

# Helen Haines MP



INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MEMBER FOR INDI



Indi Mailbox Newsletter

June 2020 | Edition 2

## Step up to the counter for Indi business

97%

negatively affected

71%

severe impact

97%



hit hardest accommodation and food

91%



32%

reported 100% revenue loss

### Virus and bushfire challenge us all

The small businesses that make our communities tick have experienced a bruising double-whammy from the coronavirus pandemic and bushfire.

The impacts are revealed by an online small business survey I ran in April. Almost 400 businesses replied. Their answers show the knock-on effects of social distancing in communities reeling from the summer bushfire emergency.

What they told me was alarming:

- **Tourism has been hit hard**
- **Accommodation and food businesses have been hit hardest**
- **400 businesses report 70 per cent revenue loss overall**
- **One-third of them have laid off employees**

The government's response has been significant. I voted for the \$1500 per fortnight JobKeeper supplement and the tax-free cashflow boosts of \$20,000 to \$100,000 for eligible businesses. But so much more must be done to get our businesses and their employees to the other side.

I put to Treasurer Josh Frydenberg six things the federal government should do now to boost support and talked him through my Indi business survey results. I'm working with our small businesses and government every day to make sure this help's delivered.

### What our small businesses told me they need right now

- ✓ Tax breaks, no- or low-interest loans, extended wage help and GST relief
- ✓ Faster bushfire recovery relief
- ✓ Road, rail and tourism investment and capital works
- ✓ Accommodation, hospitality and tourism investment
- ✓ 'Buy local' campaigns – and ensure government 'buys local', too
- ✓ More support for the arts



TABLED: Talking with Treasurer Josh Frydenberg about my COVID-19 Indi small business survey report on May 14.



**SIGNED UP:** On the way to present the petition from more than 1800 people calling for a federal integrity commission that upholds the Beechworth Principles.

## Beechworth Principles show the way

In times like this, we need to trust government to get us through the difficult months ahead.

While our communities battle coronavirus, it's more important than ever for Parliament to create a federal integrity commission to hold politicians to account.

On February 18, in Beechworth, people from Indi packed the old court house to hear about the Beechworth Principles – characteristics that we want to see in a federal integrity commission.

- **Broad jurisdiction**
- **Fair hearings**
- **Accountability to the people**
- **A common set of rules for everybody**
- **Appropriate powers to fulfill its purpose**

Afterwards, I wrote to all parliamentarians about the principles, including the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, asking for their support.

On May 13, I took a petition signed by 1800 people asking Parliament to support a federal integrity commission that upholds these principles.

But this government drags its heels. It committed to presenting an integrity bill in December. It still hasn't done this. And the sports rorts saga rolls on.

I'm calling on the government to get on with it, and when I see the bill I'll use the Beechworth Principles to assess it. We deserve an integrity commission that everyday Australians can trust.

## A renewable energy plan for the regions

The next 50 years could be the brightest ever for regional Australia if we're smart and we work hard for it. We could be an energy superpower.

Imagine 10,000 locally-owned renewable power stations right across the country, generating power at the best locations in the grid, bringing jobs, income and opportunity to towns small and large.

Community energy is where everyday people develop, build or benefit from an energy project like a solar installation, a wind farm or a large battery. It's about building more renewables in regional Australia that will create jobs and make us self-sufficient.

But there's no national plan to make this happen.

I've launched a process with a panel of local community energy advocates to work together to co-design one.

Between now and July 3, you can make a submission to this panel about ways you think the Federal Government can support community energy in regional Australia.

The panel will then look at these submissions to create a community energy policy. When it's ready, I'll take this to government and ask them to consider it.

For everyday people in regional Australia, if we do renewables right, it will mean lower electricity bills, stronger energy security, and new jobs and industries in our communities.

**Go to [helenhaines.org](http://helenhaines.org) to find out more**



**TEST CLINIC:** With Central Medical Group's Dr David Tillett, Suzanne Fisher and Dr Greg Gladman at the Wodonga Respiratory Clinic opening on May 15.

## Thanks to our health heroes keeping us safe

I want to thank all the extraordinary people in our Indi communities who for months have worked tirelessly to keep us safe from coronavirus.

To our health heroes – nurses, doctors, cleaners, staff caring for our older citizens, ambulance, health service administration staff, clinic receptionists and police – you've done an incredible job.

To mid-May, among 8000 people tested in Indi for coronavirus, only 12 returned a positive result. But it's still important to stay safe, maintain social distancing and keep up good hand hygiene. If you have cold or fever symptoms, take the free test at major regional hospitals. Or go to Wodonga Respiratory Clinic - one of more than 100 new, federally-funded clinics where respiratory ailments can be tested for free.

# Delivering the help communities need

My priority is to make sure Indi communities affected by the summer bushfire emergency get the help they need.

I'm pushing the federal and Victorian governments to speed up financial assistance on the ground.

Getting financial help needs to be simpler. And it has to be delivered faster.

Beechworth and the King Valley have been hit hard by the loss of summer tourism. But because Indigo Shire



VIDEO FORUM: Indi local government and business representatives talk with Andrew Colvin in April.

communities weren't touched by fire directly, businesses there haven't been eligible to apply for support like \$10,000 small business grants. I've asked both governments to fix this.

To make sure we're being heard, I organised a 'virtual visit' to Indi by National Bushfire Recovery Agency national co-ordinator Andrew Colvin in mid-April.

Using video-conferencing, our mayors, council chief executives, Corryong Health, Tourism North East, Rural Financial Counselling Service, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, vignerons, winemakers and softwood plantation timber industry businesses were able to tell Mr Colvin about:

- **Re-booting tourism**
- **Ensuring comprehensive mental health support**
- **Smoke impact on our wine grape harvest**
- **Salvaging burned softwood sawlogs**

Bushfire recovery grants, primary producer grants and other supports are available. Contact these agencies to help you make an application:

**Rural Financial Counselling Service 1300 834 775**

**AgBiz Assist 1300 032 332**

**National Bushfire Recovery Agency 02 6288 6300**

**Bushfire Recovery Victoria 1800 560 760**

# \$15 million protects softwood jobs

I was delighted to get a call from federal Assistant Forestry Minister Jonathan Duniam early in May to confirm a **\$15 million** grant to help the softwood plantation industry salvage burned timber.

Indi's softwood production, harvesting and manufacturing sectors provide jobs for 900 people in the North East. But summer's bushfires burned about 6400 hectares of plantations near Shelley and Myrtleford, placing these jobs and the industry's future at risk.

I've been working since the bushfires with industry and government to address this issue.

On March 13, I arranged for NBRA deputy co-ordinator Major General Andrew Hocking to meet plantation managers and



KEY SECTOR: Indi's plantation timber leaders meet Major General Andrew Hocking and me in the Ovens Valley.

manufacturers who rely on this timber for their Myrtleford, Wangaratta and Benalla businesses. They estimated two-thirds of the burned timber could be salvaged. But recovery needs to be quick before the wood degrades.

Working with the industry, state and federal ministers and bushfire agencies, I've been able to get this support.

General Hocking and I also met Country Fire Authority District 24 Command officers in Wodonga and Forest Fire Management Victoria staff at Ovens, near Myrtleford.

These incident controllers talked with us about the scale of the Towong and Alpine fires, the emergency response, and the on-going CFA and FFMV work with communities in recovery.



SAFE HANDS: Major General Andrew Hocking meets CFA District 24 commander Brett Myers, incident controller Graeme Healy and support staff at Wodonga Incident Control Centre.

## Another big mobile phone boost for Indi

Mobile telephone coverage is set to expand again in Indi, with funding committed for new phone towers in six of our communities from Round 5 of the Commonwealth Mobile Black Spot Program.

This will bring to 57 the total number of towers in Indi funded by the federal and Victorian government's Mobile Black Spot Programs since 2015.

The latest funding will improve phone reception at:

- **Cudgewa (Towong Shire)**
- **Walwa (Towong) and Jingellic in NSW**
- **Harrietville (Alpine Shire)**
- **Mount Bruno (Wangaratta Rural City)**
- **Creightons Creek (Strathbogie Shire)**
- **Tagerty (Murrindindi Shire)**

These make up almost half the 13 towers funded in Victoria. This result is a great example of shared, community-driven planning by our local councils, telecommunications companies and the NBN working closely with my office so we put forward strong funding submissions. It also shows that representation by successive Independent MPs continues to deliver results.



**NEW CONNECTION:** Members of the Woods Point community, almost 100 kilometres south of Mansfield, joined Telstra's Loretta Willaton, Mansfield councillor Harry Westendorp and me in August 2019 after a new mobile phone tower in the village was switched on.



**TOASTING SUCCESS:** With Bridge Road Brewers' chief executive Donald Mace.

## Indi innovation

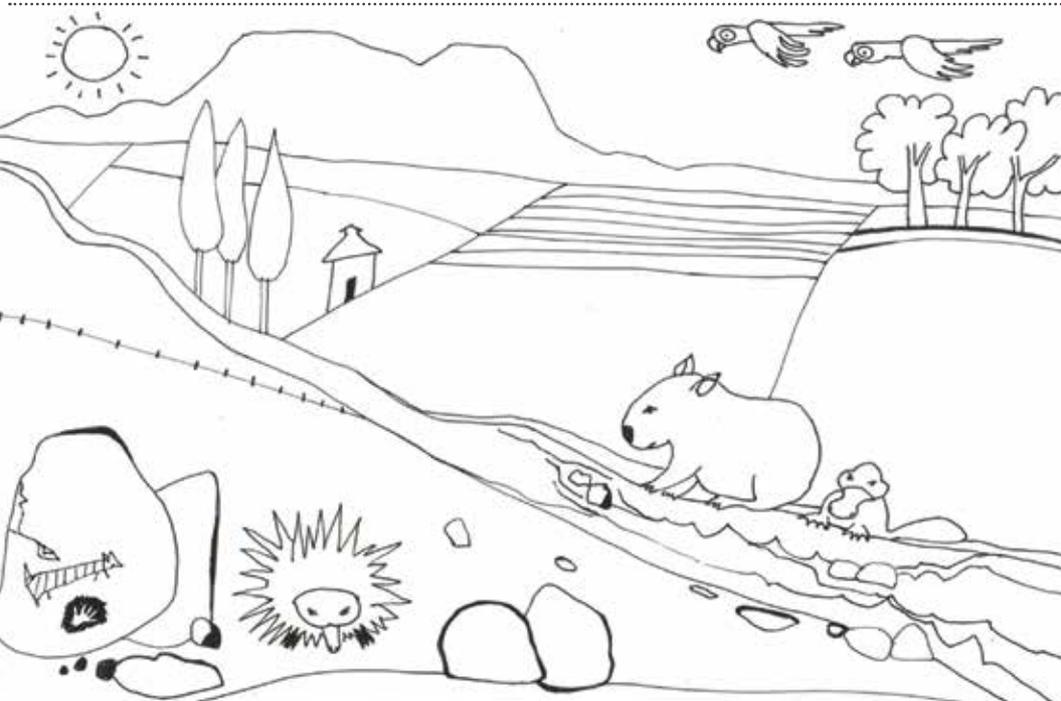
Innovation in Indi powers along with **Bridge Road Brewers** and **Beechworth Honey** securing **\$100,000** each from the Commonwealth's Manufacturing Modernisation Fund.

The \$50 million fund supports transformation in small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses.

The two Beechworth enterprises applied in October 2019 to the fund's \$20 million small-scale projects segment. The successful applicants were announced in April.

Each business will match its grant to upgrade manufacturing processes and build their skilled workforces.

Congratulations to Ben and Maria Kraus, Donald Mace and Jodie and Steven Goldsworthy and their staff on their success and commitment. I look forward to seeing these important Indi businesses continuing to step ahead.



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## Colour Indi's landscape

Colour this Indi landscape cartoon by Beechworth artist Kay Hampton. Then fill out your details below, clip the image and post it. Kay and I will select the winning entries and publish the results on my website and Facebook page on June 30.

First Name: .....

Surname: .....

Age: .....

Postcode: .....

Phone: .....

Email: .....

# Community action



## Dial your doctor for telehealth

Responding to coronavirus has made telehealth more accessible. You can now have a consultation from home via phone or video. I discussed the practicalities on a video-call with North East Family Medicine in Wangaratta. Seeing a doctor face to face in rural and regional Australia can be complicated by travel times and poor public transport. Telehealth is a great alternative. It's covered by Medicare for a range of services. These include mental healthcare, chronic disease checks, health assessments, pregnancy support, and aged care facility or after-hours consultations.



**AGE-FRIENDLY:** Launching the disaster recovery report by video-conference

## Age-friendly approaches to disaster recovery

I was so pleased to launch Central Hume Primary Care Partnership's publication 'An Age-Friendly Approach to Disaster Recovery'. This report, written by Beechworth Health's Dr Kathleen Brasher, highlights the contributions older people make during disasters. They volunteer, donate and share wisdom and experience that help communities in recovery, such as the Indi bushfires last summer. It also shows we need to do all we can to keep in touch with older people after disaster.



## Murrindindi environment grant

Furred, feathered and fine-skinned creatures in Murrindindi Shire will get a leg up from the King Parrot Catchment Fox Control Project. Upper Goulburn Landcare at Yea has been awarded a **\$12,584** Communities Environment Program grant to help reduce the impact of foxes in the King Parrot Creek catchment. The aim is to help threatened native species like the brush-tailed phascogale, spot-tailed quoll, striped-legless lizard, spotted quail-thrush and Lewin's rail populations to increase in local habitat. Upper Goulburn Landcare Network will contribute in-kind work valued at \$44,284.

**HABITAT:** Lewin's rail



## Buy from Benalla

COVID-19 social distancing has had a big impact. But what a spur for new ways of doing things! Buy from Benalla grew from idea to online marketplace in just a few short weeks, a fantastic move to boost Benalla business with help from Mansfield's Issimo, Midland Freight and Startup Shakeup. If you're a Benalla store it's free to join up. And for shoppers, purchases can be delivered across the upper North East. Clever commerce, community and Benalla Rural City collaboration. And I love the orange signs!

Check [buyfrombenalla.com.au](http://buyfrombenalla.com.au)

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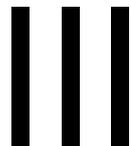
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## Anzac Day

We were unable to gather on Anzac Day to remember those who served Australia in war. But on farms, in backyards and at home we recalled them. In this International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, I honoured our nurses and medics in wartime, and their contribution as they protect us right now.



## Corryong

Towong Shire mayor David Wortmann briefed National Bushfire Recovery Agency deputy co-ordinator Major General Andrew Hocking and me about the ongoing bushfire recovery effort in the Upper Murray communities of Corryong, Cudgewa, Tintaldra and Walwa and the district's valleys.



## Marysville

A shout out to Pans on Fire steel band for its 'Zoom by me' video. Reworking 'Stand by me', the band created the film from zoom footage of each of its musicians to acknowledge those people isolated by coronavirus social distancing who helped Marysville to get back on its feet after Black Saturday in 2009. Find it on YouTube.



## Mansfield

Mansfield Musical and Dramatic Society, or MMuDS as it's affectionately known, does great work. It swept the Goulburn Valley's Georgy Awards, which I spoke about in Parliament. The society formed in 1983 to foster theatrical and musical activities around Mansfield. It has since staged more than 50 plays.



## Violet Town

'Helping Hands' is helping out across the community in Indi postcode district 3669. This wonderful volunteer group is calling in, checking in, running errands, shopping, and putting out and bringing in bins for people. If you'd like to chat, or need a hand, go to Facebook Violet Town Helping Hands or call 0417 166 824.



## Wangaratta

Fran Doig, Joan Sibley, Prue Noble and Virginia Eckles volunteered in my Parliament House office in Canberra just before COVID-19 social distancing rules took effect. Prue afterwards wrote that the shared experience makes them more engaged, informed and interested about politics.



## Tallangatta and Tangambalanga

Share tables – 'Give what you can, take what you need' – to help communities through coronavirus social distancing have been a great success. Andrea Palmer set up tables in Tallangatta and Tangambalanga to provide a place where food, seedlings and books can be offered.



## Wodonga

It was wonderful to welcome budding parliamentarians from Wodonga Primary School year six group to Parliament House. The two groups of 70 kids asked me about how parliament works, my job representing them and how some of them might become Members for Indi!



## Beechworth

Joan Simms and John Hennessy took part in a bushfire recovery forum in Beechworth convened by Susan Benedyka and the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program. 'Our Community Supporting Recovery' explored ways to bring local skills, expertise and ideas to communities recovering from summer's bushfires.



## 'I will survive' 🎵

Thanks to Gloria Gaynor, a sharp tech crew and a clever dog, I had fun filming the coronavirus handwashing challenge for ABC's Insiders on April 18. Crossbench colleague Zali Steggall put me up for the challenge, where MPs sing while showing their handwashing technique. I was keen to showcase the North East, but co-star Monty the border collie stole the show!

Note: Images of people close together were taken before social distancing measures came into effect.