



\$50k in vouchers distributed by NRCF and Social Futures to over 500 bushfire affected families

For those impacted by the summer bushfires, recovery has been a long and challenging process. With the next season fast approaching, communities still recovering from the devastating fires could easily feel forgotten.

Thanks to funding from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) and Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF), \$50k in vouchers have been distributed to help over 500 bushfire affected families in the Northern Rivers pay for back to school essentials.

NRCF partnered with regional service provider Social Futures to distribute 1000 redeemable \$50 vouchers to families in need across 35 schools in bushfire affected zones, all the way from Nymboida, to Rappville, Bonalbo and Woodenbong.

“The vouchers are for purchasing items that students may have lost in the fires and have never been able to replace due to financial difficulties,” said NRCF Executive Officer, Emily Berry.

“We hope these vouchers support inclusion for the students, helping them fit into their school environment and go on to realise their potential, instead of feeling different, or excluded because they are unable to purchase school essentials.”

“This simple gesture can go a long way... it’s community building for people to receive donations and support from others. It demonstrates a value for people, community and an understanding of hardship,” said Emily.

In partnership with FRRR, the NRCF have been supporting the Back to School Program since it began in the Northern Rivers in 2006, distributing over \$500k in redeemable vouchers to disadvantaged children and their families in our region. This is the first year that NRCF has partnered with Social Futures on the Program.

“We already have strong connections with the diverse communities across the region, including in remote or disadvantaged areas,” explained Social Futures CEO Tony Davies.

“So, when we were asked to help out with this project, we were happy to make use our networks and hard working staff to see the vouchers get into the hands of families that needed them most.”

Michelle Dalglish, principal at Coutts Crossing Public School said many families faced hardship in the aftermath of the fires due to property damage and loss of livestock.

“Our school community was affected by catastrophic fire conditions in November 2019. The fires threatened lives and property in the area, forcing the school to be declared temporarily non-operational due to safety concerns when the Coutts Crossing village was evacuated. It was an extremely scary time for students, families and the whole community,” said Michelle.

“The school has worked hard to deliver a range of social-emotional programs to improve student’s resilience and strengthen coping skills in the aftermath of the bushfires. And now the vouchers have brought some welcome financial relief to families and students,” she said.

All 86 students at Coutts Crossing received a voucher.

“Dad stayed home and we went to our friend’s place so we were safe,” said one Coutts Crossing student, Bryce, who used the voucher to buy new art and craft supplies.

"I let my neighbours stay the night because the fire was so close to their house," said another student, Yuluwirri, who used the voucher to buy new school shoes, while fellow student Dimity bought a colouring book and dot-to-dot book. "I love it because it helps me when I feel stressed," she said.

Media enquiries:

Lydia Plowright, NRCF - lydia@nrcf.org.au or 0438 778224

Warwick Forster, Social Futures – Warwick.Forster@SocialFutures.org.au or 0427 556 892