

Community Recovery Information #6

This newsletter contains recovery information for people impacted by bushfires across NSW while also considering COVID-19 impacts.

A message from Mick Willing State Recovery Coordinator NSW Disaster Recovery Office

COVID-19 introduces new challenges to bushfire recovery. I assure you that the NSW Government is committed to continuing to support your community on the road to recovery.

Protections such as social distancing and controls on large gatherings extended the opening of Recovery Centres for as long as possible, but Government's response to COVID-19 means they will now have to close temporarily.

This means the four remaining Recovery Centres in Bega, Batemans Bay, Narooma and Ulladulla will now close. The numbers visiting these centres had decreased significantly over time; it had not become unusual for only one household to register on some days.

We would like to thank the Recovery Centre staff who have supported thousands of people affected by the bushfires. Staff will now be offering online, phone and one-on-one service where possible, in line with the social distancing requirements.

Councils are using social media and online forums to connect and continue to support their communities.

The clean-up will continue, with Laing O'Rourke working across the state. If you know someone who has yet to register for clean-up – please encourage them to call **13 77 88**.

Service NSW will be continuing its Bushfire Customer Care program. Anyone who needs assistance can call **13 77 88**.

COVID-19 and Recovery

Bushfire recovery activity is a priority and continues across all affected communities.

We would like communities that have been through so much already to know that we will continue to stand with you right through the recovery process in these challenging times.

While we focus on new ways to move forward with recovery, there are ways for us all to stay safe during this time.

- If you can work from home, do. Stay at home and limit your movements outside
- Physically distance yourself from others – stay 2 metres apart
- Don't shake hands or physically greet people
- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- Don't touch your face, and if you do, wash your hands
- Self-isolate for 14 days if you have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you have been overseas
- Indoor gatherings of 100 or more people are not permitted, and outdoor gatherings of 500 or more people are not permitted (hotels, caravan parks and hostels exempt if necessary for the normal operation of accommodation services)

If you or someone in your household has severe symptoms, contact your GP or call Healthdirect 1800 022 222

Visit the NSW Health COVID-19 website for more information nsw.gov.au/covid-19

Register for Clean-Up

Laing O'Rourke are progressing the clean-up process.

You need to opt in to the clean-up program and register your property. You can do this by calling Service NSW on **13 77 88** or visiting **service.nsw.gov.au**

The project team is ensuring all staff are complying to social distancing recommendations of Government -- do not shake hands, or exchange physical greetings, and stay at least 2 metres away from others.

Destroyed or damaged buildings on a property that are the primary residences or places of business, and any associated debris, will be safely cleaned up and removed. As necessary, work may include:

- removal of known hazardous materials, including asbestos
- removal of materials destroyed by bush fire and hazardous trees near the destroyed or damaged primary residence or place of business
- removal of damaged driveways that could impact on the safety of the clean-up
- with consent of building owners, removal of concrete slab foundations.

Once you've registered:

1. Laing O'Rourke staff will contact you to discuss the damage and assess your eligibility.
2. Once the area is declared safe, they will meet with you on site, in line with the current social distancing requirement.
3. You approve the scope of works.
4. The clean-up of the property will commence.
5. You confirm the completion of the agreed scope of works.

Laing O'Rourke will always pre-arrange any household visits and will not turn up unannounced or demand payment.

Mental health support

Bushfires are distressing and you might still be feeling sad or anxious, or having trouble sleeping or remembering things. At this time people might also be overwhelmed by the constantly changing alerts and media coverage regarding COVID-19.

There are some things you can do to take care of yourself or the mental health of someone you know.

- spend time with family and friends – video calls or phone calls can help if you are isolated
- try to get back in to a routine
- continue a healthy lifestyle (eating, sleeping, exercise)
- write down your worries and concerns
- express your feelings in your own time and way
- accept help when it's offered
- limit the amount of media coverage you are exposed to
- don't expect to have all the answers
- understand you are not alone in your experience.

➤ **NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511**

➤ **Beyondblue: 1300 22 4636**

➤ **Lifeline Bushfire Recovery: 13 43 57**

➤ **Mensline: 1300 789 978**

➤ **Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800**

➤ **If you or someone you know is in immediate danger call 000**

The NSW Government has invested \$15.3 million to support bushfire mental health. There are 30 clinicians across the State. People suffering from trauma or stress as a result of the State's bushfire crisis should contact their local health service via the NSW Mental Health Line on **1800 011 511**.

Bushfire Customer Care Service

The NSW Bushfire Customer Care Service can help you navigate the support and financial assistance that's available across all levels of government. This service is delivered by Service NSW. It offers one-on-one support for people and businesses over the phone or in-person.

Call 13 77 88 (7am to 7pm daily) or **visit service.nsw.gov.au** for locations of Service NSW Centres.

So far, over 5,400 people have signed up to the Bushfire Customer Care program. The Service NSW Mobile Service Centres have visited over 50 bushfire-impacted towns across the state and helped over 860 people through mobile visits.

Emergency temporary accommodation

Emergency accommodation is available to people who have been directly affected by a natural disaster. This includes fires and floods.

The Natural Disaster Housing Assistance Service can also help with rental bond loans and advance rent.

Call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on 1800 018 444

Government financial assistance

Please note, a number of these measures have eligibility requirements.

Commonwealth Government Disaster Recovery Payment

\$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child for people severely affected by bushfires. An additional \$400 will also be provided for children. This additional payment is applied automatically.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Commonwealth Government Disaster Recovery Allowance

The Disaster Recovery Allowance is a short-term support payment if your income has been affected as a direct result of the bush fires.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

NSW Government Disaster Relief Grants

Grants are available for eligible individuals and families whose homes and essential household contents have been damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster.

To be eligible for this assistance you must:

- Be a low-income earner and meet an income assets test
- Demonstrate that the affected home is your principal place of residence
- Not be covered by insurance
- Demonstrate that the damage was caused by the disaster
- Lodge the application within four months of the disaster occurring

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Volunteer Firefighters' Financial Support

Payments for eligible volunteer firefighters who are self-employed or employed by a small or medium business and have lost income.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Primary Industries Grants Program

\$75,000 recovery grants, concessional loans and transport subsidies for eligible primary producers. More than \$40 million has been paid out to date.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Small Business Grants

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available if your business has been directly affected by bush fire.

There are also \$10,000 loans available for all small businesses in eligible LGA's.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Business Loans

Up to \$500,000 is available for eligible businesses.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Replacement of documents

Free replacement of licences, permits and certificates, including NSW Fair Trading permits/licences.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Legal advice

The Disaster Response Legal Service NSW can provide free legal advice to people affected by disasters on a range of issues.

They can help you with:

- Insurance claims and disputes
- Financial hardship
- Centrelink
- Tenancy problems
- Your rights at work
- Replacing important documents
- Domestic violence advice
- Other everyday legal problems

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Stamp Duty Relief

The NSW Government is providing stamp duty relief of up to \$55,000 for people who lost their homes during bushfires and who choose to purchase a replacement home elsewhere rather than rebuild.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88