

Community Recovery Information #3

This newsletter contains recovery information for people impacted by bushfires in the Hunter, Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands and South East NSW regions.

Emergency accommodation

The NSW Government Bushfire Housing Assistance Service is available for residents who are temporarily or permanently displaced as a result of the NSW bushfires.

This service can help with:

- emergency temporary accommodation
- private rental bonds and advance rent costs
- sourcing accommodation options from the private rental and short term housing sector.

People can access the service by:

- calling the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line (DWAL) on 1800 018 444; or
- contacting or visiting a local Department of Communities and Justice Housing office.

For more information:

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/families-and-communities/bushfire-housing-assistance-service

To find a local Department of Communities and Justice Housing office:

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/contact/housing

For more recovery information

Website:

www.emergency.nsw.gov.au

Facebook:

[@NSWDisasterRecovery](https://www.facebook.com/NSWDisasterRecovery)

Government financial assistance

A range of assistance measures are available to support people affected by bushfires. These are aimed at providing for immediate and short term needs, to support recovery from the bushfires across NSW. *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. Human Services: 180 22 66.

Commonwealth Government Disaster Recovery Allowance – short term income assistance for people severely affected by bushfires. Human Services: 180 22 66.

NSW Government Disaster Relief Grants – financial assistance for eligible individuals with low income and limited assets. Disaster Welfare Assistance Line: 1800 018 444.

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. Service NSW: service.nsw.gov.au

Primary producer assistance - \$15,000 recovery grants, concessional loans and transport subsidies for eligible primary producers. NSW Rural Assistance Authority: 1800 678 593.

Small business assistance – \$15,000 recovery grants and concessional loans for eligible small businesses. NSW Rural Assistance Authority: 1800 678 593.

Motor vehicle stamp duty relief – financial assistance for eligible motorists whose cars have been written off as a result of bushfires. Office of State Revenue: 1300 139 814.

Replacement of documents – free replacement of licences, permits and certificates, including NSW Fair Trading permits/licences. Service NSW: 13 77 88.

Other assistance

Australian Red Cross grants

If you've lost your home in a bushfire since July 2019, you can apply for an emergency grant of \$5,000. Grants will be open until 30 April 2020.

- Australian Red Cross: 1800 733 276

The Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society support

Impacted people are encouraged to register with these charities to receive assistance.

- The Salvation Army: 13 72 58
- St Vincent de Paul Society: 13 18 12

Telstra support

Telstra customers who have suffered severe damage or loss of their premises can access:

- Free call diversion from the customer's Telstra fixed phone service for a maximum period of 6 months from the date of the fire.
 - A one off credit to the value of \$500 including GST to the customer's Telstra fixed phone account to help cover the costs of the following, if required:
 - Connection of a Telstra fixed phone service at one temporary residence
 - Re-connection of a Telstra fixed phone service at the customer's original permanent premises.
- Telstra: 132 203

Banking support

Many banks are providing fee and loan repayment measures to help customers impacted by the bushfire and drought emergencies.

Contact your bank for more information.

Animal welfare

Local Land Services can assist with emergency fodder, stock water and assessment of animals impacted by the fire. Landholders are also encouraged report any stock losses or animal welfare issues.

- Local Land Services: 1800 814 647

Mental health and wellbeing

It's completely normal to experience a range of emotions after a fire, including anxiety, forgetfulness, sleep disturbance and more.

Having someone to listen to and support you through this is very important.

Check in on your friends and neighbours, and if you or someone you know needs help, reach out.

The following are free services available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

- **Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511**
- **Beyondblue: 1300 22 4636**
- **Lifeline: 13 11 14**
- **Mensline: 1300 789 978**
- **Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800**

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

Some tips on managing your recovery include:

- Spend time with family and friends
- Try to get back into a routine
- Continue a healthy lifestyle (eating, sleeping, exercise)
- Take time out but don't isolate yourself
- Express your feelings in your own way
- Accept help when it is 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.
- Keep checking in with your friends and neighbours and looking out for each other.

Legal advice

The Disaster Response Legal Service NSW can provide free legal advice to people affected by disasters on a range of issues, including insurance, tenancy, credit and debt.

- Disaster Response Legal Service: 1800 801 529

Bushfire clean-up and waste management

If you are insured:

- Talk to your insurance company as soon as possible about how to make a claim.
- Take photos or video of damage to your property and possessions as evidence for your claim.
- Your insurance company will manage the clean-up of your residence.

The Insurance Council of Australia can be contacted with any questions, complaints or concerns about insurance on 1800 734 621.

If you are uninsured:

Public Works Authority is available to manage the full clean-up and removal of bushfire debris from your residence and immediately adjacent outbuildings. The full cost of the clean-up will be met by the NSW Government.

➤ Public Works Advisory: 1800 885 539

Clean up health and safety

Houses, sheds and any other buildings that have been burnt in a bushfire can leave potential health and safety hazards in the remaining rubble and ash.

Hazardous household materials that might be present after a bushfire include asbestos, ash from burnt treated timbers (i.e. copper chrome arsenate or CCA), medicines, garden or farm chemicals, other household chemicals and cleaning products, damaged gas bottles, metal and other residues from burnt household appliances as well as ash and dusts.

Other hazards may include unsafe building structures, electrical hazards or missing fencing panels around pools.

When returning to your property after a bushfire, consider the following to protect your health:

- Do not enter your property until you are advised that it is safe to do so by emergency services, utilities companies or your local council.
- Electrical hazards could exist such as live power lines that may be down or active solar panels.

- Buildings and other structures may be unstable to enter or walk over.
- Sewerage and septic systems may be disrupted causing health risks.
- Be aware that hot, smouldering coals and other potentially hazardous materials may be hidden under the rubble.
- Building rubble should not be buried as it may contain hazardous materials.
- Waste generated as a result of the fires needs to go to lawful facilities to ensure soil, water and human health is protected.
- Don't spread ash around your property, particularly if asbestos materials were used in your home or other structures, or CCA-treated timber was burnt.
- Moisten the ash with water to minimise dust and keep damp but do not use high pressure water sprays.
- Asbestos dust and fibres have the potential to present a health risk.
- Asbestos clean-up and removal must be done by a licensed asbestos removalist.

Disaster relief grants for individuals and families

NSW Government Disaster Relief Grants are available for eligible individuals and families.

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.

➤ Disaster Welfare Assistance Line:
1800 018 444

Potable water assistance

Replacement of potable water is available for residential properties in rural areas not on town water supply where the RFS has taken water or contaminated roofs with fire retardant.

➤ Disaster Welfare Assistance Line:
1800 018 444