

Community Recovery Information #2

This newsletter contains recovery information for people impacted by bush fires in the Hunter, Greater Sydney, Lower Hunter, Blue Mountains and Southern NSW regions.

Health and wellbeing

Looking after yourself and others

Major events, such as the current NSW bush fires, that cause widespread loss and distress impact the whole community.

If you have been impacted by the recent fires, you might feel things like frustration, sadness and anxiety, or have trouble sleeping or remembering things.

This is a normal reaction to an abnormal event.

Having someone to listen and support you at times like this is important.

People recovering from bush fires are being encouraged to access mental health and counselling services.

The resilience of people in regional communities is well known, but no one should feel like they need to go it alone in the coming days, weeks, or months.

Coping with Christmas

Occasions like Christmas can bring up feelings of sadness and grief.

Sometimes it's difficult to talk about what's going on but it's important to reach out if you need help.

This could be as simple as sending a text, a message on social media, inviting someone over for a cuppa or making a phone call.

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

- **Beyondblue: 1300 22 4636**
- **Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511**
- **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.**

Tips for managing your recovery

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.

For more recovery information and updates visit:

Website:

www.emergency.nsw.gov.au

Facebook:

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

Insurance

If you are insured:

1. Talk to your insurance company as soon as possible about how to make a claim.
2. Take photos or video of damage to your property and possessions as evidence for your claim.
3. If you have clearance from your insurer and evidence for your claim, you can start cleaning up.

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

Legal Aid NSW can provide free legal advice and minor assistance to people affected by disasters on a range of issues, including insurance, on **1800 801 529**.

If you are uninsured:

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 (8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays).

Disaster Welfare Assistance Line – Christmas opening hours

Call **1800 018 444** from 8.30am to 4.30pm, every day throughout the Christmas holiday period.

DISASTER WELFARE ASSISTANCE LINE

23 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
24 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
25 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
26 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
27 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
28 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
29 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
30 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
31 December:	8.30am to 4.30pm
1 January:	8.30am to 4.30pm

Disaster Recovery Payment

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment has been activated for people severely affected by the NSW Bush Fires.

This provides a one-off payment of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child if your home has been destroyed or severely damaged (including smoke damage).

➤ **Human Services:**

180 2266 or humanservices.gov.au

Disaster Recovery Allowance

The Disaster Recovery Allowance has been activated by the Australian Government for people affected by the NSW Bush Fires.

This provides short term support payment to assist those whose income has been affected as a direct result of the bush fires.

➤ **Human Services:**

180 2266 or humanservices.gov.au

Primary Producer Grants

Grants of up to \$15,000 are available for bush fire affected primary producers.

Eligibility criteria apply.

➤ **Rural Assistance Authority:**

1800 678 593 (closed public holidays)

Small Business Grants

Grants of up to \$15,000 are available if your business has been directly affected by bush fire.

Eligibility criteria apply.

➤ **Rural Assistance Authority:**

1800 678 593 (closed public holidays)

Note: Primary Producer and Small Business grants are currently activated for the following Local Government Areas only:

Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Cessnock, Hawkesbury, Lithgow, Mid Western, Singleton, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly

Disaster relief low interest loans of up to \$130,000 are also available to eligible primary producers and small businesses, and transport subsidies of up to 50% of the cost to transport livestock or fodder, to eligible producers.

Rural Assistance Authority: 1800 678 593 or www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/disaster-recovery-grants

Emergency temporary accommodation

Emergency accommodation is available to people affected as a direct result of the recent fires.

Short-term housing support for up to three months is available to all people in urgent need of housing because of a natural disaster. This covers people who would not normally be eligible for social housing.

Housing Contact Centre: 1800 422 322
(available 24/7)

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.

Clean-up health and safety

- 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.

Clean-up assistance

The NSW Government is supporting the clean-up of homes damaged or destroyed by the recent fires. This includes insured and uninsured homes.

If you are insured, continue to work with your insurer on the clean-up. If you have any concerns please contact:

Insurance Council of Australia 1800 734 621

If you are uninsured please contact:

Public Works Advisory: 1800 88 55 39

Fire retardant information

Coloured foam dropped from the air to suppress fires may have landed on some properties.

This retardant will need to be flushed from roofs and water sources.

To stop retardant or ash getting into water tanks, disconnect your downpipe/s from water tank/s, so that the first flush (either rain or washing) does not wash anything from the roof into tanks.

Disaster Welfare Assistance Line: 1800 018 444 (8.30am to 4.30pm business hours)

Domestic water assistance

If your potable water has been used by a fire fighting agency to fight the fire, you may be eligible to have it replaced.

This assistance is for residential properties in rural areas.

Call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line: 1800 018 444

Over the holiday period, assistance is still available:

Housing: 1800 422 322 (24/7)

Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511 (24/7)

Animal and Ag Hotline: 1800 814 647

Rural Assistance Authority: 1800 678 593

Disaster Welfare Assistance Line: 1800 018 444 (8.30am-4.30pm)