

**Submission
No 69**

REVIEW OF THE NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY ACT 2022

Organisation: BlazeAid

Date Received: 9 July 2024

Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Subject: Submission from BlazeAid to the Joint Select Committee on the Review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022

To Committee Manager,

I am writing to offer the following submission on behalf of BlazeAid in response to the invitation for submissions in relation to the NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSW RA), and the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022 (the Act) to determine whether

- (a) the policy objectives of the Act remain valid, and
- (b) the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing the objectives.

BlazeAid agrees that these objectives remain valid and appropriate.

BlazeAid would like to acknowledge the significant assistance provided by the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) to BlazeAid, a volunteer-based organisation that has been instrumental in supporting rural communities affected by natural disasters since 2009.

This submission aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) in supporting the non-profit organisation BlazeAid, focusing on the financial assistance provided for various camps in 2022 and 2023. The RA's role in disaster recovery and community resilience is crucial, especially in the context of increasing natural disasters due to climate change and population growth. The financial contributions to BlazeAid camps and grants for fencing materials are significant indicators of the RA's commitment to disaster recovery and community support.

The NSW RA has been established with the goal of proactively reducing the impact of future disasters across New South Wales and to expedite the recovery process for affected communities. Their comprehensive approach encompasses critical planning and preparation alongside communities, businesses, and all levels of government, aiming to mitigate the adverse effects that natural disasters impose on our lives.

BlazeAid, known for its commitment to rebuilding and restoring hope in the aftermath of such calamities, aligns perfectly with the objectives of the NSW RA. The organisation's core foundations of honesty, transparency, trust, empathy, and integrity resonate with the RA's mission to support and rebuild communities with compassion and ethical conduct.

BlazeAid

Helping Communities Rebuild
After Natural Disasters

BlazeAid Inc.
ABN 72 456 906 612
PO Box 73
Kilmore Vic 3764

Kevin – Founder and President: [REDACTED]
Melissa – Chief Executive Officer [REDACTED]
Debbie – National Business Manager: [REDACTED]
Email: admin@blazeaid.com.au
Web: www.blazeaid.com

The collaboration between the NSW RA and BlazeAid has been notably effective in areas ravaged by disasters. The NSW RA has supported the running costs of BlazeAid camps with Disaster Assistance Funding, which has been crucial in maintaining the operational capacity of BlazeAid in regions hit by significant natural disasters throughout NSW. This funding has enabled BlazeAid to continue its invaluable work without the financial burden that might otherwise hinder its operations.

In 2022 and 2023, the RA allocated funds to BlazeAid for the establishment and running of basecamps in several locations, distributed to the following locations:

2022 Camps:

- Wauchope, Oxley Island, Casino, Coolah

2023 Camps:

Lismore, Taralga, Willawarrin, Cessnock, Forbes

Additionally, grants have been provided for fencing materials paid directly to landholders via BlazeAid across NSW.

With the RA's assistance, BlazeAid has achieved remarkable milestones:

- Mobilisation of 25,069 volunteer days
- Service to 1,125 properties
- Clearance of 567 kilometers of fencing
- Reconstruction of 681 kilometers of fencing

These efforts are estimated to have a value of \$15 million in disaster recovery, highlighting the significant impact of the RA's support on the communities affected by natural disasters.

To streamline the funding process and enhance the efficiency of resource allocation, it is recommended that BlazeAid applies directly to the RA for grants in the future, bypassing the intermediary step of applying through local councils.

The NSW Reconstruction Authority's financial support to BlazeAid has been a cornerstone in the recovery process post-natural disasters. The effective use of funds has not only facilitated immediate relief efforts but also contributed to the long-term resilience of communities. It is imperative that this support continues, with improved mechanisms for grant applications to ensure timely and effective aid distribution.

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I trust that this submission will serve to acknowledge and continue the support for such collaborations, which are essential for the well-being and recovery of our communities. BlazeAid would be happy to discuss further if more information is required.

Yours sincerely,



Melissa Jones

Chief Executive Officer, BlazeAid

