



Monday, 23 November 2020

TRANSCRIPT

NAB CEO Ross McEwan speaks with 3AW's Neil Mitchell

Neil Mitchell: On the line is the Chief Executive Officer of National Australia Bank, Ross McEwan, who has been touring areas in Eastern Victoria affected by the fires because the NAB's involved in support around natural disasters. Ross McEwan, good morning.

Ross McEwan: Good morning, Neil.

NM: Hey first thing first, are you going to get 25 per cent of your staff back in the office this week?

RM: Well look, I'd love to get them back, we're certainly planning on getting as many as we can back into the office as long as it's safe and secure for them. I think a number of them are looking forward to getting back as well, having spent the last seven months at home. Not always an easy time when you're looking after children and both of you are working and those sorts of things. So, I think for some it will be a relief, but also work has changed and where people work from has probably changed because of what's happened in the last seven months.

NM: So, you don't reckon you'll get back to 100 per cent?

RM: I can't see it. Look, 80 per cent our colleagues at work when we surveyed them said they'd like a balance between working from home and working from a workplace. We've certainly shown that we can operate that way and our staff have shown that they've done a brilliant job of working from home and looking after customers. So, there's a good balance in there somewhere.

NM: OK, the bushfires, I know you've been down around that region – they're still lingering the problems, are they?

RM: I'm down in Bairnsdale today in the Gippsland region and was just chatting to a farmer and it is pouring with rain down here and they are continuing to celebrate the rain because you can basically hear the grass growing. These fires were a devastation and I think many of us forgot about them but the problems linger on in these communities.

NM: So, there's still quite some impact on businesses?

RM: Absolutely, more so on businesses than ever and it was only a year ago to today that the devastation happened and since then we've had COVID as well, so a big impact on a lot of areas.

NM: Have they sort of been forgotten a bit because of COVID do you think?

RM: Yeah, I think that's right and this is the first time I've actually been able to get out of Melbourne itself, out into these areas safely, so it's been great getting back out and connecting with customers and you do see the impact and it's still there and they're still rebuilding. They're rebuilding factories, they're rebuilding fences on farms, they've had forestry burnt down and it still has a lot of ramifications and our research has shown that. A lot of people weren't prepared as they should have been they're still saying nine out of 10, that we've researched, showing that there's still an impact on themselves and the family.

NM: What do they need? What can be done in a broader sense?

RM: Well one thing, I think, Neil, was that people just themselves weren't prepared for what might come through and this is one of the things that NAB's working on now is, particularly with our grants program that we're launching today, an increase in the grants program to \$1.2 million, where they can get a grant to do plans for preparing for the next fire, or flood or whatever comes through, but also helping them recover from it as well. But there are planning tools that people can use to actually prepare themselves and a lot of the people when we did the survey, this was an interesting one, that people just didn't realise there were resources around that could help them to do planning. And they did want their bank to actually step-up and help them both pre- and after.

NM: So where will the \$1.2 million go?

RM: Out into communities where people are wanting to develop a plan for the next disaster that may come through. It'll go into areas in helping them recover, so if people have lost fencing and parts of their factory or the like, the grants are there for out in the community.

NM: Thank you very much for your time, I appreciate it.