

Here I briefly summarise some things which I think can, if implemented, assist the recovery process and achieve better funds expenditure.

1. Ensure that the Recovery Directorate is properly staffed and not hide bound by red tape and oppressive meeting schedules. The people selected for the task should have good community savvy and connectivity. The best way to achieve an uncomplicated and effective recovery is to enable local communities to own their own recovery. This will not happen with the wrong people in charge.
2. As a priority, rebuild infrastructure, particularly that which is essential to a community continuing to function in the locality. (Power, water, sewerage, School, Library, supermarket, local government offices.) This will keep people in their region and avoid the impression that towns and villages will be slow to recover. There is less prospect of people moving away if their children still have a school to attend.
3. Clean up destroyed house sites and other buildings as a single, centrally funded project. Asbestos and other building refuse issues are best dealt with as one project and not left to individuals and insurers with cross contamination issues if one person has cleaned a site but the neighbours haven't.
4. Something needs to be done about the Tax treatment of funds raised in appeals. For example, we found, through Red Cross, that their appeal fund (over \$8M) could only be distributed to non business recipients, otherwise the fund would lose its tax deductible status. This meant that farmers and business people adversely affected by the fire could not receive any funds from this significant appeal fund.
5. Many farmers do not insure their fences, it is for them an unsustainable business expense. If these farms abut highways and National Parks and Reserves then, depending on the State or Territory, the Highway authority or the Parks and Wildlife Service is likely to be exempt from meeting any part of the cost of replacing farm fencing destroyed in a natural disaster. It is important that rural fencing is rebuilt as quickly as possible, otherwise livestock may stray on to the highway or in to Parks and Reserves. Travel on these roads will be restricted until fencing is repaired. Should there be a nationally funded insurance programme? Or uniform national arrangements for State and Territory contributions towards the cost of replacing such fencing.

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