



ACT
Government

STEPS TO RECOVERY AFTER THE ORRORAL VALLEY FIRE

INITIAL REPORT

Environment, Planning and
Sustainable Development Directorate

March 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The ACT Government acknowledges and pays our respects to Elders, past, present and future of the Ngunnawal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and where we conduct our business. For thousands of years Traditional Custodians have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters. We also acknowledge other Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

OVERVIEW

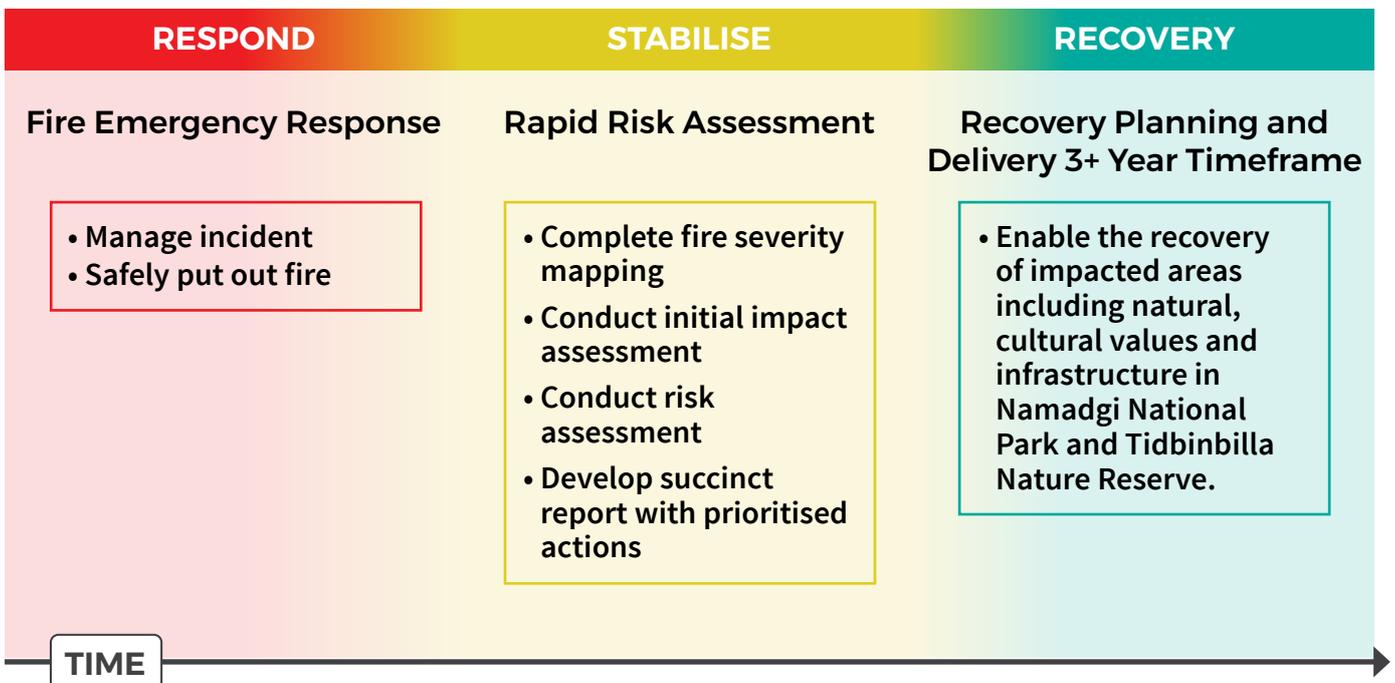
On 27 January 2020 the Orroral Valley Fire began in Namadgi National Park and burnt over 82,700 hectares in Namadgi National Park (80% of park) and spread into Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve burning 1,444 hectares (22% of the reserve).

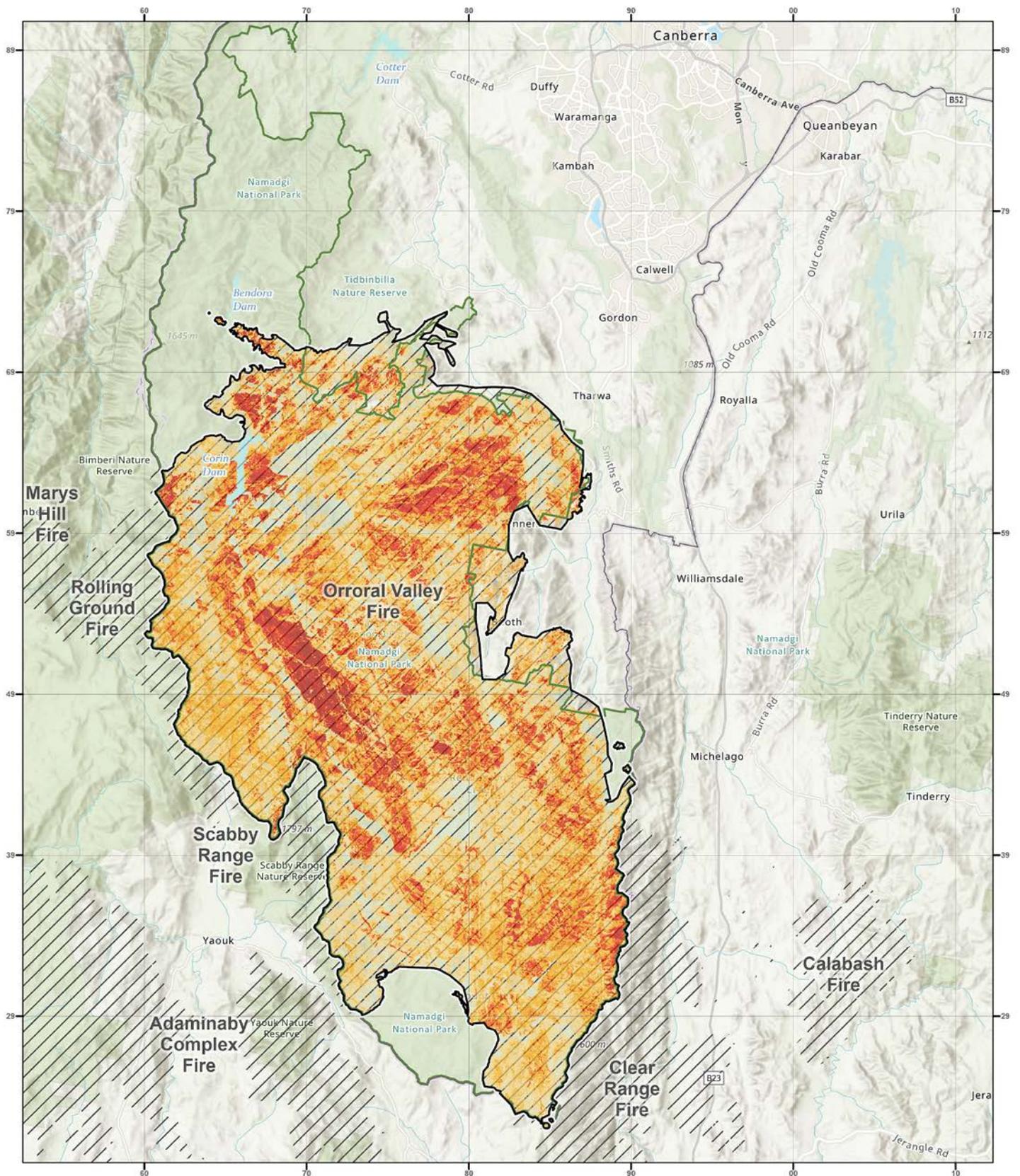
We are now looking to a fire recovery response to help our landscape heal. This will involve a two-stage process, including:

- > Rapid Risk Assessment – (short term initial investigation)
- > Recovery planning and delivery – (medium to long term recovery process)

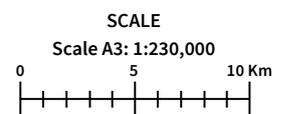
Both stages of recovery will consider cultural heritage, ecological values including catchments/water, infrastructure, our people and the community.

RECOVERY PROCESS





Normalised Burn Ratio (dNBR) 14th February 2020



- Low Severity
- Moderate Severity
- Mod-High Severity
- High Severity
- Very High Severity
- Orroral Valley Fire
- Major Fires
- Namadgi National Park Boundary

STAGE 1

THE FINDINGS

The RRAT identified a series of risks that will guide our immediate priorities and ongoing recovery planning and delivery efforts.

A hierarchy of risks was created – extreme, high and medium risks. Twenty three extreme and high risks were identified as a priority for action.



FLOODING AND EROSION RISKS

- Impacts on roads and walking tracks
- Sediments entering Cotter River catchment and impacting water quality and quantity
- Sediments impacting aquatic and riparian habitat
- Stability of hillslopes in high erosion areas

RISKS TO FAUNA

- Increased predation of threatened fauna by introduced predators (e.g. feral cats and foxes)
- Injury and starvation of large gliders
- Reduced wildlife diversity and loss of populations (such as birds, reptiles and small mammals)
- Sediment entering waterways impacting local fish habitat

RISKS TO FLORA

- Loss of Alpine Bogs and Associated Fens (a threatened ecological community)
- Increased invasive plant impacts on native plants and ecological communities
- Feral herbivore (such as horses, deer, and pigs) impacts on native plants and ecological communities
- Loss of threatened and significant plant species
- Loss and impact on fire sensitive ecological communities
- Loss of hollow bearing trees that provide important wildlife habitat

RISKS TO CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Damage to Aboriginal rock art
- Damage to historic huts
- Damage to heritage significant trees and historic border markers
- Disturbance to archaeological sites impacted through earthworks
- Disturbance and erosion of Aboriginal stone arrangements
- Disturbance and erosion of archaeological sites

RISKS TO ASSETS

- Removing dangerous trees around public access
- Burnt Infrastructure
- Damaged fences, including those owned by rural landholders
- Disturbance and erosion of archaeological sites

STAGE 2: RECOVERY PLANNING AND DELIVERY – THE NEXT STEPS

The Risk Assessment will be used to guide the recovery planning and delivery. The planning process will deliver a 'Recovery Plan' to address the immediate and short-term impacts of the fire and floods and a broader and long term 'Recovery Program'.

The 'Recovery Program' will look beyond the immediate fire and flood impacted areas and consider broader ecosystem trends and drivers, and issues such as climate change and adaptation, continuing dry conditions and safeguarding Canberra's water supply.

The Recovery Plan and Recovery Program will engage and allow for the Ngunnawal people, Canberra's communities and volunteers, scientists and researchers and industry to be involved throughout the recovery phase. The Recovery Plan will provide information about the actions required to restore our natural and cultural heritage and park values, identify key stakeholders and their roles and outline the process and priorities for reopening sections of the parks for public use.

RECOVERY PRINCIPLES

Our efforts will be guided by the following principles.

1. Traditional Custodians, the Ngunnawal people, and the Government will heal Country and walk the journey to recovery together.
2. Environmental integrity and ecosystem functions will be restored through assisting natural processes.
3. Heritage values will be restored through collaboration and contemporary and traditional practices.
4. Canberra's communities, recreational, interest, conservation and user groups will be genuinely and meaningfully engaged throughout the recovery phase and reconnected to country.
5. Recovery actions will consider ecosystem drivers and be underpinned by sound science, credible research, monitoring, and best practice techniques.
6. Climate adaptation will be considered in every aspect of recovery.
7. We will support our people through the recovery journey.





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