

## BIG NEWS

# AUSSIE BUSHFIRES

## “COULD GET WORSE”

**BUSHFIRES** across Australia have killed at least 25 people, destroyed almost 2,000 homes and wiped out huge amounts of the country’s native wildlife populations – and there could be more disaster on the way.

Australia has bushfires every year but officials say they’ve never been this large, or begun this early in the country’s fire season.

While the climate crisis didn’t start these fires, scientists agree that it has contributed to making 2019 Australia’s driest year on record, and has made heatwaves more severe.

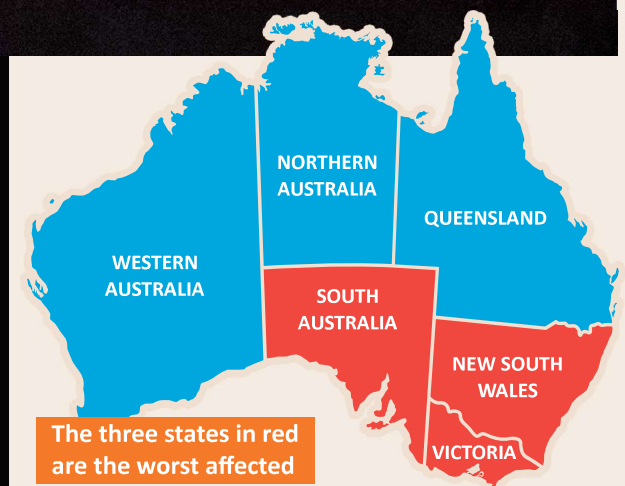
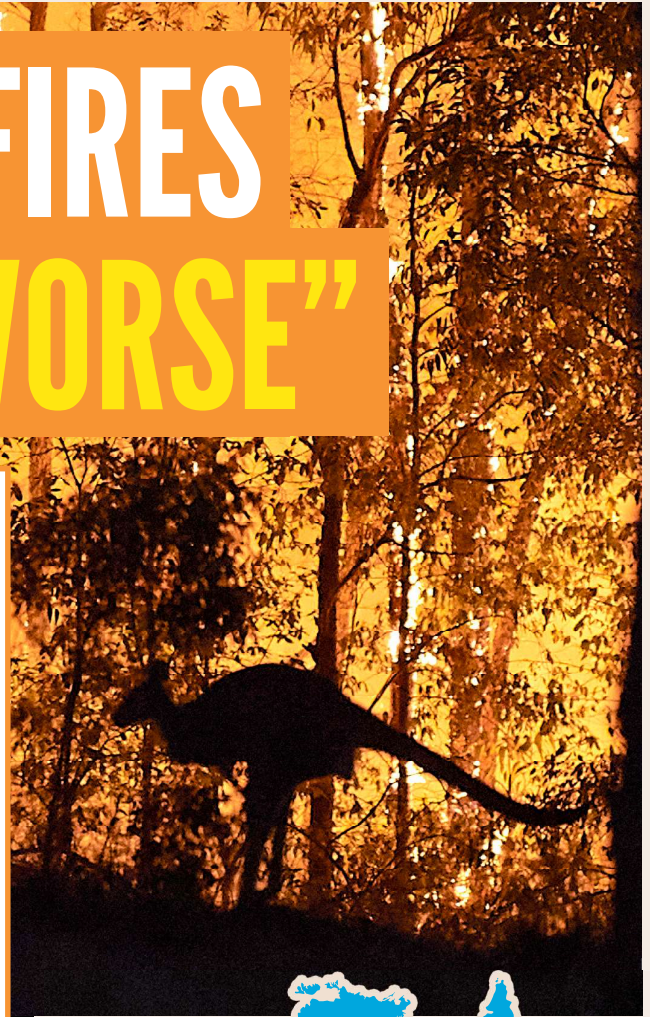
The fires have affected every Australian state, hitting New South Wales (NSW), Victoria and South Australia the hardest.

As First News went to press, much-needed rain had lowered temperatures a little, but the welcome break wasn’t expected to last. Further strong winds and high temperatures have been forecast, and there are concerns that fires in Victoria and NSW could join together to create a “mega blaze”.

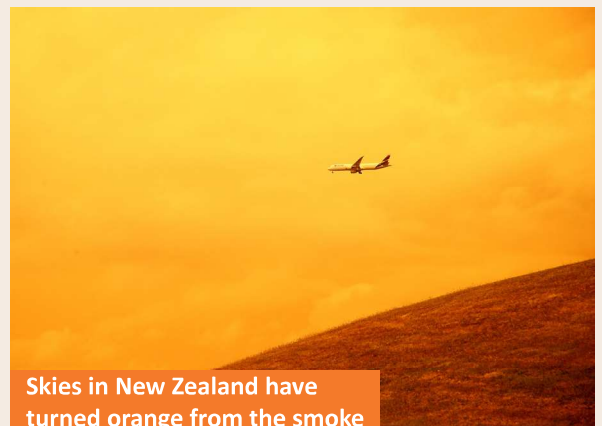
Neville Nicholls, a former professor at Monash University’s School of Earth, Atmosphere and the Environment, said: “While we all hope the rain arrives soon and eases the fire situation, the rain will bring other risks.”

Because Australia hasn’t seen rain for a long time, when it does fall, it’s more likely to rain a lot, and this can lead to floods and landslides.

Fortunately, our ability to predict the weather has vastly improved in the last few decades, and it’s saved lives. Professor Nicholls says: “We must keep adapting to these changing threats, and further improve our ability to forecast them.”



More than ten million hectares have been affected by the flames – an area the size of Scotland and Wales



Skies in New Zealand have turned orange from the smoke

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## GLOSSARY

**bushfire** – An uncontrolled fire burning in an area of wild land that can spread quickly. Wildfires are often started by lightning and are common in hot, dry parts of the world

**Monash University** – A university in Melbourne, Australia

**officials** – People with particular duties or a position of authority

**hectare** – A measurement of area = 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>

## ■ Look at the article 'Aussie bushfires "could get worse"'.

1. Which parts of Australia are being affected by bushfires?
2. Are wildfires unusual in Australia? Explain how you know.
3. What is different about the fires this year?
4. Find three facts that help to explain the size and severity of the fires.
  - 1) .....
  - 2) .....
  - 3) .....
5. Is climate change (also called global warming) the cause of these fires? Explain your answer.
6. What **weather conditions** have made the bushfires worse?
7. Some rain has recently fallen in fire-stricken areas. Find two positive **descriptions** used for the rain.
  - 1) .....
  - 2) .....
8. What is **predicted** to happen next?
9. Why is the weather forecast so important when it comes to wildfires?
10. Photographs are now an important part of news articles. They help to tell the news visually. Do you think the photographs selected for this report are helpful? Explain your opinion.