



**Australian Government**

# Australian Government Services in Response to the Bushfires

## **CUSTOMER PACK**

Information current as of: **30 January 2020**

The Australian Government is providing services and information to bushfire affected communities across the country. This pack gives you the information and contact details for Australian Government services available to families and individuals affected by the bushfires.

●Department of Human Services ●National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) ●Australian Taxation Office ●Department of Veterans' Affairs ●NSW Government ●National Indigenous Australians Agency ●Hearing Australia ●Department of Employment, Skills Small and Family Business ●Victorian Government ●Attorney-General's Department ●South Australian Government



**Australian Government**

# Australian Government Services in Response to the Bushfires

Part A:  
Support for  
Residents

# INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

## Department of Human Services (Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support Services)

**180 22 66** – This is a dedicated phone line for people adversely affected by the bushfires. Mon-Fri 8am - 8pm, 8am - 5pm on weekends (local time).

- The **Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment** is a one-off payment of \$1,000 for each eligible adult and \$400 for each dependent child for people who have been injured, who have lost an immediate family member or whose home has been significantly damaged or destroyed.
- Eligible recipients of the **Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment** for a child in their primary care will automatically qualify for the **Additional Payment for Children**. This is an additional amount of \$400 for each dependent child (under 16 years of age).
- The **Disaster Recovery Allowance** is an income support payment for up to 13 weeks for people who have lost income as a direct result of the fires. The payment is the equivalent of the maximum rate of Newstart or Youth Allowance.
- There are ex-gratia equivalents of each of these payments for eligible New Zealanders.
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)** Temporary Financial Hardship  
If you've been affected by the bushfires you may be able to access ACCS. You can get it for up to 13 weeks. You don't need to meet the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity test. This means you can access up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight.

Services are provided in all Service Centres. Mobile Service Centres and Mobile Service Teams are also visiting affected areas with mobile equipment to assist people claim payments and provide information.

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/disaster>

### Mutual Obligation

Jobseekers involved in bushfire recovery should contact Centrelink to seek an exemption from their mutual obligation requirements after 19 January 2020.

Job seekers who live in bushfire affected regions will not have to meet any of their mutual obligation requirements until 6 March 2020, and will not be required to seek an exemption from these requirements.

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency/bushfires>

### Debt recovery

We've paused all debt and compliance activities in bushfire affected areas. This applies to customers living in declared disaster areas by the Australian Government.

<b>National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	<p><b>1800 800 110</b></p> <p>For NDIS participants or providers affected by the bushfires – indicate that the person is from an impacted bushfire area, and the request will be marked as urgent.</p> <p>The National Contact Centre is open 8am - 8pm Monday - Friday.</p> <p>Providers can also send an email to <a href="mailto:provider.support@ndis.gov.au">provider.support@ndis.gov.au</a> and include the words ‘Natural Disaster’ in the subject line of the email.</p>
<b>Australian Taxation Office</b>	<p><b>1800 806 218- Emergency Support Infoline</b> (8.00am–6.00pm Monday–Friday)</p> <p>This phone line is available for everyone, including those who are outside the identified impacted areas</p> <p>If the customer has a residence or business in the impacted areas (postcodes available on <a href="http://ato.gov.au">ato.gov.au</a>) the automatic deferrals for lodgments and payments have been applied, and if they are receiving a refund, this will be prioritised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For a language other than English, the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is on <b>13 14 50</b>.</li> <li>• The Indigenous Helpline is 13 10 30.</li> </ul> <p>We recognise the ongoing effects of this disaster and will continue to update our <a href="http://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters">ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters</a> webpage with additional <a href="#">impacted postcodes</a> and available support.</p>
<b>Department of Veterans’ Affairs</b>	<p><b>1800 555 254 General Enquiries</b></p> <p>Transport <b>1800 550 455</b> – DVA may provide financial assistance with travelling expenses for medical treatment in Australia.</p> <p>Defence Service Homes Insurance <b>1300 552 662</b></p> <p>Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling <b>1800 011 046</b> provides a 24 hour free and confidential counselling and support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families</p>
<b>NSW Government</b>	<p><b>13 77 88- Service NSW contact number</b></p> <p><a href="http://Service.nsw.gov.au">Service.nsw.gov.au</a> is the key source of information about the programs provided to support the fire response. This website is updated as new programs come on board. The Service NSW contact number for customers is 13 77 88.</p>

The Office of Emergency Management website contains information about Evacuation Centres and Disaster Welfare Access Points  
[www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance.aspx](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance.aspx)

Types of assistance we can help with include:

- Accommodation advice
- Relevant charitable services
- Mental health and wellbeing services
- Support for businesses
- Clean-up services
- Financial assistance
- Grants and rebates
- Insurance and legal support
- Replacing lost ID
- Volunteer RFS and SES payments.

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

Customers impacted by bushfires are encouraged to call Service NSW on 13 77 88, see a Service NSW team member in a Disaster Recovery Centre, visit a Service NSW Centre or Mobile Service Centre, or go to [service.nsw.gov.au](http://service.nsw.gov.au) for assistance.

## Hearing Australia

### **1800 826 500- Emergency Helpline**

Available 8:30pm to 5:00pm AEST, Monday–Friday.

- Access to emergency appointments at the nearest Hearing Australia Centre to see a qualified audiologist.
- Support services including initial hearing checks, replacement of hearing aids lost or damaged during the bushfire emergency, and hearing aid batteries\*.
- Hearing Australia bus visits to provide hearing healthcare to bushfire impacted areas.

**\*Please note conditions apply. Follow up services may attract a fee. Please discuss eligibility requirements with your Hearing Australia representative.**

<p><b>Victorian GOVERNMENT</b></p>	<p><b>1800 560 760</b>—Bushfire case support</p> <p>Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) is focused on the needs of Victorian communities, working closely with local residents to ensure that rehabilitation projects are both locally-driven and locally-delivered.</p> <p>The establishment of the new agency recognises the long process of recovery and the increased risk our state faces due to longer and hotter bushfire seasons</p> <p>Recovery grants: up to \$75,000 for farmers in these areas affected by the recent bushfires</p> <p><b>Community and Emergency Services Health:</b> \$10 million to boost mental health services and support people impacted by fire, including emergency service personnel</p> <p>All other enquiries <b>1800 560 760</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:BushFireRecoveryVictoria@dpc.vic.gov.au">BushFireRecoveryVictoria@dpc.vic.gov.au</a></p> <p><b>DHHS Personal Hardship Assistance Program</b></p> <p>A Personal Hardship Assistance Program information line <b>1800 961 054</b> has now been set up for the Eastern Victoria bushfires.</p> <p>This hotline will support affected Victorians by providing information on Personal Hardship Assistance Program, including eligibility criteria and guidance as to where individuals and families can go for assessment.</p>
<p><b>Australian Electoral Commission</b></p>	<p><b>13 23 26</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.aec.gov.au">www.aec.gov.au</a></p> <p>If a resident is absent from the address that appears on the electoral roll for a period of time but has the intention to return to that address, they <b>do not</b> need to update their enrolment.</p> <p>If the temporary accommodation <b>becomes more permanent</b> however, they should <b>update their enrolment at an appropriate time.</b></p>
<p><b>Attorney- General's Department</b></p>	<p><b>1300 135 040</b></p> <p>The Australian Government provides financial assistance to cover certain unpaid employment entitlements to eligible employees who lose their job due to the liquidation or bankruptcy of their employer.</p> <p>If you have been retrenched from work because of the liquidation or bankruptcy of your employer, and they do not have sufficient funds available to pay the employment entitlements you are owed, you may be able to claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your unpaid wages—up to 13 weeks</li> <li>• your unpaid annual leave and long service leave</li> <li>• payment in lieu of notice—up to five weeks</li> <li>• redundancy pay—up to four weeks per full year of service</li> </ul> <p>To be eligible you must be an Australian citizen or the holder of a permanent visa or</p>

	<p>special category visa that allows you to stay and work in Australia at the time your employment ended.</p> <p>For further information contact the FEG Hotline on 1300 135 040 or visit</p> <p><a href="https://www.ag.gov.au/industrial-relations/fair-entitlements-guarantee/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.ag.gov.au/industrial-relations/fair-entitlements-guarantee/Pages/default.aspx</a>.</p>
<b>South Australian Government</b>	<p><b>1800 302 787- Recovery Hotline</b></p> <p>South Australians directly affected by the fire can call the Recovery Hotline for information on recovery assistance and support.</p> <p><a href="https://dhs.sa.gov.au/services/disaster-recovery">dhs.sa.gov.au/services/disaster-recovery</a></p> <p>For advice about what to do after an emergency or information about the help available after a disaster.</p> <p><a href="https://sa.gov.au/topics/emergencies-and-safety/recovery">sa.gov.au/topics/emergencies-and-safety/recovery</a></p>

# DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## What financial help is available

### Disaster payments

If you live in a bushfire affected area, you may be eligible to claim a disaster payment from us.

Depending on your situation you may be eligible for:

- Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment
- Disaster Recovery Allowance.

There are also payments for eligible New Zealanders. The quickest way to claim is to call 180 22 66. Go to [humanservices.gov.au/disaster](http://humanservices.gov.au/disaster) for more information, including other claiming options.

### Additional Payment for Children

The Additional Payment for Children is a one-off payment of \$400 per child.

You'll automatically get this payment if you were affected by bushfires after 30 June 2019 and are eligible for the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment.

### Advance Payment

If you get an income support payment or Family Tax Benefit (Part A), you may be eligible for an advance payment.

You'll need to pay it back later out of your payments from us.

### Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) Temporary Financial Hardship

If you've been affected by the bushfires you may be able to access ACCS. You can get it for up to 13 weeks. You don't need to meet the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity test. This means you can access up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight.

To claim this payment you must:

- be eligible or already get CCS
- have experienced temporary financial hardship due to an event in the last 6 months
- have a substantially reduced ability to pay child care fees.

## What happens to my existing payment or card

### Update your details with us

If your details or circumstances change, tell us as soon as you can. This can include things like a temporary change of address.

### Child Support

If you have a child support assessment and your situation has changed, call us so we can update your details. For example, your income or care of your children has changed. This is important so we can make sure your assessment is correct. You can update your details using the Express Plus Child Support mobile app or call 131 272.



## **Job seekers**

Mutual obligation requirements and participation requirements will be suspended for job seekers and ParentsNext participants living in declared bushfire areas until at least 6 March 2020.

If you don't live in a declared bushfire area and you've been impacted by the bushfires, let your employment services provider know. They can tailor your mutual obligation requirements to meet your current circumstances.

You can also contact us and we can give you an exemption from all mutual obligation requirements if you:

- are volunteering as part of the emergency response (e.g. volunteer firefighters)
- have been called to service as part of the Defence Force Reserves to assist with recovery efforts
- have been personally affected by the bushfires
- are providing support to a relative or loved one who has been affected by the bushfires.

## **Debt recovery**

We've paused all debt and compliance activities in bushfire affected areas. This applies to customers living in declared disaster areas by the Australian Government.

## **Access to medicines**

If you can't see a doctor to get a prescription, you can discuss your options with a pharmacist.

Make sure to bring anything that shows what medicines you're taking, such as a medicine pack. If you don't have your concession cards available, your pharmacist can call the PBS general enquiries for assistance.

## **Replace a lost card**

You can request a replacement concession, Health Care Card, Medicare card or Cashless Debit Card.

You can use our self service facilities to order a replacement card.

You can also get a digital copy of your card through the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app or Express Plus Medicare mobile app.

We'll send your replacement card to the address you have registered with us. Don't forget to update your address if it's changed.

## How to get mental health support

You can get up to 10 free counselling sessions if you've been affected by the bushfires in 2019-20. Speak to our social workers to organise counselling sessions. You can also get Medicare benefits for 10 mental health treatment services.

To arrange a mental health treatment, talk to a:

- GP
- psychologist
- occupational therapist
- social worker.

If you don't have a mental health professional near you, you'll still get Medicare benefits for a video telehealth appointment.

### **Social work services**

Our social workers are travelling through fire affected areas with our Mobile Servicing Teams. They can help if you need to turn to someone for support.

You can also talk to a social worker at a service centre or call 132 850 and ask for a social worker.

## How to access our services

We have special arrangements in place to help bushfire affected communities. This includes Mobile Service Teams and Mobile Service Centres.

Find out where they'll be at <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/access>



## NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Contact number: 1800 800 110

[www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support](http://www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support)

# NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Bushfire information and support for NDIS participants and providers

The **Frequently Asked Questions** below will assist those who have been impacted by the current bushfire situation.

## Participants

### **What is the NDIA doing to assist participants in affected areas?**

If you are not in immediate danger and require assistance with your disability supports, contact the NDIS Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 to discuss your circumstances. The NDIS Contact Centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

The NDIA has enacted its Crisis and Recovery processes to assist impacted areas. Dedicated NDIA representatives are being mobilised in fire affected areas to assist impacted participants and providers. Every effort is being made to ensure processes for impacted participants are simple and clear and there is a specific point of contact.

### **What help can I get from the NDIS?**

NDIS participants impacted by the bushfires are being prioritised to ensure they can continue to receive their NDIS supports, including any additional supports that may be required such as replacing equipment, additional care or therapies.

Where appropriate we can quickly make changes to your NDIS plan to minimise paperwork.

### **How do I tell the NDIS about changes to my circumstances?**

We understand your circumstances may have changes as a result of the bushfires. Normally when changes occur, you would need to complete a change of circumstances request. However, to simplify the process for you, we will conduct Agency initiated reviews for participants known to be in affected areas. This means we can quickly make changes to plans to minimise administration and paperwork.



## **NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME**

Contact number: 1800 800 110

[www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support](http://www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support)

Through this process, we will discuss any changes in your circumstances and any changes to your support needs.

### **Is my local office open?**

While most offices have now reopened, some offices remain closed. You can check the [NDIS Website](#) for the latest information.

### **Will my planning or review meeting go ahead?**

If you have an NDIS meeting booked and you live in an affected area, please contact the NDIS Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 if you need to reschedule an appointment or seek additional information about your meeting.

You will be offered the choice of having your appointment via phone with an alternate office, or rescheduling to a later date when the office may re-open.

With most offices now open, your planning or review meeting is likely to go ahead as scheduled. Your local office will contact you if your meeting needs to be rescheduled.

It is important for participants and carers to follow advice from their local emergency services and health department as to whether it is safe to travel in their area.

### **What if my plan is due to expire and I can't attend my meeting?**

Please contact the NDIA Contact Centre on 1800 800 110. Depending on your situation, there are a range of options we can discuss with you, including automatic plan extensions of varying durations.

### **What do I do if my provider is not operating?**

Please contact your Support Coordinator, LAC or the NDIA Contact Centre. We will work with you to ensure that suitable alternative arrangements are made. Please be aware that many people who work for providers in affected areas are also likely to be personally impacted, but we will do what we can to support participants.

### **What do I do if I need an urgent Assistive Technology repair?**

To make sure participants can access urgent repairs for their Assistive



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Technology (AT) or equipment even when they don't have funding in their plan, the NDIS Contact Centre can provide authorisation for funds over the phone.

Repairs and maintenance of AT is included [in a participant's NDIS budget](#) where they are funded for AT supports. If there is no funding available for an urgent repair, the Contact Centre can provide an authorisation number over the phone to ensure participants can access the support they need and providers are paid appropriately.

Urgent repairs include repairs to equipment the participant is dependent on for safety, mobility, communication, or activities of daily living (e.g. showering).

Repairing AT damaged in a natural disaster will be classified as an urgent repair. This extends to hiring a replacement item where needed (e.g. the AT is destroyed or significantly damaged) until a more permanent solution is available.

If a participant needs an urgent repair to their AT, and does not have funding available in their NDIS budget, the following action should be taken.

### Agency-managed participants

- Providers should always try to complete a service booking for an urgent repair.
- If this doesn't work, the provider should call the Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 to seek a pre-claim authorisation approval. Providers will need the participant's name, NDIS number, and date of birth to gain authorisation.
- If a repair is required outside of Contact Centre hours (8am to 8pm), a repair can be made to make the AT safe and usable or an alternative support hired. Approval for further repair, and/or a pre-claim authorisation can be provided the next business day.

### Self-managed participants

- Participants should pay the provider for urgent repairs directly and then claim against their plan.
- If there isn't sufficient funding available in their budget, call the Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 for assistance.



## NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Contact number: 1800 800 110

[www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support](http://www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support)

### Plan-managed participants

- The participant's registered plan management provider can pay the AT provider for urgent repairs and claim against the plan.
- If there isn't sufficient funding available in their budget, call the Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 for assistance.

### Providers

#### **Our business has been contacted to deliver services to a participant who has been affected by the bushfires. What do I need to know?**

If you are a provider and have been contacted to deliver services to a participant immediately before, during or after the emergency please deliver the services required and following the disaster contact the NDIS Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 or [provider.support@ndis.gov.au](mailto:provider.support@ndis.gov.au) and include Natural Disaster in the subject line.

After the emergency the NDIA can make changes to participants' budgets through the unscheduled plan review process, so that expenses incurred in the delivery of disability supports can be claimed on the basis of changed circumstances.

Providers delivering Support Coordination or other essential disability related supports should continue to provide services and claim, but should assist the participant in arranging a plan review if their circumstance have changed by contacting the Contact Centre on 1800 800 110.

#### **How do we claim payments?**

NDIS registered Providers are reminded they must ensure they only submit Payment Requests for supports outlined in the [NDIS Price Guide and Support Catalogue](#).

## AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE

### Key messages

- The ATO recognises that bushfires continue to devastate communities across Australia.
- If you, or anyone you know, have been impacted by the bushfires don't worry about tax at this time. Now is the time for you, your family and community. The ATO will help you sort out your tax affairs when you are ready.
- For people and businesses living in impacted local government areas, we'll automatically defer any lodgments or payments you have due. Income tax, activity statement, SMSF and FBT lodgments, and their associated payments, will be deferred until **28 May 2020**.
- The ATO continues to update their website with identified impacted postcodes and information about specific support available to anyone impacted. Visit [ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](http://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters).
- If your business or residential address is in one of the identified impacted postcodes on the ATO website, automatic deferrals for lodgments and payments due have been applied. You, or your agent, do not need to apply for these deferrals.
- The ATO will also automatically prioritise your refund if you have one due to you.
- If you need further assistance, or you're not in a listed postcode, you can phone the ATO on **1800 806 218**, or speak to your tax or BAS agent, for help based on your circumstance.

### Support available for you

To help you we can, for example:

- give you extra time to pay your debt or lodge tax forms such as activity statements
- help you find your lost tax file number (TFN) by using methods to verify your identity such as your date of birth, address and bank account details
- re-issue income tax returns, activity statements and notices of assessment
- help you re-construct tax records lost or damaged in the bushfire
- prioritise any refunds you are owed
- set up a payment plan tailored to your circumstances including an interest-free period
- remit penalties or interest charged during the time you have been affected by the bushfires.

### More information

- [ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](http://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters)
- ATO Emergency Support Infoline on **1800 806 218** (8.00am–6.00pm Monday–Friday) – this phone line is available for everyone, including those who are outside the identified impacted areas
- General ATO assistance **13 28 61** (8.00am–6.00pm Monday–Friday)



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Australian Taxation Office

## Australian Taxation Office

Contact number: 1800 806 218

[ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](https://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters)

- If you prefer to speak to the ATO in a language other than English, phone the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50 for help with your call.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can phone the ATO Indigenous Helpline on 13 10 30.
- If you have difficulty hearing or speaking to people who use a phone, you can contact the ATO through the National Relay Service (NRS).

## Frequently asked questions

### **I'm in an identified impacted area and have an automatic deferral. When is that due?**

- We recognise the ongoing effects of this disaster and will continue to update our [ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](https://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters) with additional impacted postcodes and available support.
- If your business or residential address is in an impacted region (as identified in the identified impacted postcodes list), the deferred date is **28 May 2020**. Your income tax, activity statement, SMSF and FBT lodgments, and their associated payments, will be automatically deferred.

### **What if I need more assistance?**

We know these times are tough, if you need more assistance or want to talk to someone about your affairs call the ATO on **1800 806 218** for assistance, or your tax or BAS agent.

### **I'm impacted but I don't live in the areas listed, what do I do?**

- If you have been affected by this disaster but your postcode is not currently in the identified impacted postcodes list, you don't need to worry. When you're ready and if you need assistance, phone the ATO on **1800 806 218** for help based on your situation.

[Note: this includes those assisting in the response to the fires]

- If you are a tax or BAS agent operating outside of the impacted postcodes, but have clients that are in the impacted postcode regions, the deferral options will apply to those clients.

### **I've been seriously affected; I don't know how I'm going to recover from this.**

- If you are experiencing serious hardship, the ATO can help you manage tax and super commitments through difficult circumstances, call the ATO on **1800 806 218** or speak to your tax professional.
- We recognise that events like these take a toll on your personal health and





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Australian Taxation Office

## Australian Taxation Office

Contact number: 1800 806 218

[ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](http://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters)

wellbeing. If you're struggling with your mental health and need immediate support you can phone Beyond Blue any time on **1300 224 636** or Lifeline on **13 11 14**. You can also visit our website at [ato.gov.au/wellbeing](http://ato.gov.au/wellbeing) for a list of additional support providers.

### What type of help can the ATO offer?

- The ATO can work with you to help you sort out your tax affairs. Depending on your circumstances they can help by:
  - giving you extra time to pay your debt or lodge tax forms
  - setting up a payment plan tailored to your individual circumstances, including interest free periods, if you owe money
  - fast track any refunds owed
  - helping you find your lost tax file number (TFN)
  - re-issuing income tax returns, activity statements and notices of assessment
  - helping you re-construct lost or damaged tax records
  - remitting penalties or interest charged during the time you have been affected.

### What obligations do I still need to comply with?

- If you are an employer, you will still need to meet your ongoing super guarantee obligations for employees.

### I'm not impacted, but am in an area with deferrals, what do I do?

- If you are not impacted but your business or residential address is in the identified impacted postcodes list, you can continue to meet your ongoing tax and super obligations as normal.

### I want to help by donating to a charity, are donations tax deductible?

- If you would like to donate, gifts of cash to the value of \$2 or more to a disaster relief appeal are deductible if the organisation receiving the gift is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient (DGR). You can check the status on the Australian Business Register (ABR) at <http://abn.business.gov.au/> or phone the ATO on 1300 130 248. More information about donations is available at [ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](http://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters).
- Unfortunately, disasters can often create opportunities for scammers posing as charity representatives seeking donations. You can verify the authenticity of a charity on the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission's (ACNC) website at [acnc.gov.au/charity](http://acnc.gov.au/charity) or contact them on 13 2262, or find out more about scams on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) website at [scamwatch.gov.au](http://scamwatch.gov.au).



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**Australian Taxation Office**

## **Australian Taxation Office**

**Contact number: 1800 806 218**

[ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters](https://ato.gov.au/naturaldisasters)

### **Are there any exceptions?**

- Employers will still need to meet their ongoing super guarantee obligations for their employees. Automatic deferrals do not apply to large pay as you go withholders, however large withholders can contact us for assistance with their tax obligations if required.



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

## Department of Veterans' Affairs

Contact number: 1800 555 254

[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

# DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

## General Enquiries 1800 555 254

Access to medical treatment	Advice regarding overseas travel
Applications for lump sum advances	Recording change of circumstances, including temporary or permanent changes of address
Access to online services	Referrals to other community support
Organising replacement health cards	Assistance with Grant applications
Recording feedback, including complaints	Access to pharmacy benefits
Information on pensions, allowances and compensation entitlements	

## Transport 1800 550 455

DVA may provide financial assistance with travelling expenses, including meals and accommodation for DVA clients and their medically required attendant to attend their closest practical Health provider for medical treatment within Australia. DVA may also arrange transport under the Booked Car with Driver Scheme for travel to approved treatment locations. The Scheme contracts local taxis and hire cars to transport eligible clients to and from their permanent or temporary residence at the time of their medical appointments.

## Defence Service Homes Insurance 1300 552 662

The Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme is available to eligible veterans, serving members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), Reservists or a widow/widower of any of these persons.

Contact us to get a quote on your home, contents, motor vehicle and a number of other insurances.

If you hold an insurance policy with Defence Service Homes Insurance and need to make a claim due to bushfire damage, please contact us as soon as you're safe and able to do so.

## Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling 1800 011 046

Open Arms is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential telephone and face to face counselling, community and peer support and crisis accommodation for current and ex-serving ADF personnel, and their families. For more info visit [www.OpenArms.gov.au](http://www.OpenArms.gov.au)



**Australian Government**

**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

# Department of Veterans' Affairs

Contact number: 1800 555 254

[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

## **Veterans Home Care 1300 550 450**

Veterans' Home Care (VHC) is a DVA program designed to assist eligible DVA clients who need a small amount of practical help to continue living independently in their own home. Services include Domestic Assistance, Personal Care, Respite Care, and safety-related Home and Garden Maintenance. VHC is not designed to meet complex or high-level care needs. The VHC Program also assists carers in recognition of the vital role they play in the veteran and defence community.

## **Household Services 1800 555 254**

Household services (HHS) are provided to members and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) who have incapacitating DRCA or MRCA accepted medical conditions which means they are unable to manage household tasks themselves.

HHS are those services which are reasonably required for the proper running and maintenance of a household and may include meal preparation, cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, shopping, lawn mowing and gardening. Requests for any other similar services can also be considered.

To access HHS a client must complete DVA Form *D9319 Claim for Household Services* in conjunction with their treating doctor and submit to DVA.

## **Medical Providers 1800 550 457**

Direct line for Providers to call if seeking prior approval, wishing to register and account enquiries.

## **Defence Service Homes Loan 1800 722 000**

The DSH subsidised home loan is a subsidised loan of up to \$25,000.00 available to eligible veterans and their surviving partners and dependent parents.

## **Community Nursing 1300 550 450**

Community nursing provides clinical nursing services to eligible members of the veteran community in their own home. Community nursing services can assist with medication, wound care, hygiene and help with showering or dressing. Community nursing services can help to restore or maintain health and

independence at home and assist in avoiding early admittance to hospital or residential care. Community nursing services are provided by a mix of personnel including registered and enrolled nurses and nursing support staff, who work within the framework of their relevant national standards.

- a General Practitioner (GP),
- a Nurse Practitioner specialising in a community nursing field,
- a treating doctor in hospital,
- a hospital discharge planner, or
- a Veterans' Home Care (VHC) Assessment Agency (**1300 550 450**)

### Online Services

MyService: login using [www.my.gov.au](http://www.my.gov.au)

- Apply for the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant
- Claim for incapacity payments
- Access free mental health treatment

MyAccount: login using [www.my.gov.au](http://www.my.gov.au)

- Lump sum advance
- Claim for permanent impairment compensation
- Apply for a service pension or income support partner pension

- Apply for income support supplement

Mailing address:

Department of Veterans' Affairs GPO Box 9998  
Brisbane QLD 4001

Email:

General Enquiries: [GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au) Complaints and feedback:  
[feedback@dva.gov.au](mailto:feedback@dva.gov.au) DVA Media Team: [media.team@dva.gov.au](mailto:media.team@dva.gov.au)



## VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

Contact number: 1800 560 760

[emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au)

## VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program will immediately be available for people in fire affected areas in East Gippsland and North East Victoria. The package will provide Support Coordinators as a single point of contact linking residents with vital support – including information and advice, mental health support and financial counselling.

Access to Support Coordinators can be made via their local council, visiting a recovery centre, by calling **1800 560 760** or emailing [bushfirerecovery@windermere.org.au](mailto:bushfirerecovery@windermere.org.au). Information regarding recovery centre locations and opening hours can be found at [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au)

The Personal Hardship Assistance Program Hotline supports affected Victorians by providing information on personal hardship assistance payments, including eligibility criteria and guidance on where individuals and families can go for support.

A one-off payment (up to \$1800 for families/\$500 for individuals) is provided to help meet immediate needs, including emergency food, shelter, clothing, medication and accommodation.

A needs assessment is carried out by a Personal Hardship Assistance Officer at an Emergency Relief Centre to determine eligibility.

### **Relief payments are not available to:**

- Tourists
- Cover the costs of cleaning up fallen trees or branches on properties
- Cover the cost of repairing or replacing fences. If a tree has fallen on your house, please call the SES or your local council for more information
- Cover losses or impacts associated with power outages. Contact your energy distributor if you have any questions
- Cover business losses or compensate for lost income
- Repair or tow motor vehicle
- Pay insurance excess.

The hotline number is **1800 961 054** and operates from 9am - 5pm, 7 days per week.

Information regarding financial assistance available to fire affected communities is available at [https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#financial\\_assistance](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#financial_assistance).

Bushfire Clean-Up Program: Registration is now open for the 2020 Clean-Up Program, which is free of charge for eligible property owners. Property owners are encouraged to register at <https://www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-victoria> or phoning **1800 560 760**. The 2020 Clean-Up Program covers the demolition and disposal of all buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by this season's bushfires (including residential homes and sheds, commercial and public buildings, and other out-buildings).

This may also include the removal of fencing, trees and vehicles but only where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings.



## VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

Contact number: 1800 560 760

[emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au)

### East Gippsland Council services

#### **Bushfire Recovery Centre**

At our Service Street, Bairnsdale office, open **7 days 9am to 5pm**.

This information and recovery centre will provide a mobile service to visit smaller communities, starting Monday 13 January.

The Mobile Recovery Centre will be visiting:

- Wed 22 January – Buchan
- Thurs 23 January – Bemm River
- Friday 24 January – Marlo

It's a one-stop-shop for bushfire-related enquiries.

Agencies on hand include Council, the Insurance Council, Victorian Council of Churches, Disaster Legal Help, Rural Finance, Agriculture Victoria and others.

You can also make fire-related enquiries by phone to **03 5153 9500** and our staff will assist in identifying which services you may need to access.

All general Council enquiries should be made at the Corporate Centre.

#### **Customer Service Centres**

Open centres (open 8.30 am to 5.00 pm)

- Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street, Bairnsdale
- Orbst, Lakes Entrance, Omeo and Paynesville are open for fire-related enquiries and a limited range of usual services
- Omeo has additional opening hours of Saturdays and Sundays 10am to 2pm
- Mallacoota open Mondays and Tuesdays 10am to 2pm and Wednesdays to Fridays 2pm to 5pm

Residents are asked to direct fire-related enquiries to our general number: **03 5153 9500**



## **SERVICE NSW**

Contact number: 13 77 88

[www.service.nsw.gov.au/assistance-bushfire-affected-communities](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/assistance-bushfire-affected-communities)

## **SERVICE NSW**

The Service NSW contact number for customers is **13 77 88**.

The Bushfire Customer Care service has been designed to help individuals and businesses impacted by bushfire to navigate the support that is available to them across all levels of government.

Given the unprecedented nature of the fires and scale of destruction, there is a need to boost current arrangements.

This service will complement and not replace the excellent work that has been delivered by disaster recovery agencies, councils, NGOs and communities since the beginning of this bushfire season and which is ongoing.

Customers impacted by bushfires are encouraged to call Service NSW on 13 77 88, see a Service NSW team member in a Disaster Recovery Centre, visit a Service NSW Centre or Mobile Service Centre, or go to [www.service.nsw.gov.au](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au) for assistance.

Types of assistance we can help with include:

- Accommodation advice
- Relevant charitable services
- Mental health and wellbeing services
- Support for businesses
- Clean-up services
- Financial assistance
- Grants and rebates
- Insurance and legal support
- Replacing lost ID
- Volunteer RFS and SES payments.

The customer is being asked to:

- Contact Service NSW online, in person or over the phone
- Answer some questions on how they have been impacted by the fires and what help they need
- If they have a one-off request or need, Service NSW helps navigate the application process or conducts a warm handover to the relevant agency offering the service
- The customer will also be offered ongoing support to navigate the recovery process by a Service NSW Customer Care specialist and/or a Business Concierge specifically designed to help small business operators.

Please also note that the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line's number 1800 018 444 is now redirecting to the Service NSW number 13 77 88.



## **SERVICE NSW**

Contact number: 13 77 88

[www.service.nsw.gov.au/assistance-bushfire-affected-communities](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/assistance-bushfire-affected-communities)

We look forward to working with you to support communities in need. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [engagewithus@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:engagewithus@service.nsw.gov.au)

The Service NSW website (<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/assistance-bushfire-affected-communities>) is the key source of information about the programs provided to support the fire response. This website is updated as new programs come on board.

Our Southern NSW and Community & Events Mobile Service Centres will be visiting bushfire-affected communities, helping people replace lost or damaged documents (such as birth or marriage certificates, driver licences, photo cards, and Fair Trading licences and permits) free of charge. <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/mobile-service-centres>

The Office of Emergency Management website ([emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://emergency.nsw.gov.au)) contains information about Evacuation Centres and Disaster Welfare Access Points (<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance.aspx>).

### **Disaster Assistance - [emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://emergency.nsw.gov.au)**

There are a number of schemes available to those in areas declared Natural Disasters, including Personal Hardship and Distress Assistance, Primary Producers, Small Business, Assistance for Council and more.

<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/financial-support.aspx>

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

OPEN EVERY DAY, 8:30am - 4:30pm

People are also encouraged to register online at **Register Find Reunite** (<https://register.redcross.org.au/>). This service registers, finds and reunites family, friends and loved ones after an emergency.



## EMERGENCY HEARING HELP SERVICE FACT SHEET

### Hearing help for bushfire affected communities across Australia

Hearing Australia has established an emergency hearing help service to support its clients and other members of the community in bushfire affected areas across Australia.

Hearing Australia is the sole provider of services to eligible Australians under the Government's Community Service Obligations (CSO) program and the largest provider of services under the Government's Hearing Services Voucher program.

Clients include pension concession card holders, recipients of Centrelink sickness allowance, holders of a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold and White card (specifying hearing loss), NDIS participants, children and young adults under the age of 26 years, adults with complex hearing needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged over 50 years or who are participating in Community Development Programs, and fee paying clients.

**Hearing Australia's emergency hearing help service is available to anyone needing support and includes:**

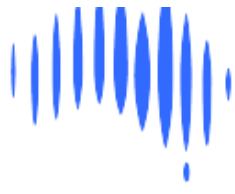
- **An emergency Helpline 1800 826 500** available 8.30am to 5.00pm AEST, Monday–Friday.
- **Access to emergency appointments** at the nearest Hearing Australia Centre to see a qualified audiologist.
- **Support services** including initial hearing checks, replacement of hearing aids lost or damaged during the bushfire emergency, and hearing aid batteries\*.
- **Hearing Australia bus visits** to provide hearing healthcare by qualified audiologists to bushfire impacted areas.

Hearing Australia has also teamed up with Cochlear™ to help people with a Cochlear implant who have been impacted by the bushfires. The Hearing Australia buses are equipped with Cochlear™ Nucleus and Baha® Bone conduction implant troubleshooting kits and accessories, such as microphone protectors, spare non-rechargeable batteries, cables and coils.

The Hearing Australia emergency hearing help service utilises the organisation's nationwide network of professionals to ensure people with hearing loss have support during the bushfire crisis.

Hearing Australia will also work with Australian Government Services, including Centrelink, and local organisations to ensure that people living in bushfire affected areas know how to get urgent help from Hearing Australia if they need it.

**\*Please note conditions apply. Follow up services may attract a fee. Please discuss eligibility requirements with your Hearing Australia representative.**



# Hearing Australia

## Hearing Australia bus and community visit schedule - NSW and VIC\*

Location	Address	When
<b>Katoomba</b>	Bunnings Katoomba Cnr Wilson St and Megalong St NSW	<b>Wednesday 29 January</b> <b>Starting 9:00 am</b>
<b>Mooroopna</b>	Paul Wickham Pharmacy McLennan St VIC	<b>Monday 3 February</b> <b>Starting 10:30am</b>
<b>Shepparton</b>	Chemist Warehouse Shepparton 425 Wyndham St VIC	<b>Tuesday 4 February</b> <b>Starting 9am</b>
<b>Wangaratta</b>	Wangaratta Livestock Exchange 99 Shanley St VIC	<b>Wednesday 5 February</b> <b>Starting 9:30am</b>
<b>Kiama</b>	Kiama Leisure Centre 1 Havilah Pl NSW	<b>Monday 10 February</b> <b>Starting 10:30am</b>
<b>Shellharbour</b>	Bunnings Shellharbour 15 Shandan Cct NSW	<b>Tuesday 11 February</b> <b>Starting 8:30am</b>

\*Schedule subject to change depending on local conditions

\*Please note conditions apply. Follow up services may attract a fee. Please discuss eligibility requirements with your Hearing Australia representative.



# ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

## FAIR ENTITLEMENTS GUARANTEE

### General Information for Claimants

#### What is the Fair Entitlements Guarantee?

The Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG) is a scheme of last resort that provides financial assistance for unpaid employee entitlements in insolvency. FEG assistance is only available where there is no other source of funds to pay employment entitlements to eligible employees retrenched due to liquidation of bankruptcy of the employer.

FEG is administered by the Attorney-General's Department (the department). Decisions about eligibility for FEG assistance are made in accordance with the Fair Entitlements Guarantee Act 2012 (FEG Act).

#### What can I claim?

The department can pay what is owed to you under your terms and conditions of employment for the five basic entitlements below. Some caps apply.

- **wages** – capped at 13 weeks
- **annual leave**
- **long service leave**
- **payment in lieu of notice** – capped at 5 weeks
- **redundancy pay** – capped at 4 weeks per full year of service.

Note: FEG does not cover unpaid Superannuation Guarantee Contributions owed by the employer. If you have unremitted employer superannuation contributions you should:

- contact the insolvency practitioner managing your former employer's affairs to discuss your rights as an employee creditor
- visit the [ATO website](http://www.ato.gov.au/super) (www.ato.gov.au/super)

For further information please refer to the [What assistance can FEG provide?](#) fact sheet available at the [FEG website](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG) (www.ag.gov.au/FEG).

#### Am I eligible for FEG assistance?

You may be eligible for FEG assistance if:

- you have lodged an effective claim within 12 months of either you losing your job or the liquidation/bankruptcy of your former employer (whichever is later), and



## Australian Government

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### Attorney-General's Department

- you have lost your job due to, or less than six months before, your employer's liquidation or bankruptcy, and
- you are owed one or more of the entitlements mentioned above, and
- you were an Australian citizen or the holder of a permanent visa or special category visa that allows you to stay and work in Australia at the time your employment ended.

You will not be eligible if, for example:

- you were a contractor (Textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) contract outworkers may be eligible—see the [FEG website](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG) (www.ag.gov.au/FEG) for further information)
- you are (or were within 12 months before liquidation/bankruptcy) a director of the company, or a spouse or relative (as defined by the Corporations Act 2001) of an employee director of the company.

For further information please refer to the Eligibility for [FEG assistance fact sheet](#) available at the [FEG website](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG) (www.ag.gov.au/FEG).

## How do I make a claim?

You must make an effective claim to be eligible for FEG assistance. It is important that you submit your claim as soon as possible because FEG has strict time limits.

To make an effective claim, you must:

- lodge a FEG claim form (online lodgement is preferred)
- include all mandatory information and documentation requested on the form
- lodge your claim no more than 12 months after the end of your employment or the date your employer entered liquidation or bankruptcy (whichever is later) and
- lodge your claim before the discharge of your former employer's bankruptcy (if your employer was a bankrupt sole trader or partnership).

If your claim is not made within this timeframe, or does not include all required information and documentation, it will not be effective and you will not be eligible for FEG assistance.

For further information please refer to the [How do I apply for FEG assistance](#) and [How do I access FEG Online Services](#) fact sheets available at the FEG website ([www.ag.gov.au/FEG](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG)).

## What if I can't make a claim online?

You can print and complete the [FEG Claim Form](#) and send it to department by email, post or fax. Alternatively, you can call the FEG Hotline and we will post the claim form to you. If submitting a paper form, you should include a copy of your identity documents, not originals.

## How does the department assess claims?

Once we have received your FEG claim, we take a number of steps to assess it in accordance with the requirements of the FEG Act. A number of investigations need to be undertaken to confirm eligibility, the financial affairs of your former employer, and the terms and conditions of your employment from the records of your employer.

For further information please refer to the [How we assess FEG claims Fact Sheet](#) and the FEG



Service Charter available at the FEG website ([www.ag.gov.au/FEG](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG)).

## **Privacy and protecting your personal information**

Your personal information is protected by law, including the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (Privacy Act). Your personal information is collected by the department for the purposes of administering the FEG program. The department may also collect your personal information from third parties including other Commonwealth agencies, your former employer, insolvency practitioners, or contracted service providers, for the purposes of administering the FEG program.

The department's Privacy Policy contains more information about the way in which we will manage your personal information, including information about how you may access your personal information held by the department and seek correction of such information. A copy of the department's Privacy Policy can be found at <http://www.ag.gov.au/Pages/Privacystatement.aspx> or by requesting a copy from the department via email at [privacy@ag.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ag.gov.au).

For further information about steps you should take to protect your personal information during your FEG claim please refer to the [Protecting your information](#) fact sheet available at the FEG website ([www.ag.gov.au/FEG](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG)).

## **Where can I find more information or contact FEG?**

- **Visit FEG website** ([www.ag.gov.au/FEG](http://www.ag.gov.au/FEG)).
- **Call the FEG Hotline** on 1300 135 040, Mon - Fri, 9 am - 5 pm (AEST/ADST)
- **Email us** at [feg@jobs.gov.au](mailto:feg@jobs.gov.au)
- **Fax us** on (02) 6276 8717
- **Post documents** to us at:  
Fair Entitlements Guarantee Branch  
Attorney-General's Department  
PO Box 9880  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

The information contained in this fact sheet is of a general nature and explains, in summary form, the intended operation of the Fair Entitlements Guarantee Act 2012 - it is not legal advice. Where necessary, you should seek your own independent legal advice relevant to your particular circumstances. The Commonwealth does not make any representation or warranty about the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of the information contained in this fact sheet and is not liable for any loss resulting from any action taken or reliance made by you on the information contained in this fact sheet.