



MEDIA RELEASE

NEW FORUM TO BUILD BEGA COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AFTER THE FIRES

A GROUNDBREAKING NEW PROGRAM aimed at building resilience and hope in rural and regional communities will bring world-leading fire and trauma recovery experts to Bega next week.

Farmers for Climate Action, a group of farmers and rural leaders working to ensure farmers and regional communities are a key part of the solution to climate change, are hosting a virtual Community Resilience forum for the **Bega community on 19 May at 8:45am**.

The free forum, which is open to the entire community to attend, will look at the impact of the catastrophic bushfires on the South Coast, and how the community can develop strength and resources to rebuild to face the challenges of climate change.

Featured speakers include Emergency Leaders for Climate Action chair and former NSW RFS Commissioner Greg Mullins and disaster and trauma recovery expert, clinical psychologist Dr Rob Gordon.

Greg Mullins, former Commissioner of Fire & Rescue NSW, fought the fires at Batemans Bay on New Years Eve as an RFS volunteer. He said that the local community has shown incredible strength during tragedy, but that planning for a future that involves worsening bushfires is necessary due to the effects of climate change.

"There aren't many communities in the world that have had to face what the South Coast went through over summer, and prior to that, in Tathra in 2018. We've never before seen bushfires on this scale - but they're going to become a regular occurrence unless we take urgent action to reduce greenhouse emissions. That means everyone has to have a plan for survival.

"During the summer's fires, the phone towers went, electricity failed, and all access was cut off. There was no radio, no internet, no phones, so nobody could get emergency warnings. There was no refrigeration, no medication available for people who needed it, and food stocks dwindled.

"Everything can fall over so quickly, and a big part of building resilience is going back to basics and asking yourself whether you have the essentials for survival, whether you can cope on your own if everything "normal" is suddenly gone. Resilience begins at home, in local communities, and at all levels of government," said Mr Mullins.

Wendy Cohen, CEO of Farmers for Climate Action, said that regional communities such as Bega have had a very difficult year, and that the forum aims to bring people together to develop strategies to face the challenges that lie ahead.

"Rural and regional Australians have an extraordinary capacity for coming together and tackling challenges as one," Cohen said.

"It has been a tough few months of bushfires and social isolation, but we want to bring people together to identify and pursue the solutions that will make communities stronger, more resilient against climate and economic threats, and help alleviate the threat of climate change," she said.

Anyone who is interested in joining this free, online forum can register their details at www.farmersforclimateaction.org.au/bega_2020_forum

For interviews or for more information contact Lara Nicholson 0431 050 768 or Vai Shah at 0452 290 082.

Interviews available with:

Greg Mullins, AO, Climate Councillor and former Commissioner, Fire and Rescue NSW
Dr Rob Gordon, clinical psychologist
Wendy Cohen, Farmers for Climate Action CEO