

## Introduction

The oyster industry is the main aquaculture activity in NSW. The industry produces over 6 million dozen oysters each year which is worth around \$60 million to the state's economy. There are around 270 oyster farming businesses in NSW, supporting an estimated 1,700 direct and indirect jobs. The businesses are based in a range of regional and coastal areas, from the Tweed River in the north to Wonboyn Lake in the south.

The bushfire season had severe impacts to oyster businesses including wind-blown ash, debris and sediment from fires running into oyster producing estuaries and catchments. The ash and sediment caused poor water quality, leading to the suspension of harvesting in some areas. There were also major productivity declines through increased handling and processing of oysters in grading machines. The bushfire season has also caused a steep decline in consumer demand and tourism, which generates many of the sales that the industry relies upon.

This package will co-invest with aquaculture businesses who have been directly impacted by the 2019/20 bushfires to assist in the targeted recovery of their production

The eligible activities and costs have been determined through the development of the Agriculture Recovery Plan available on the Bushfire Industry Recovery Package website.

## Eligibility Criteria

### Eligible Applicants

Aquaculture businesses whose properties or aquaculture leases were affected by bushfires since August 2019 are eligible, including shellfish businesses impacted by ash and fireground runoff. This includes oyster and mussel aquaculture and land-based aquaculture permit holders.

Applicants must demonstrate aquaculture production within the last three years prior to the impacts of the bushfire or have taken over an aquaculture business with an aquaculture production history within the last three years in order to be eligible.

### Eligible Projects

Eligible projects include activities that address or respond to the impacts of bushfires such as:

- the purchase of oyster spat to replace oysters that died due to ash or run off from firegrounds;
- stock loss on land-based farms; and,
- repair or purchase critical infrastructure such as shellfish cultivation equipment, pipes, pumps and tanks to support business recovery.

### Eligible Costs

Capital and other costs directly related to the delivery of eligible projects.

Costs already claimed under the Rural Assistance Authority Special Disaster Grant – Bushfires, other State or Commonwealth program or insurance will not be eligible.

### Eligible Amounts and Limits

Grants of up to a maximum of \$20,000 per aquaculture business, to be matched by an equal cash or in-kind contribution from the business.

### Co-contribution

Co-contributions can include direct cash and in-kind contributions to a project. Costs already incurred for the purchase of oyster spat, stock loss, replacement equipment and infrastructure (and not already claimed / paid under another State or Commonwealth program or insurance) can be deemed a co-contribution.

## Application Process

All applications will be completed online. The form is available at [www.nsw.gov.au/bushfire-industry-recovery-package](http://www.nsw.gov.au/bushfire-industry-recovery-package). Applicants will be required to provide the following information:

- Business details including location, ABN and evidence of production within the last three years
- The aquaculture permit number of the applicant
- Evidence of damage and impact from the bushfires
- Costings for activities proposed to be funded by the grant
- Demonstration of matching co-contribution from the applicant

The NSW Rural Assistance Authority will assess your application against the eligibility criteria and may request additional information from you or your nominated financial advisor or accountant. The RAA has the right to refuse an application if you cannot demonstrate that you meet the eligibility criteria. The RAA can also refuse an application if you do not provide the information requested, in order to undertake an assessment.

## Getting Support

Support can be accessed from the Rural Assistance Authority at [www.raa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au), [rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au) and 1300 678 593.

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