



As at 23 January 2020

## Assistance for Families Affected by the Bushfires

**The Australian Government is providing funding for a number of short-term and long-term assistance measures to assist families affected by bushfires.**

### Disaster Recovery Payment

People are entitled to a one-off payment during a bushfire if:

- ▶ you get injured
- ▶ you lose an immediate family member
- ▶ your home is significantly damaged or destroyed
- ▶ a major asset or assets you own located at your principal place of residence has or have been destroyed or suffered major damage from the fire.

Each eligible adult will receive \$1,000 and each eligible dependent will receive \$400. The Australian Government has also announced an additional \$400 (\$800 in total) for each eligible child to help families with education expenses.

To claim the payment, call Services Australia (Centrelink) on 180 22 66. You can call from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.

### Disaster Recovery Allowance

If you have lost income as a direct result of a bushfire you can get an income support payment for up to 13 weeks. The payment is the equivalent of the maximum rate of Newstart or Youth Allowance.

To claim the allowance, call Services Australia (Centrelink) on 180 22 66. You can call from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.

### Mutual obligation pause

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers residing in impacted Local Government Areas will be suspended until 6 March 2020.

### Debt recovery

The Australian Government has paused debt and compliance activities for people living in Local Government Areas (LGAs) affected by the recent bushfires. This pause is in place in all LGAs where a major disaster has been declared.

If you're suffering hardship call 1800 076 072.

### Advance Payment

If you get an income support payment or Family Tax Benefit Part A, you may be eligible for an advance payment.



Talk to staff about an advance payment at a service centre.

### **Key assistance**

**One-off Disaster Recovery Payment (\$1,000 per eligible adult, and \$800 per eligible child)**

**Income support payment for up to 13 weeks**

**Family Tax Benefit Part A advance payment**

**Additional Child Care Subsidy hardship help**

**Significant expansion of mental health services**

## **Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) Temporary Financial Hardship**

This is short-term help for families who use child care and are experiencing significant financial hardship.

You can get it for up to 13 weeks. You don't need to meet the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity test. This means you can access up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight.

## **Mental Health Support**

New assistance measures have been introduced including free distress and trauma counselling sessions (available for individuals and families and emergency services personnel affected by bushfires).

New assistance measures have been introduced including free distress and trauma counselling sessions (available for individuals and families and emergency services personnel affected by bushfires). You can be connected to this free counselling through:

- ▶ Services Australia's Mobile Service Centres and Mobile Servicing Teams
- ▶ Recovery centres and evacuation centres
- ▶ Mental health services commissioned by Primary Health Networks (PHNs)
- ▶ Existing mental health counselling hotlines, including Lifeline and Kids Helpline

Bushfire affected individuals and families, and emergency response personnel will also be eligible to receive Medicare rebates for up to 10 psychological therapy sessions through GPs, psychologists and other mental health professionals. To find out more about the services please speak to your GP, or visit [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)

## **Bushfire Clean-up Program (VIC)**

The program covers the demolition and disposal of all buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by this season's bushfires. This includes:



- ▶ residential homes
- ▶ sheds and other out-buildings
- ▶ commercial buildings
- ▶ public buildings

This may also include the removal of fencing, trees and vehicles, but only where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings.

[www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-clean-up-program](http://www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-clean-up-program)

## **Bushfire Clean-up Assistance (NSW)**

The NSW Government has provided funding to help cover the cost of clean-up for both insured and uninsured properties. If you are uninsured, please contact Public Works Advisory on 1800 88 55 39.

## **Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program**

Support coordinators will be a single point of contact, working with local residents in Gippsland and North East Victoria to link them directly with vital support, such as information and advice, mental health support or financial counselling.

Affected Victorians can access a support coordinator by calling 1800 560 760.

## **Cashless Debit Card**

If you are a Cashless Debit Card participant in an area impacted by bushfires you can call the hotline on 1800 252 604 (Monday to Friday 9am-6pm AEDT)

## **Support for Carers**

Carers might be able to get emergency respite care at short notice if you suddenly find you can't provide care. If you need emergency respite care, talk with your local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222 (or 1800 059 059 after hours).

This includes carers of National Disability Insurance Scheme participants.

## **National Disability Advocacy**

The National Disability Advocacy Program provides people with disability with effective disability advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their human rights, which can be of heightened concern during times of crisis. Visit [disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap](http://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap)

## **Other Financial Help after a Bushfire**

If you are experiencing financial hardship, you can talk with a financial counsellor or find a financial counsellor near you. Call the free National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 (Monday to Friday 9:30am-4:30pm) or visit [www.ndh.org.au](http://www.ndh.org.au)



Visit [www.moneysmart.gov.au](http://www.moneysmart.gov.au) for other financial help available to support you after a bushfire.

## **Emergency Relief through Charities**

The Australian Government is providing \$40 million to these two charities to help deliver emergency relief to bushfire affected communities, such as food parcels, clothing, vouchers and cash payments.

You can call the Salvation Army Disasters Assistance team on 1300 662 217 or the St Vincent de Paul bushfire assistance team on 13 18 12.

BlazeAid ([www.blazeaid.com.au](http://www.blazeaid.com.au)) is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and flood.



## Key contacts

<b>National</b>	
Disaster recovery Payment and Allowance	18 22 66
Advance Payment and Additional Child Care Assistance	18 22 66
Debt recovery	1800 076 072
ATO Emergency Support Infoline	1800 806 218
Cashless Debit Card	1800 252 604
Support for Carers	1800 052 222 A/H 1800 059 059
National Debt Helpline	1800 007 007
Salvation Army Disasters Assistance	1300 662 217
St Vincent de Paul bushfire assistance team	13 18 12
Lifeline	13 11 14
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800
<b>NSW</b>	
NSW Disaster Welfare Services Line	1800 018 444
NSW Bushfire Clean-Up Assistance	1800 885 539
<b>VIC</b>	
VIC Emergency Hotline	1800 226 226
Bushfire Clean-Up Program	1800 560 760
Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program	1800 560 760
<b>SA</b>	
SA recovery Hotline	1800 302 787
<b>WA</b>	
Emergency <u>WA</u>	13 3337
<b>ACT</b>	
ACT Emergency Services Agency	132 281
<b>QLD</b>	
QLD disaster and Alerts	132 500
<b>TAS</b>	
TAS Alert	(03) 6232 7551