

## PART 1: GENERAL NARRATIVE REPORT

<b>Project/Programme Name:</b>	The Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund (AWNRF)
<b>Project/Programme Number:</b>	AU778000
<b>Web Link to project/programme strategic plan or other useful documents:</b>	<a href="https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/bushfires#gs.b3qhy7">https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/bushfires#gs.b3qhy7</a>
<b>Reporting Period:</b>	June – December 2021
<b>Project/Programme Start Date (FY):</b>	January 2020
<b>Report Completed by:</b>	WWF-Australia
<b>Date Report Completed (MM/YR):</b>	31 January 2022

## Reflections on Success and Failure

### 1) Key Outcomes and Impacts Achieved

#### SUMMARY

The past year has seen WWF-Australia's focus move on from the emergency bushfire response that characterised our efforts of early 2020 to projects that restore fire-affected landscapes and prepare for future events. WWF-Australia launched a five-year comprehensive campaign to encompass this program of work, Regenerate Australia – designed to address current rehabilitation needs and look to mitigate future catastrophic events.

WWF-Australia continues to work with a diverse range of partners including community-based groups, universities and research institutions, Traditional Owners groups, local governments, as well as state government agencies and businesses. We have now passed a significant milestone of partnering with 189 other organisations, supporting their efforts both financially and technically to deliver impact.

Notable highlights over the past six months have included support for the ground-breaking Byron Bay Mobile Wildlife Hospital, the installation of nest boxes for gliders and other arboreal species in fire affected forests in northern New South Wales, the planting of thousands of trees to restore koala habitat in the Northern Rivers region, support for Aboriginal communities to revitalise cultural fire practices, and the installation of an innovative cooling system for roosting grey-headed flying foxes.

To date, WWF-Australia have approved 166 bushfire response, recovery, and future-proofing projects, with a further 59 projects in the design phase. This means a total of 226 projects are underway or in the pipeline.

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS – QUANTITATIVE

- WWF-Australia supported **29 collaborations led by Indigenous groups** throughout the period which have brought communities together from across the country, building both technical skills and, knowledge and improving cultural connection.
- **389 women rangers** are participating in the Women Rangers Environmental Network (WREN), an increase from initial engagement of 147 women rangers. Within this period, 21 women engaged in WREN moved into higher leadership roles.
- **Over 100 landholders have been engaged** in restoration projects over 2021, helping to restore over 300ha of koala habitat.
- **1000+ cameras** monitoring wildlife recovery in situ across WWF & partners projects.
- At least **58 fauna species** being actively supported through targeted, on-ground interventions.
- **136 Corporate partners** lending support to Renewables Nation campaign, with 27 new businesses onboarded.
- Leveraging the influence of AWRNF, a **further \$17.8 million in contributions** have been made to WWF-Australia's conservation programs

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS – QUALITATIVE

1. The [Rewilding Australia](#) strategy was approved, and the program officially launched to rewild landscapes by introducing animals - the soil diggers, the seed dispersers and natural predators - to restore the function of ecosystems. WWF-Australia is playing a key role in building a wider rewilding movement that is attracting government support and funding for rewilding projects.
2. **The Queensland Government welcomed an offer by WWF-Australia to propose a pathway by 2030 out of land clearing and into landscape restoration.** This is within the context of high, ongoing rates of land clearing in the past two years.
3. We have **established a partnership with Climate Friendly to pilot a land-based carbon project** to increase the area and connectivity of koala habitat in eastern Australia. The pilot will develop and fund the establishment of premium land-sector tree planting projects that deliver Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU), along with important environmental, social and economic and First Nations co-benefits. The concept is designed to shift the economics of carbon farming, to better compete with drivers of deforestation and degradation.
4. **The second [Renewable Superpower Scorecard](#) was released as part of WWF-Australia's Renewables Nation campaign.** Analysis of the Scorecard report demonstrated measurable progress with every state and territory improving their score, moving towards energy diversification and decarbonisation.
5. **WWF-Australia's theory of change** 'Indigenous-led revitalization of cultural fire management at landscape scale across southeast Australia' is driving program engagement and impact, with 29 Indigenous-led partnerships activated. This is complemented by a strong, Indigenous-led approach to our communications narrative to amplify Indigenous stories and communicate our impact together.
6. The **Eyes on Recovery project** has established a network of 14 camera trap projects, with over 1000 cameras monitoring wildlife recovery landscapes impacted by the 2019/20 bushfires. This has strengthened our project monitoring, data analysis and wildlife insights.
7. **The 'Regenerating Australia' short film was completed. The film will tour in 2022 to drive support for the Regenerate Australia movement and trigger action and engagement.** Test screenings were conducted with approximately 100 people including one in-person community screening.

*The following pages provide a snapshot of some of the projects being undertaken to restore and protect Australia, spotlighting our focus on innovation, collaboration and Indigenous-led knowledge.*

### **CASE STUDY: Direct drone seeding to restore koala habitat**

To achieve our ambitious goal of doubling koala numbers across eastern Australia, large-scale restoration of degraded landscapes is essential. WWF-Australia is testing and validating innovative technology to achieve this, including the use of drones to plant and grow trees.



In November 2021, our first drone seeding trial was completed to direct seed 11 hectares as part of a larger corridor revegetation project with the Turner Family Foundation, Queensland Trust for Nature, Greenfleet, and Dendra Systems. A high-tech drone spread millions of seeds within a few hours to plant a new koala corridor with over 40 different plant species. Plants include native grasses and koala food and shade trees such as blue gums, iron barks, melaleucas and acacias.

As one of first drone seeding projects of its kind in Australia, the trial presents an opportunity to scale up restoration by finding more cost-effective ways of planting trees, especially as the technology continues to get cheaper. Site preparation and seed acquisition are relatively high cost for tree planting activities—we are experimenting with combining different technologies to improve the survival rate of seed and reduce these costs. WWF’s initial investment in this technology is helping to de-risk similar revegetation approaches for government and laying the groundwork for scaling this work up across eastern Australia. We have already seen new financing from state governments in drone seeding technology in the past six months.

### **CASE STUDY: Climate-ready restoration partnership**

WWF-Australia has partnered with Australian environmental organisation, Greening Australia, on a multi-year plan of action to deliver national climate-ready restoration. United by our joint commitment to bushfire recovery, nature conservation, climate resilience and innovation, this collaboration marks a significant milestone in Australia’s pathway to mainstreaming nature-based solutions.



The partnership will combine the strengths of both organisations to build on existing science and take leadership on practical, on-ground solutions that will improve the long-term resilience of the Australian environment to help prepare people and nature for a changing climate. By collaborating with an organisation that we historically may have competed with for funding, we aim to enhance coordination, leverage cross-sectoral action and investment, and collectively deliver greater impact.

AWNRF funds have been allocated to kickstart the initial projects, with co-investment from Greening Australia. We have built in long-term investment solutions into the program design to scale up the program to the tens of millions of dollars. The National Australia Bank (NAB) Foundation has joined as our first joint partner for a three-year project. The first on-ground project being delivered under the partnership is underway to restore a 100-ha site in South Australia.

## **CASE STUDY: Right-way fire: re-establishing Indigenous burning practices in Southeast Australia**

WWF-Australia is helping establish a strong foundation for right-way fire management in southern Australia, by providing pathways for Indigenous and non-Indigenous fire managers and stakeholders to share knowledge and build capacity.

The ecosystem-based and cultural nature of Indigenous fire management means that it needs to be conducted with local Traditional Owners who have deep knowledge of the land and traditional practices. However, many Indigenous communities, especially in Australia's southeast, have lost traditional approaches to fire management following generations of systematic dispossession and displacement. Experts in the practice say much more investment in capacity building is needed before cultural burning can be adopted in mainstream fire management plans.



WWF-Australia has partnered with Firesticks Alliance and Aboriginal Carbon Foundation on a large-scale collaboration to develop and roll-out a coordinated and complementary program of activities designed to implement a model for right-way fire management in southeastern Australia.

Our strong relationships with these two well-regarded Indigenous organisations has had a positive impact on the overall Indigenous Cultural Fire Management program, helping to build trusting relationships with a network of Indigenous fire practitioners, communities and supporters. This approach aligns with WWF's Global Practices 2025 target of 'WWF offices collaborate with and/or influence other actors in 55 countries to support Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities'.

## **2) Effective Implementation of Workplans and Budgets**

### **PROGRESS OF ACTIVITIES**

FY21 saw an upswing in new project approvals compared to the beginning of AWNRF, with 71 new projects activated. In FY22 we expect even stronger growth in new projects with 48 projects already approved and a further 59 projects in the pipeline. Total funding allocation to date is \$32.5 million.

All major activities are on track. Implementation of workplans has been strong in FY22 and progress has occurred despite challenging circumstances, including partnership delays, restrictions on field work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and environmental events such as floods and landslips at our project locations.

Whilst some project milestones have been delayed due to extended COVID-19 shutdowns and border closures meaning workshops, on-ground activities and cultural burns could not go ahead as planned, we have continued to work with our partners to adapt.

Project managers have used additional time away from the field to map out the breadth of programs, develop unified theories of change and identify partnerships and projects most important to focus on. We have shifted to virtual conferences, knowledge sharing and strengthening communities of practice to support program delivery. In working towards our 2025 program impact objectives, 2021 has focused on delivering the activities and outputs needed to drive longer term outcomes and impact.

### **COVID-19 IMPACTS**

Travel restrictions and more recent lockdowns in Australia over the past six months have had a significant impact on interstate travel and delayed some of our partners on-ground activities.

To mitigate against future delays, we are conducting quarterly conservation COVID-19 impact reviews. Projects managers are remaining flexible and encouraging open discourse while adjusting collaborative agreements and workplans to account for delays, whilst ensuring that the safety of staff and partners is our first priority. The benefit of routine scheduled meetings with partners has become evident to sustain positive partnerships during the pandemic and ensure the cadence and communication of collaborative projects.

### **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

Lower than planned spend rate reported in July – December 2021 R3 financial report is due to:

- a. Projects delayed due to COVID-19 impacts
- b. Multi-year projects adopted ‘tranching’ payment to ensure effective funding allocation

Total committed to-date has reached 73.4% of the total fund, including funds committed to be spent in future periods.

### 3) Challenges and Strengths Affecting Performance

#### CHALLENGES

##### External

Ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19 caused delays for many of our on-ground partners through 2021. This is challenging effective face-to-face communication and delayed the delivery of on-ground activities including the construction of physical infrastructure for wildlife care. Additional time and support have been required for partners and key stakeholders to deliver on project outcomes, with consideration of staff wellbeing and mental health during this time.

Lack of clarity in the Australian Government's plan for Net Zero, coupled with ongoing political intransigence on climate change and land protection, exacerbates the risk that accelerating investment into 'nature-based' solutions for climate change may drive perverse environmental and social outcomes that challenge WWF's advocacy work.

La Niña is occurring in the Pacific causing wetter than average conditions for northern and eastern Australia, making it difficult for some on-ground projects to be delivered and slowing restoration efforts.

##### Internal

Limited contracting and legal support capacity: with the growing number of delivery partners requiring contracting and legal support, there has been some delays in getting collaboration agreements in place which is slowing implementation.

#### STRENGTHS

##### Internal

Increased internal resourcing and capacity: WWF-Australia continue to on-board a high-volume of new staff to manage and enhance the delivery of our growing program of work within the bushfire fund. Of note include new project officers within our Koalas, Landscapes, Renewables and Wildlife Recovery programs, which has enabled us to strengthen internal systems, processes and monitoring.

WWF's expertise, established trust, brand-recognition is helping to attract new partners, along with investment, with particular interest from state governments. WWF's initial funding is de-risking novel conservation approaches for government and laying the groundwork for scaling this work up across NSW. For example, WWF-Australia's Rewilding Australia program is helping create a movement on existing rewilding project ideas. The rewilding project in Lungtalanana (Clarke Island) had been discussed for over a decade but there was no momentum. WWF getting involved has kickstarted the project by providing funding and project management support.

Clearly defined and integrated plan of action: Building on our bushfire framework and the momentum that came out of this work, WWF-Australia defined an overarching vision and public-facing campaign, Regenerate Australia, which reflects WWF's commitment to delivering bold climate action and encompasses all our conservation work. The development of this vision and

signature programs, showcased through the Regenerate Australia narrative, has been helpful to deliver coordinated and strategic conservation work, engage new and existing audiences, and leverage further investment.

## External

*Strong state government support and new government financing commitments* for WWF's koalas' program, renewable energy, cultural fire practitioners, and Indigenous Women rangers. We have secured a further \$17.8 million outside of the \$50 million bushfire fund, owing to the influence and recognition of WWF-Australia's conservation work within AWNRF. Further to this, we have estimated WWF-Australia's conservation actions and Regenerate Australia campaign has influenced an additional \$1.4 billion in climate-related investments from governments and other organisations.

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## Learning

### 1) Sharing of Lessons Learned

*Key learning themes surfacing from July to December 2021 across the various programs supported by AWNRF include:*

1. It is important to design programs informed by partner and community vision.

This is particularly significant in our collaborations with Indigenous groups. WWF-Australia must be mindful as we take on a leadership role in this space to ensure we are truly supporting Indigenous self-determination and respecting Cultural Intellectual Property, rather than imposing our ways of working onto them.

Our deliberate approach to being partner-led has resulted in stronger relationships with women ranger groups and Indigenous organisations. This provides more opportunities to support activities which are meaningful to partners, rangers and WWF. Our strategy is for these Indigenous groups to take on, lead and grow their fire management practices independently into the future, supporting the Indigenous-led revitalisation of cultural fire management at landscape level across Southeast Australia.

2. Through our work in wildlife care in the Northern Rivers, we have learnt the importance of understanding context and appreciating many stakeholders with different agendas.

Acknowledging the often-complex relations between wildlife rehabilitators, veterinarians, government and the local community is important for wildlife treatment and protection service delivery. Navigating this arena poses significant risks to projects but also provides the opportunity for enhanced integration and long-term success. In response to this, WWF has used its brand and profile to help bring together wildlife care groups in a collaborative way with the Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital Network. By working with all the different groups, we are helping to drive a sustainable and cohesive service delivery model for wildlife care in the Northern Rivers.

### 3. Embedding innovation into ways of working is critical to achieve high-impact conservation

WWF-Australia has been redesigning its ways of working to develop and integrate innovation right across the organization and into all elements of our work, from our digital systems to field work. We have seen the result of this investment in innovation over the past year with innovative solutions and organisation-wide integration and capabilities significantly increasing. This is evident across all our key conservation programs but demonstrated clearly through our Innovate to Regenerate Program, developed to encourage and support experimentation and learning at scale by investing in new, regenerative business models and solutions. Our innovation 'Regeneration Challenges' have uncovered and are testing innovative solutions addressing real community and environmental challenges in bushfire affected communities, that can be scaled across Australia.

### 4. Conducting scientific research and building strong relationships with government decision-makers is critical to influence policy commitments to achieve our program goals.

WWF-Australia's engagement with government and public advocacy has proven to have a strong influence on the national environmental agenda. For example, we've seen evidence that WWF's Renewable Nation campaign throughout 2021 has helped to influence a shift in the climate messaging across multiple government decision-makers. Additionally, every state and territory government improved their score in the Renewable Superpower Scorecard, and each state (except ACT) is developing a Renewable Energy Industrial Precincts program, in line with WWF's recommendations.

Further to this, WWF-Australia's 2.2 million strong supporter-base and 1 million reach across social channels has played a key role in amplifying our impact. The Australian public are a key driver for policy and legislative change. Our online petition to up-list koalas to 'endangered' status has over 14,000 signatures and we have worked with the NSW Nature Conservation Council and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to put in a submission to government. The outcome is looking promising and expected to be publicly announced in February 2022.

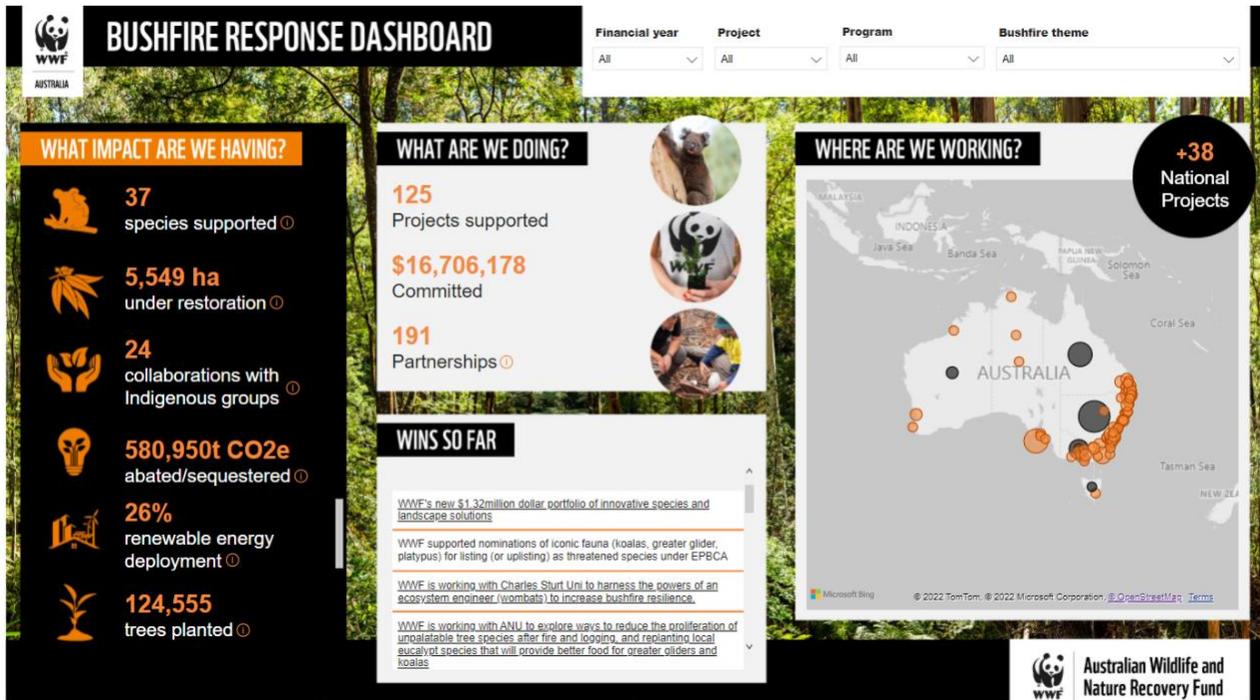
## 2) Adaptive Management related to the learning above

The Bushfire Recovery Framework continues to provide a strong foundation for implementation of our response, recovery and future-proofing efforts.

Based off our learnings over the past two years managing the fund, we are adapting and refining our approach, project management and messaging in line with what has proven most impactful.

As articulated above, WWF is playing an important role in testing, piloting, and validating novel and innovative approaches to conservation and project management in Australia. We are focusing on accelerating and amplifying emerging technologies and novel approaches with positive social and environmental impact to increase investment into these areas and lay the groundwork for scaling this work up. Additionally, we are concentrating on fewer, more strategic, signature partnerships with emerging and expert on-ground partners to achieve long-term, meaningful conservation impact.

We continue to devote resources into improving our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning systems to strengthen the evidence base for spending allocation decisions through targeted and impactful investment. As part of our commitment to improving project and program monitoring, WWF-Australia created an interactive dashboard with key AWNRF impact metrics (see snapshot below). This is a key first step in strengthening our communications of the evidence base for project spending and WWF’s impact going forward. The platform is currently still in testing phase, and we look forward to sharing the external facing version later this year.



## PART 2: DATA MATRIX REPORT

Key Long-term Objectives (Outcomes)	Indicator	Results to date		Current status this year	Planned Final Result (value & date)	Comment
	<i>(what is being measured and the units)</i>	FY20	FY21	<i>(“what result was achieved by the time of this report”)</i>		
Conservation pathway of (at least 10) flagship species most vulnerable to climate change and fire measurably improved by rewilding, assisted colonisation and other direct interventions	Species supported	18	38	58	>10	7/10 priority species are being supported through direct interventions <sup>i</sup> . With the most conservation effort directed towards priority species (i.e. koalas=34 projects). Furthermore, our integrated programmatic approach means many more species benefit indirectly by taking a structured multi-objective approach that maximises benefits to species.
WWF-Australia has, directly and indirectly, supported at least 75 Indigenous organisations/communities in their efforts to revitalise cultural fire management and indigenous land management	Indigenous collaborations	4	22	29	75	Our initial engagement has focused on building strong collaborations with key Indigenous organisations such as Firesticks Alliance. In FY22, we are starting to see these relationships come to fruition and we are anticipating a significant increase in Indigenous collaborations through the Women Rangers Environment Network and our Indigenous Cultural Fire Program.
100,000 ha in priority bushfire affected landscapes under restoration to enhance species recovery	Hectares under restoration	592	9,994	9,994	100,000	Through the Greening Australia signature partnership, we are anticipating a significant scale up in our on-ground restoration efforts this financial year. Our advocacy work to increase restoration efforts at the federal and state level is ongoing.
10m tonnes of (additional) CO <sub>2</sub> e abatement and sequestration through protecting and restoring forests	CO <sub>2</sub> e t Abated/sequestered	222,000	749,400	749,400	10,000,000	

<sup>i</sup> *List of priority species* – These species are illustrative of the key actions and issues that we’ve identified for post-fire recovery of ecosystems and biodiversity more broadly (see below). Therefore, focusing on these species will either directly benefit many other species, provide a platform for us to drive action and awareness on wider issues and/or enable us to demonstrate approaches for species-specific recovery that can be applied to other species. While maintaining this overall framework, we refined the list to ensure we had a cross-section of taxa, fire-affected geographies and ecosystem types covered across the portfolio.

Priority species	Key conservation activities/issues	Projects
Koala	Protect and restore habitat	34
Greater glider	Transition out of native forestry	7
Platypus	Improve freshwater quality	4
Potoroos	Control feral predators	0
Frog (TBC)	Adapt to climate change	0
Hastings River mouse	Establish insurance populations	1
Grey-headed flying fox	Enhance ecosystem services (pollination)	3
Lyrebirds	Rainforest vulnerability to climate change	4
Alpine she-oak skink	Alpine vulnerability to climate change	0
KI dunnart	Restore habitat	2