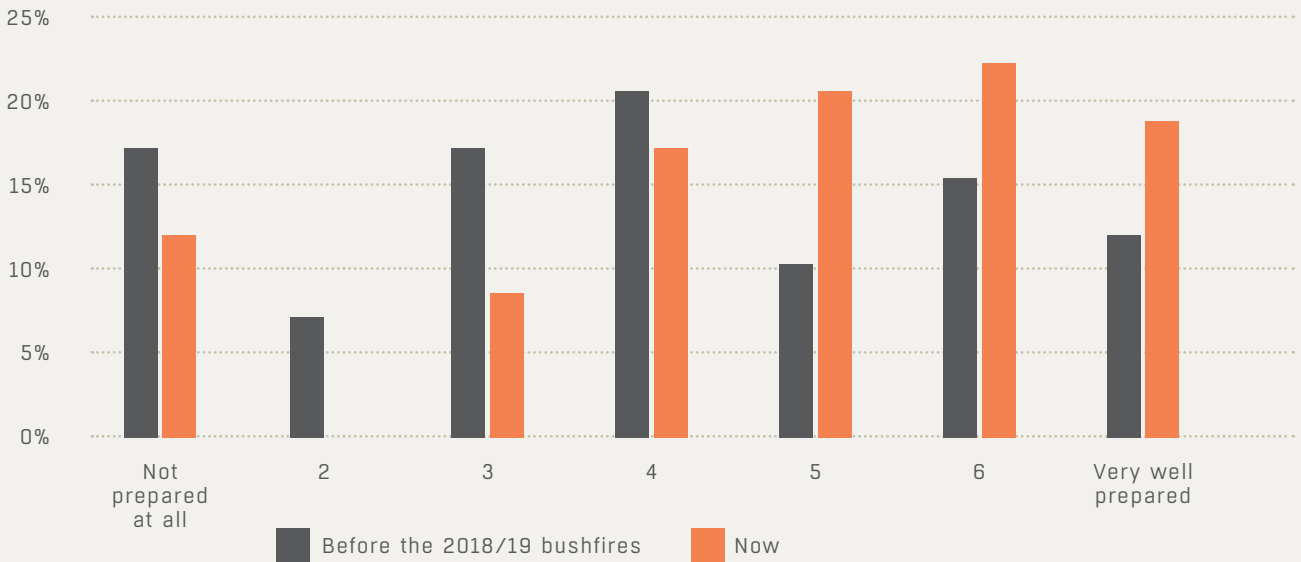
Summary of the question: What does your employment (funded/unfunded) look like now?

Summary of the results: Half of the respondents stated that their employment remained similar throughout the disasters.



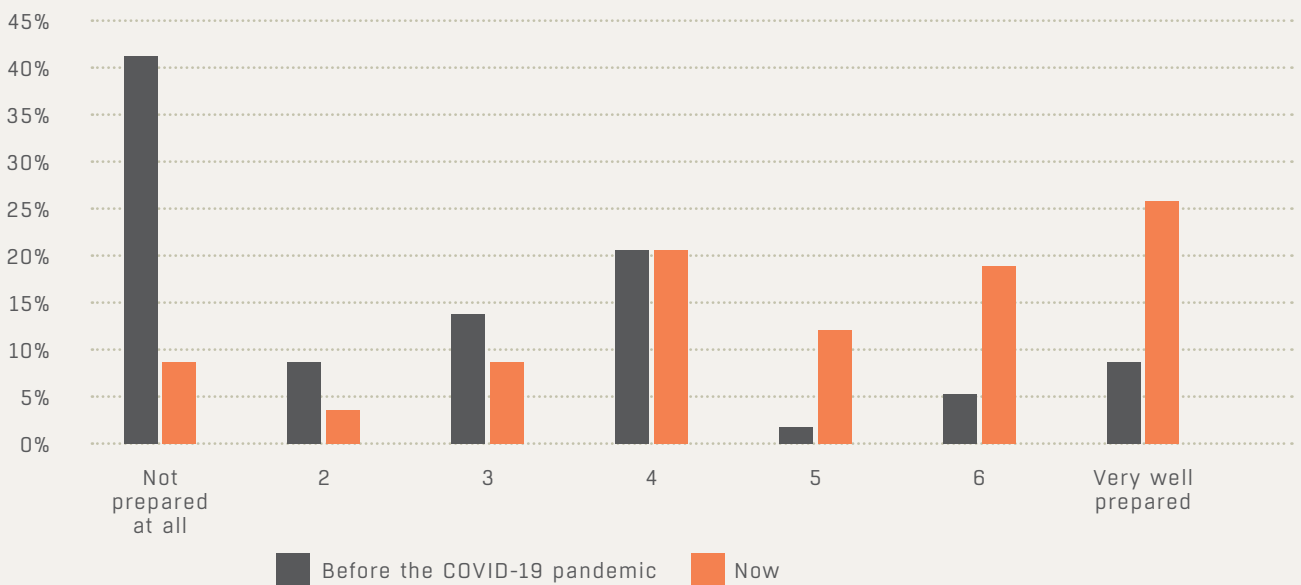
Summary of the question: How would you rate your preparedness for bushfires?

Summary of the results: The results would indicate that people's bushfire preparedness has improved after the bushfires.



Summary of the question: How would you rate your preparedness for pandemics?

Summary of the results: The data would indicate that people's preparedness for a pandemic was very low prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but now people's preparedness for a future pandemic has increased.



■ Right: Tahune fire. WARREN FREY / TFS



