



OFFICIAL

Disaster Recovery Assistance

This fact sheet brings together information on how to claim for Disaster Recovery Assistance and the support available at the Commonwealth and State levels. The information is taken from the responsible department and authority's websites.

The [Department of Home Affairs](#), [Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation](#) and [Indigenous Business Australia](#) have assistance packages at the Commonwealth level, and the relevant state authority at a State level.

For NSW it is the [Rural Assistance Authority](#), Victoria it is [VicEmergency](#) and [Emergency Management Victoria](#) and for South Australia it is the [SA Department of Human Services](#).

Commonwealth support (individuals)

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP) is a one-off, non-means tested payment of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 for each child under 16 years of age who have been adversely affected by a major disaster.

NSW Bushfires: 31 August 2019 onwards (AGRN: 871)

Victorian Bushfires: 20 December 2019 onwards (AGRN: TBA)

South Australian Bushfires: November 2019 onwards (AGRN: 877)

Claims can be lodged through the Department of Human Services for a period up to six months or through the Australian Government Information Hotline on **180 22 66**.

- **The fastest way to claim is over the phone.**

To claim, either:

- call **180 22 66** to make your claim
- go to a [service centre](#).

Phone lines are open 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday, local time.

Call us on 131 202 to talk to us in languages other than English.

To get the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment you must:

- be an [Australian resident](#) or hold an eligible visa
- be 16 years or older at the time of the fire or getting a social security payment
- have not already received an Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment for the bushfires in August, September, October, November and December 2019 in NSW.

You also need to have been adversely affected by the fire. For example:

- you have been seriously injured
- you're the immediate family member of an Australian citizen or resident who died

OFFICIAL



- your principal place of residence has been destroyed or must be demolished
- the interior of your principal place of residence has sustained major damage
- damage from the fire has exposed the interior of your principal place of residence to the elements
- your principal place of residence has been declared structurally unsound
- the interior of your residence has been affected by sewerage contamination
- you're the principal carer of a dependent child who has experienced any of the above.

For the purposes of this payment:

- your principal place of residence is the main place where you have a right or license to normally reside. It doesn't include holiday homes or investment properties
- you're a principal carer of a child if the child is your dependent and has not turned 16. The principal carer must have legal responsibility for the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child.

If you're a member of a couple, you can both receive this payment. You and your partner will need to complete separate claim forms.

You cannot claim on behalf of a person who has died or their estate.

You may need to provide evidence to show you can get this payment. For example, proof of hospital admission or damage to your principal place of residence. If you're having trouble getting these documents you should still lodge a claim without delay. You can provide your supporting documents to us within 28 days.

You may also need to confirm your identity. We'll tell you how to do it during the claim process.

You will need to provide one document showing Proof of Birth or Proof of Arrival in Australia. Alternatively, you can provide any other approved documents that add up to the value of 50 points. For example:

- driver's licence (40 points)
- bank card/statement (40 points)
- Medicare card (20 points).

Disaster Recovery Allowance

Disaster Recovery Allowance is a short term payment to help if a declared disaster directly affects your income. It is for a maximum of 13 weeks, payable from the date you lose income as a direct result of the NSW Bushfires.

Disaster Recovery Allowance is a taxable payment. You can ask us to withhold voluntary tax deductions from your payments.

The maximum payment rate is the equivalent of [Newstart](#) or [Youth Allowance](#), based on your circumstances. Rate of payment will be affected by your income prior to and following the disaster. If you're independent, your maximum rate of payment will be determined by your accommodation and personal circumstances.

- **The fastest way to claim is over the phone.**

To claim, either:

- call 180 22 66 to make your claim
- print and complete the relevant form:
 - [NSW Bushfires, September 2019 – Disaster Recovery Allowance claim form](#)
 - [Victorian Bushfires, December 2019 – Disaster Recovery Allowance claim form](#)
 - [South Australian Bushfires, November 2019 – Disaster Recovery Allowance claim form](#)
- go to a [service centre](#).

Phone lines are open 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday, local time.

Call us on 131 202 to talk to us in languages other than English.

To get Disaster Recovery Allowance you must:

- be 16 years or older at the time of the fire and not a dependent child
- be an [Australian resident](#) or hold an eligible visa
- get an income by working in an affected Local Government Area or live in an affected Local Government Area
- lose income as a direct result of the NSW Bushfires in August, September, October, November and December 2019
- show you will earn less than the relevant [income threshold amount](#) in the fortnight following the loss of income.

You must not get the following payments for the same period you're claiming this payment:

- an [income support payment](#) or pension
- [Parental Leave Pay](#)
- [Dad and Partner Pay](#)
- [ABSTUDY living allowance](#)
- [Farm Household Allowance](#), or
- a [Service Pension](#) from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

If you're a member of a couple, you can both receive this payment. You and your partner will need to complete separate claim forms.

If you're between 16 and 21 years of age, you may be able to get Disaster Recovery Allowance if you're considered independent. We'll look at your income, personal circumstances, and whether you're dependent on anyone, such as an adult who has legal responsibility for your care and provides financial assistance.

You'll need to provide evidence supporting the claimed loss of income. For example:

- pay slips from an employer
- bank statements showing previous bank deposits from an employer
- a letter from your employer
- profit and loss statements
- income tax returns
- other account documents identifying cash flow.

If you're having trouble getting these documents you should still lodge a claim without delay. You can provide your supporting documents to us within 28 days.

You may also need to confirm your identity. We'll tell you how to do it during the claim process.

You will need to provide one document showing Proof of Birth or Proof of Arrival in Australia. Alternatively, you can provide any other approved documents that add up to the value of 50 points. For example:

- driver's licence (40 points)
- bank card/statement (40 points)
- Medicare card (20 points).

Indigenous specific support (individuals)

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) provides home loans, business support and finance and investment opportunities for Indigenous Australians all across Australia. Customers in affected areas may face hardship as their lives, homes and businesses are under direct threat of bushfire.

To assist our business finance and home loan customers directly impacted by the current bushfires through loss of property or compulsory evacuation, IBA will provide the following support:

- Temporary suspension of loan repayments
- Access to a \$2,000 bushfire crisis grant to cover immediate needs
- Assistance with making insurance claims
- Further assistance for business customers to be assessed on an individual basis.

Call the IBA on **1800 064 800** to discuss support available for you.

National Bushfire Recovery Agency

The Australian Government will establish the National Bushfire Recovery Agency with an initial \$2 billion for a recovery fund to coordinate a national response to rebuild communities and livelihoods after the devastating fire-front has passed.

The funding will ensure the families, farmers and business owners hit by these unprecedented bushfires would get the support they needed as they recover.

Details on how to apply for funding are not yet available.

Mental health support

The Australian Government will create a Bushfire Recovery Access Program to provide immediate and ongoing free counselling and support to individuals, families and emergency services workers affected by the bushfires.

This program will give people the best chance of full mental health recovery from highly traumatic bushfire events.

The Government will deliver trauma care training to emergency personnel and employers on the fire fronts to help identify people at risk and support bushfire trauma response coordinators and the development of a National Cross-Services Framework to deliver mental health support effectively and efficiently across Australia.

Counselling and psychological services

- Front line emergency distress and trauma counselling will be available immediately, with up to 10 free mental health support sessions for individuals, families and emergency services personnel.
- Bushfire affected individuals and families, and emergency response personnel will also be eligible to receive Medicare rebates for up to 10 psychological therapy sessions. This will provide people with the support they need during the extended recovery phase, when the deep impact of trauma is more likely to be felt.
- Those affected by fires will not need a mental health plan from a GP or a diagnosed mental illness to obtain these services.



- Psychological therapy sessions via telehealth will also be available to people in fire affected rural areas that don't have easy access to mental health professionals. These sessions will also be Medicare funded.
- To support our youth and assist with managing any increased demand for services, headspace sites in fire affected areas will also each be provided with up to an additional \$300 000 to ensure that young people can get support when they need it.
- Additionally, Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in fire affected communities will receive funding to deliver 'surge capacity' mental health services to individuals and families who are affected.
- Therapists will offer coping strategies, social supports, counselling and family-based psychological interventions.
- People may also be referred for counselling through emergency relief phone lines and other government points of contact.
- More intensive psychological therapy may be obtained through GPs, psychologists, headspace and other mental health professionals.

Telehealth services are available by contacting a GP or psychologist.

Mental health workers will also be immediately deployed to bushfire recovery centres.

Additional counselling and psychological sessions billed to Medicare, and telehealth mental health services, will be available from 17 January 2020 until December 2021. The new GP telehealth items are available now.

Trauma informed care and care coordination

Training in trauma informed care and psychological first aid will be provided to frontline emergency staff as well as to organisations managing frontline emergency staff to identify personnel at risk.

In addition, Australia's bushfire trauma response coordinators will be the single point of contact for individuals and communities to ensure the right mental health supports are offered in the right place at the right time.

A National Cross-Services Framework will ensure we can respond to mental health challenges because of national disasters.

- Evidence based training will be developed and delivered by organisations with expertise in trauma informed care. Training will be co-designed with Primary Health Networks (PHN), Services Australia and state and territory government services.
- The bushfire trauma coordinators will be employed by the PHNs in severely impacted fire-affected region.
- The coordinators will support Services Australia recovery staff by providing up-to-date information and mental health services in the region. The coordinators will also prioritise distress counselling services for affected individuals and families within treatment services.
- The new National Cross-Services Framework will ensure all jurisdictions work together to develop a mental health framework. The framework will ensure we are prepared and resourced to deliver effective mental health supports in response to national disasters.
- The training will be rolled out immediately and progressively over the next six months.
- The bushfire trauma response coordinator support will take immediate effect.
- The National Cross-Services Framework will involve a national coordination effort commencing this year.

For access to support services, please phone Services Australia on 180 22 66, or visit the Primary Health Networks website.

For more information about the Bushfire Recovery Access Program, please call the public health information hotline on 1800 004 599.

Support for emergency services workers and their families

Our emergency services workers are invaluable and critical members of our community. To ensure workers and their families are receiving the necessary support to prevent and treat the effects of trauma, both now and after the immediate fire threat has passed, the Government is funding specialist organisation/s to provide PTSD support services to emergency services workers (and their immediate families).

The Government is also establishing a pilot program to provide a support and mental health literacy network for emergency services workers and their families/kinship groups. This network will also connect those in need of clinical services in relation to PTSD and other mental health issues.

State support (individuals – NSW)

The Australian and NSW Government have established an \$80 million Community Recovery Fund (CRF) to provide further support to bushfire affected communities. The CRF includes:

- Additional mental health support for affected communities, volunteers and emergency services personnel
- A Community Recovery and Resilience Building Program to provide targeted grants to community and industry groups and local governments for locally led recovery and resilience building activities.

Anyone in need of assistance should contact the NSW Government Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on 1800 018 444.

State support (individuals - Victoria)

Emergency Relief Assistance Payments

Emergency relief assistance is available for up to seven days after the event if you are unable to access or live in your home because of an emergency.

Payments of up to \$560 per adult and \$280 per child (up to a maximum of \$1,960 per eligible household) are available to help meet immediate needs, including emergency food, shelter, clothing and personal items.

The payments are designed to help eligible people experiencing personal and extreme financial hardship due to the fires.

Visit a [relief centre](#) for more information and to find out if you are eligible. Relief centres are open at:

- Bairnsdale City Oval, 40 MacArthur St, Bairnsdale
- Bairnsdale Racecourse, Forge Creek Rd, Bairnsdale – you must register at Bairnsdale City Oval before attending this site.
- Recreation Reserve Pavilion, Park St, Omeo VIC 3898

Emergency Re-establishment Payments

Emergency re-establishment assistance is available if your principal place of residence (your home) is uninhabitable for more than seven days because of an emergency.

Provides up to \$42,250 per eligible household experiencing financial hardship, who have been affected by fire at their primary place of residence.

The grants will be available for clean-up, emergency accommodation, repairs, re-building (a principal place of residence), and replacing some damaged contents.

Re-establishment assistance is available to individuals or families who do not have building (home) insurance or contents insurance. Information can be found [online](#), contact your local council, or visit a relief centre, to discuss assistance options.

Replacing documents and identification

The Australian Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages will replace certificates that were lost in the recent bushfires, free of charge. You can call the Department of Justice on 03 5215 8500 and they will mail the forms to you.

If you've been affected by the recent fires VicRoads can:

- refund your remaining registration without any admin fees for any fire damaged vehicles or,
- replace your licence/learner permit/marine licence card for free.

State support (individuals – South Australia)

Personal Hardship Emergency Grants

South Australians directly affected by the Kangaroo Island, Cudlee Creek and Yorketown fires can apply for one-off emergency grants to assist with immediate, temporary relief. The Personal Hardship Emergency Grants of up to \$700 per family (or \$280 per individual adult) can be used at the discretion of each recipient but are intended to pay for essential items such as food, toiletries, clothing and medication. This assistance is provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

For more information including how to apply please phone the Recovery Hotline on [1800 302 787](tel:1800302787) or visit an Emergency Relief Centre in SA.

Re-establishment Grants

Eligible South Australians who are uninsured and have had their principal residence damaged by bushfires can apply for grants of up to \$10,000 to help them re-establish their homes.

The payments can be used to help repair bushfire-damaged homes or replace essential household items.

The payments are available only to those persons who meet the following criteria:

- Their primary residence has been damaged
- They meet an income test
- Their losses are not being met by insurance, compensation or other assistance measures
- The structure/dwelling component of the grant can only be paid to owner-occupiers
- The essential household and personal item component may be paid to owner-occupiers or tenants.

Assistance is being provided under the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The SA Housing Authority will administer the grants under its Emergency Relief arrangements.

For more information on eligibility please visit a relief centre or phone the SA Recovery Hotline on [1800 302 787](tel:1800302787) (8.00 am to 8.00 pm).