



National Bushfire Recovery Agency

Contacts for emergency assistance

If you are in an affected Bushfire area please listen to the instructions provided by emergency services personnel. **If you need emergency assistance, ring triple zero (000).** Important messages are often played **on your local ABC radio.**

FEDERAL		
Disaster Recovery Payment and Allowance	180 22 66	https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency/bushfires
Emergency	000	
New South Wales		
NSW Rural Fire Service – Bushfire information line	1800 679 737	https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/emergency-information
NSW Disaster Welfare Services Line	1800 018 444	https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance.aspx
Victoria		
VicEmergency Hotline	1800 226 226	https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/
South Australia		
SA Recovery Hotline	1800 302 787	https://dhs.sa.gov.au/services/disaster-recovery
South Australian Government website		https://www.sa.gov.au/
Western Australia		
WA Emergency Information – Public information line	13 3337	https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/contactus/Pages/default.aspx https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/
Queensland		
Queensland Disasters and Alerts State Emergency Service (SES)	132 500	https://www.qld.gov.au/alerts?utm_source=qld.gov.au%20homepage%20hero%20feature&utm_medium=online&utm_campaign=Queensland%20bushfires
Health	13 HEALTH: 13 43 25 84	
Emergency housing assistance:	13 74 68	
Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors	1800 173 349	www.communities.qld.gov.au
Tasmania		
TasAlert	(03) 6232 7551	http://alert.tas.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx



National Bushfire Recovery Agency

The Australian Government will establish a dedicated agency with an initial \$2 billion for a recovery fund to coordinate a national response and help rebuild communities.

Priorities will include: primary producer grants for restocking, replanting and fencing, additional support for small businesses, grants to bushfire affected Local Government Areas, a mental health package for first responders and communities, support to attract tourists back to the regions, infrastructure projects to support economic, community and industry recovery and resilience, and measures to support the environment and native wildlife.

The funding is in addition to funding available under existing natural disaster support mechanisms.

www.pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/national-bushfire-recovery-agency

Is there financial assistance available to people affected by the bushfires?

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment – a one-off payment of \$1,000 for each eligible adult and \$400 for each dependent child for people who have been injured, who've lost an immediate family member or whose home has been significantly damaged or destroyed.

Disaster Recovery Allowance – 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.

For information about payments and eligibility criteria go to humanservice.gov.au/disaster

How do I claim a Disaster Recovery Payment?

The fastest way to claim is by calling 180 22 66. The line is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday. These times are subject to change. The payment is generally in people's bank accounts within 24-48 hours.

What support is the Australian Defence Force providing to the bushfire response?

The bushfire crisis is the ADF's primary focus. Several thousand troops have been deployed, including land, sea and air assets.

To manage the response, a Two-Star Emergency ADF National Support Coordinator has been appointed to work with state and territory authorities. More details can be found at <https://news.defence.gov.au/national/defence-boosts-bushfire-support>

I have been evacuated, but do not have anywhere to stay. What can I do?

In addition to local evacuation centres, Defence has opened bases from Brisbane to Adelaide for people needing short-term evacuation assistance.

A list of bases in each state can be found at: www.news.defence.gov.au/national/defence-bases-open-to-evacuees

I live on Kangaroo Island and the fires have impacted our water supply. Is there assistance available?

Portable water filtration infrastructure is enabling the Middle River Water Treatment Plant to treat raw water to clean potable (human consumption) levels and is producing 400,000 litres every 24 hours for use by CFS and community members in cooperation with SA Water. New Zealand Army Engineers are producing another 12,000 litres per day.

What are my communication options during an emergency?

In an emergency situation it is recommended people do not rely on a single form of communication.

Possible options include local radio, television, and state and territory emergency service websites or apps. For example, during emergency situations people can listen to ABC Local Radio to receive up-to-date warnings.



You should also consider downloading the Emergency+ app. This app uses GPS functionality built into smart phones to help a Triple Zero (000) caller provide critical location details required to mobilise emergency services.

It is important to conserve the battery life of mobile phones and have a backup for charging these devices should there be a power outage.

A portable transistor radio with a spare set of batteries can provide a valuable backup in the event there is a loss of mains power or mobile coverage.

I am having issues paying my energy bill.

If you are worried about your electricity bill, you should contact your electricity retailer. Electricity retailers are offering help including freezes on bills in affected areas and payment extensions.

Support for the agriculture sector

Bushfire affected farmers can access information, key contacts and assistance at www.farmhub.org.au/live-bushfire-assistance-key-contacts/

Rural Financial Counselling Service

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) provides free financial counselling to primary producers, fishers, forest growers and small, related businesses, who are suffering financial hardship and have no alternative sources of impartial assistance.

Please call the national referral hotline on 1800 686 175 or visit www.agriculture.gov.au/rfcs

Farm Household Allowance

Farmers and their partners in disaster-affected postcodes can claim Farm Household Allowance (FHA) with minimal information. Applicants will not need to supply verification of income and assets for 13 weeks. FHA can be granted as long as Proof of Identity is established and with a verbal declaration of the person's estimated financial position.

Further information on accessing FHA is available at www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance

What do I do with dead or injured stock?

The Government is deploying veterinarians to work with states and territories to undertake livestock assessments and attend to the welfare of injured livestock and other animals. More information is available at

www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/partnerships/nbc/nbepeg/interstate-deployment-arrangements

When humane destruction is necessary, appropriate methods must be used by people who have the experience, knowledge, skills and tools outlined in the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines*, available at

www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/

Check with your local and state authorities for advice on appropriate carcass disposal methods and specific health risks in your area.

What assistance is available for wildlife and injured native animals?

The Australian Government has made an initial investment of \$50 million to help rescue and protect wildlife impacted by the bushfires. This support will help provide much needed shelter and protection for our native animals and plants from feral predators and pests while local habitats are rehabilitated.

In the case of injured or orphaned wildlife, Australians are encouraged to follow the advice of registered wildlife carer organisations.

Nationwide, you can contact the Wildlife Rescue Australia 24-hour call centre on 1300 596 457 or at www.wildliferescue.net.au. The RSPCA provides contacts for organisations in each state and territory at bit.ly/wildlifecarers.

What other disaster recovery support is the Commonwealth providing?

A range of relief and recovery assistance is available under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) to bushfire affected communities, individuals, primary producers and small businesses. Depending on where you live, this assistance may include financial support for emergency assistance and



housing damage, and recovery grants and concessional interest rate loans for small businesses and primary producers. DRFA assistance is administered by State Governments. Further information on the specific assistance available in each state is on the DisasterAssist website www.disasterassist.gov.au

I have an insurance policy and need to make a claim. What do I do?

Talk to your insurance company as soon as possible about how to make a claim. The contact numbers for major insurers are:

- NRMA: 132 132
- Suncorp: 132 524
- QBE: 133 723
- Allianz: 131 013
- Zurich: 132 687

The Insurance Council of Australia is also operating a 24 hour hotline 1800 734 621 to help with information about claims and recovery.

I am having issues paying my home loan/credit card. Who should I contact?

A range of banks have announced measures to support people experiencing financial difficulties. You should contact your financial institution to discuss your circumstances and to see what financial assistance is available.

What support is available for my business?

A range of relief and recovery assistance is available to small businesses, administered by State Governments. If you have been directly impacted by the bushfires, you may be eligible for recovery grants and/or concessional interest rate loans depending on where you live. Visit DisasterAssist at www.disasterassist.gov.au

Visit www.business.gov.au/bushfiresupport for information about tax support, employer obligations, mental health support and government assistance. There is also business planning information to assist you to recover and rebuild your business.

Where do I go for information about my employment entitlements and obligations?

You should contact the Fair Work Ombudsman. The Fair Work Ombudsman can give you information about your leave entitlements, including personal/carer's leave, annual leave and community service leave, and information for employers who are unable to operate.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has set up a Bushfires across Australia web page www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/bushfires-across-australia, or you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94.

My Medicare card has been lost or damaged, can I still see a doctor?

You can still see a doctor without a Medicare card. The doctor is able to call Medicare and our Medicare Service Officers can assist them to obtain your relevant Medicare details. If you need to visit a public hospital, hospital staff can also contact Medicare on behalf of the doctor to obtain your relevant Medicare details.

How can I access Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines if I do not have my Medicare, DVA or Centrelink card?

If you do not have your Medicare, DVA or Centrelink card, ask your pharmacist to ring the PBS inquiry line on 132 290 (option 1) for assistance with your Medicare or concessional details.

How can I access medicines if I do not have my prescriptions?

If you do not have a valid prescription, your pharmacist may be able to supply a limited amount of medicine to you under emergency supply arrangements.

Under the Commonwealth's expanded Continued Dispensing arrangements from 13 January 2020 to 31 March 2020, your pharmacist may be able to provide your usual medicines subsidised by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.



Ask your pharmacist for more details, or contact the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme information line for further information: 1800 020 613.

What to do if power remains down?

If your power is out, you should contact your electricity distribution company. These companies manage the poles and wires that supply electricity. Your electricity distribution company can help with information about your outage.

In fire affected areas these companies are:

- Essential Energy: Regional New South Wales including Alpine Regions, Riverina and far South Coast. Phone 13 20 80 for faults and emergencies, or 13 23 91 for general enquiries. www.essentialenergy.com.au, twitter.com/essentialenergy, facebook.com/EssentialEnergyAU/
- Endeavour Energy: New South Wales including Sydney's Greater West, the Blue Mountains, Southern Highland and the Illawarra and the South Coast. Phone 131 003 for faults and emergencies, or 133 718 for general enquiries. www.endeavourenergy.com.au, mobile.twitter.com/endeavourenergy
- AusNet Services: Eastern Victoria including Alpine Regions and Gippsland. Phone 13 17 99 for faults and emergencies, or 1300 360 795 for general enquiries. www.ausnetservices.com.au, facebook.com/AusNet.Services.Energy/?view_public_for=512280309135240

How do I know if my child's school has been impacted by the bushfires?

For information on your local school and preparation for the school year, please contact your school or the state or territory education department, Catholic Education Office or Association for Independent Schools in your state or territory. State and territory education department websites have information relating to schools, school safety and support. The

state and territory education department Contact details are:

NSW

02 7814 1530

www.education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/school-safety

VIC

1800 338 663

www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx

SA

(08) 8226 1000 or 1800 088 158

www.education.sa.gov.au/

What action is being taken to restore telecommunications services?

Telecommunications operators are deploying temporary facilities where damage to infrastructure has occurred:

Telstra

Customers: Customers who have had to evacuate their home, or have lost their home due to the bushfires should call 13 22 03 to register for the assistance package.

Telstra has issued a Disaster Relief Package for customers' impacted areas in

- VIC- www.exchange.telstra.com.au/victoria-bushfire-assistance-2019/
- NSW – www.exchange.telstra.com.au/providing-bushfire-relief-to-our-customers-affected-in-new-south-wales/
- SA – www.exchange.telstra.com.au/bushfire-relief-package-south-australia/
- QLD – www.exchange.telstra.com.au/giving-bushfire-assistance-to-qld/

This support package includes the following:

- Free use of Telstra public payphones



- Free use of Telstra Air payphone hotspots
- Free call diversion from an affected fixed home or business phone service to another fixed or mobile service of the customer's choice
- Customers who use the free call diversion to divert their affected fixed home or business phone to their Telstra mobile service can also make local and STD® calls on their mobile at fixed-line rates, in accordance with their selected plan (limited to one designated Telstra mobile per affected household or business)
- Affected Telstra mobile customers who do not have a Telstra home phone can receive a one-off credit to the value of \$100 inc. GST (limited to one mobile phone per Telstra mobile account).

Front line responders: Contact Telstra on 13 22 03 to register for free calls. Telstra is offering free mobile phone bills www.exchange.telstra.com.au/free-calls-for-firies/ for volunteer firefighters, SES volunteers and others.

Optus

Customers: Optus has established a dedicated customer contact line for customers affected by the bushfires - 1300 301 671.

Optus are providing on the ground support in bushfire affected zones including evacuation centres by providing charging stations, pre-paid SIMs, satellite and mobile phone access.

Front line responders: Firefighters, volunteers and staff affected by bushfires should also use the dedicated contact line - 1300 301 671. Optus are covering the cost of volunteer fire fighters' mobile services for December and January.

Vodafone Hutchison Australia (VHA)

Customers: Affected customers should contact VHA's Financial Hardship team - 1300 650 405. VHA is offering a range of relief options under their hardship

policy for customers who have been directly impacted by the fires.

Front line responders: VHA are waiving mobile network usage charges for all volunteer firefighters during December and January, and has provided four weeks paid leave for its employees volunteering to fight fires.

I am an NDIS participant in a bushfire affected area and need help with my disability related supports. What do I do?

Any NDIS participant who needs assistance with their disability supports due to the bushfire situation is encouraged to contact 1800 800 110 to discuss their circumstances.

More information is available at www.ndis.gov.au/news/4143-bushfires-information-and-support.

How can bushfire smoke affect my health?

Smoke contains fine particles that can affect your health. Smoke can be more dangerous for people with existing lung and heart conditions like asthma, emphysema or angina. People with these conditions should avoid outdoor physical activity when there's smoke around.

If you have asthma, you should follow your Asthma Action Plan and keep your asthma medication with you.

The best way to reduce exposure to smoke is to stay indoors with the doors and windows shut.

How can I find out about air quality in my area?

For long periods of smoke haze, it may not be possible to stay indoors all the time. Monitoring your local air quality can help you find the right time to go outside when the risk is lowest.

- Australian Capital Territory Air Quality Index - www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/environmental-monitoring/monitoring-and-regulating-air



- New South Wales Current and Forecast Air Quality - www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality
- Northern Territory Air Quality Network - ntepa.webhop.net/NTEPA/Default.ltr.aspx
- Queensland Air Quality Monitoring - apps.des.qld.gov.au/air-quality/
- South Australia Air Quality Monitoring - www.epa.sa.gov.au/data_and_publications/air_quality_monitoring
- Tasmania Real Time Air Quality - epa.tas.gov.au/epa/air/monitoring-air-pollution/real-time-air-quality-data-for-tasmania
- Victoria AirWatch - www.epa.vic.gov.au/EPAirWatch
- Western Australia Air Quality Index - www.der.wa.gov.au/your-environment/air/air-quality-index

What happens if residential aged care services have been impacted by bushfires?

Aged care residents who are moved temporarily to a different residential age care service due to bushfires will continue to receive all their services in the new location.

You can call the My Aged Care contact centre on **1800 200 422** (Freecall*). If translating and interpreting services are needed, call **131 450** and ask for **1800 200 422**.

Counselling and mental health support

The Australian Government is providing \$76 million for mental health support for individuals, families and communities, including emergency services personnel impacted by the bushfires. This response includes up to 10 free counselling sessions, expanded telehealth mental health services, increased funding to headspaces in affected communities, bushfire trauma response coordinators to link individuals and communities with the right mental health supports, and a package of measures to support the needs of emergency services personnel (including volunteers) and their families – both now and into the future.

Needing support in the wake of disaster is normal and not a sign of weakness.

How can I access mental health services in my area?

Your General Practitioner can refer you to the most appropriate mental health services within the *Better Access* scheme. Visit www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services for a list of GPs in your area.

If you are aged between 12 and 25 years old you may be able to access free or low cost services at a headspace centre. Visit headspace.org.au/our-services/our-centres to find a centre.

Your local Primary Health Network can also help you locate health services near you. Find your local Primary Health Network here: www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/PHN-Boundaries

What online or telephone mental health services can I access?

You can access a range of online and telephone mental health services, listed below.

Lifeline - 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au

Lifeline is a crisis support service that provides short-term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.

Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636 or www.beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue is available 24/7 by phone or online via chat or email, to assist with mental health issues.

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au

Kids Helpline is a free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years.



My passport has been lost or damaged. What do I do?

Australians whose passports have been lost or damaged in a natural disaster may be eligible for a free replacement.

Affected passport holders should call the Australian Passport Information Service (APIS) on 131 232.

I would like to make a tax deductible donation to assist with the relief efforts. What entities are accepting tax deductible donations?

The Australian Government is compiling a list of registered charities which are accepting tax deductible donations for bushfire relief and recovery. This list will be added to on the National Bushfire Recovery Agency website over coming days:
pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/national-bushfire-recovery-agency

If you are a registered charity with deductible gift recipient status working to support bushfire recovery efforts, please contact the Australian Treasury at dgr@treasury.gov.au if your charity does not appear on the list.

Reporting bushfire scams

Scamwatch is warning the community to be careful when making donations to support bushfire charities and fund raising initiatives. Unfortunately during times of natural disasters scammers will pretend to represent legitimate or well-known charities or fund raising organisations, or set up their own fake fund raising pages on social media or fund raising platforms.

The community can report scams to Scamwatch at www.scamwatch.gov.au

The ACCC has also set up a dedicated bushfire scams hotline to report bushfire related scams. People can call **1300 795 995** to report bushfire scams.