

Community Recovery Newsletter #3

This newsletter contains information and advice for people impacted by the fires across Northern NSW

New Disaster Relief Assistance

On 25 February the Australian Government announced additional disaster assistance for eligible people in the Local Government Areas of Armidale, Inverell, Kyogle, Tamworth and Tenterfield. It includes:

1. Australian Government Disaster Relief Payment (AGDRP)

The AGDRP is a one-off payment for eligible people who have been significantly affected by a disaster e.g. you have been seriously injured or the house you live in has been damaged or destroyed. It is not for minor damage or inconvenience.

If you're eligible you'll receive:

- \$1,000 per adult
- \$400 per child under 16 years old

2. Disaster Relief Allowance (DRA)

The DRA is a short term payment to help you if you have lost income as a direct result of a disaster.

You can get this payment for a maximum of 13 weeks and it is payable from the date you lose income as a direct result of the fires.

To be eligible you will need work or live in one of the affected areas and provide evidence of your income loss.

For more info on either payment or to check your eligibility call the Commonwealth Department of Human Services: **180 22 66** or visit:

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

Community Meetings

A number of community recovery meetings have now been held across the region including Tingha, Drake and Wallangarra. The next community meeting will be held in Tabulam:

Tabulam Community Recovery Meeting

6pm, Wednesday 27 February

Tabulam Hall, 7 Barnes Street

Council, RFS and Local Land Services will provide information and answer questions.

Disaster Welfare and Health and Wellbeing support staff will also be available to chat with.

Recovery Assistance Points

Recovery Assistance Points have been established for fire affected residents to access recovery information and register for assistance.

Recovery Assistance Points

Tabulam: Tabulam Hall
7 Barnes Street

Tingha: Sport & Rec Club
New Valley Road

Tue 26 Feb	10am to 4pm
Wed 27 Feb	10am to 4pm
Thu 28 Feb	10am to 4pm
Fri 1 March	10am to 4pm

If you have been impacted by the fires but are unable to visit please call:

**Disaster Welfare Assistance Line
1800 018 444**

Mon-Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm

Are you insured?

If you are insured, you should talk to your insurance company as soon as possible about how to make a claim. Before you start cleaning up take photos or video of any damage to your property and possessions as evidence for your claim.

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

If you are not insured and have limited income, you may be eligible for a disaster relief grant:

Disaster Relief Grants for Individuals

Disaster relief grants are for eligible individuals and families whose homes and essential household contents have been damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster.

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

Applying for a disaster relief grant:

To apply for financial assistance call Disaster Welfare Services on **1800 018 444**.

Disaster Relief for Farmers

A range of assistance measures are available to eligible farmers and primary producers impacted by fire, including:

- Concessional fixed-rate loans up to \$130,000
- Transport subsidies for the carriage of livestock, fodder and water

For more information contact:

NSW Rural Assistance Authority **1800 678 593**

rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au

Housing Assistance

Family & Community Services (FACS) can assist by providing temporary accommodation for up to 28 nights while impacted residents seek alternative longer-term arrangements. FACS can also provide financial assistance through a repayable bond loan and a non-repayable advanced rent of two weeks. All fire affected residents are eligible for this assistance.

Call FACS Housing **1800 422 322**

Telstra Assistance

An assistance package is available for residential and small business customers in northern NSW who have lost services due to bushfires across the Tingha and Tabulam area.

Call Telstra on **132 203**.

Tax Help

If you have been affected by the fire you don't need to worry about your tax affairs right away. The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) will give you time to deal with your more immediate problems first and can help you to sort out your tax affairs later.

Depending on your circumstance, the following assistance may be available to you:

- more time to lodge, pay and respond
- early access to your money
- assistance payments
- help with damaged or destroyed property
- reconstructing your tax records
- fuel tax credits for individuals, businesses and others

Call the ATO for more information on **13 28 65**

Small Business Assistance

The NSW Government provides practical support to businesses affected by the fire.

Business Advice

Business Connect can provide you with two free independent and confidential business advice sessions. An advisor can meet you at a convenient place and discuss your business needs.

Advice is offered about managing cash flow, planning the next steps, accessing financial support schemes and connecting to additional support.

Call **1800 806 218**

Legal Assistance

Legal Aid NSW helps people with their legal problems. Legal Aid NSW lawyers can provide free legal advice and minor assistance to people affected by disasters on a range of issues including insurance, tenancy, credit and debt problems.

Legal Aid NSW: **1800 801 529**

www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Motor Vehicle Assistance

Motorists whose cars have been written off as a result of a natural disaster may be eligible for a stamp duty refund on their replacement vehicle.

Contact the Office of State Revenue via the website www.osr.nsw.gov.au

Revenue NSW: **1300 139 814**

Fire Retardant Information

Retardants were dropped from the air to suppress and slow the fires and may have landed on some properties.

This type of retardant is basically a fertiliser (a mix of ammonium and diammonium sulphate and ammonium phosphate).

See below for information on how to manage this and where to collect emergency water supplies.

For assistance with removing fire retardant from your roof please call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on **1800 018 444** (Mon–Fri 8.30am-4.30pm)

If you think that your rainwater tank has been contaminated you can still use the water to:

- flush toilets
- water the garden
- wash clothes (providing it will not stain clothes)
- wash cars
- fight fires

It is important for residents in fire affected areas or in areas where ash may have fallen on roofs to ensure that all rainwater from the first full rainfall event is not collected as this may be contaminated by ash.

For more information on fire retardants and tips on cleaning see the RFS fact sheet:

<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/information-about-the-use-of-firefighting-retardants.pdf>

Domestic Water Assistance

If your potable (drinking) 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 and you will need to sign a declaration that your water was used by the RFS for firefighting.

Call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on **1800 018 444** (Mon–Fri 8.30am-4.30pm) for more information.

Emergency Drinking Water

If you have been impacted by the fire and are in need of emergency potable water to drink or cook with, you can collect free water from the following locations:

- Tingha Sport and Recreation Club
- Tabulam Hall
- Drake Lunatic Hotel

Call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on **1800 018 444** (Mon–Fri 8.30am-4.30pm) for more information.

Emergency Water for Livestock

Water that has been taken to fight bushfires may be replaced if the removal of the water results in animal welfare concerns or production losses.

If your livestock water supply has been emptied or contaminated due to firefighting.

Contact Local Land Services to assess your eligibility:

Animal & Agriculture Hotline **1800 814 647**

Clean Up Advice

Houses, sheds and 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 may 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 and missing fencing panels around swimming pools.

When returning to your property after a bushfire, consider the following precautions 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 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 services 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.
- 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.

Health and Wellbeing

Bush fires are distressing and you might feel sadness or anxiety, or have trouble sleeping or remembering things. This is a normal reaction and it is not a sign of weakness.

Having someone to listen and support you at times like this is important. Some tips on managing your recovery include:

- Spend time with family and friends
- Try to get back in to a routine
- Continue a healthy lifestyle (eating, sleeping, exercise)
- Take time out but don't isolate yourself
- Write down your worries and concerns
- Express your feelings in your own time and 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

If you are struggling there are people you can talk to, like your local GP or health care provider.

Free 24/7 telephone support services

- NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
- Lifeline Crisis Support: 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 46 36
- MensLine: 1300 78 99 78
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

For more information and updates

Visit our website at
www.emergency.nsw.gov.au

Or follow our Facebook page at
[NSW Disaster Recovery](#)