

Getting Help, Helping or Getting Prepared during the 2019/2020 Bushfire Emergency.

How to get help

If you or any of the people in your communities are affected by the bushfires, there are disaster recovery payments available, which you can access by calling 1802266. You can find out more information by going to <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency/bushfires>

Centrelink payments available for people affected by the bushfires

- Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment – a one-off lump sum payments for people affected by the bushfires from August 2019 through to January 2020.
- Disaster Recovery Allowance – income support payment for up to 13 weeks for people who have lost income because of they were affected by the bushfires

For details about eligibility and payment rates, please go to: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency/bushfires> and click on your relevant state.

If you are having trouble accessing disaster payments (ie. your claim has been denied) please contact [National Social Security Rights Network](#) and find state and territory contacts for help.

Another option is to access free legal services established through Legal Aid NSW (Disaster Response Legal Service NSW 1800 801 529) and Victoria Legal Aid (Disaster Legal Help Victoria on 1800 113 432).

Relevant state government financial assistance

For information about NSW Government financial assistance, please see here: <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance-for-individuals.aspx> (includes assistance for people who do not have insurance).

For information about Victorian Government financial assistance, please see here: <http://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief-and-recovery/924> (There is up to \$42,250 per household to help people re-establish if they have lost their home and do not have insurance).

For information about SA Government financial assistance, please see here: <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/services/disaster-recovery/cudleecreek> (There is up to \$10,000 for residents without insurance to re-establish their homes).

Red Cross Grants

If you've lost your home in a bushfire since July 2019 (including if you're a tenant), you can apply for an emergency grant of \$5,000 from the Red Cross, here <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/recovering-from-emergencies/direct-assistance-contact>

Accessing services and support

Ask Izzy has introduced a bushfire support category to help anyone affected by the #bushfires find services and information in their area. Visit www.askizzy.org.au to find links to emergency info, recovery support, food services, counselling and more.

Financial relief for people affected by the bushfires

The Consumer Action Law Centre has published some new information about where to get financial assistance for loan payments, energy bills, insurance premiums– <https://consumeraction.org.au/20200109-bushfire-financial-relief/>

You can also get confidential help from a financial counsellor by calling the National Debt Hotline – 1800 007 007 – or going to www.ndh.org.au

Mutual obligation requirements and Centrelink debt recovery

There are two arrangements in place for people with mutual obligation requirements:

- There is a '[national contingency arrangement](#)' in place till 19 January 2020. This means that jobseekers do not have to meet mutual obligation requirements or seek an exemption from requirements up until that date. This applies to jobactive, ParentsNext, Disability Employment Services and the Community Development Program. This also applies to volunteer firefighters – they do not need to seek an exemption from mutual obligation during this time.
- The Federal Government has also put in place a two-month suspension of mutual obligation requirements and debt recovery proceedings in fire-affected areas.

Speak to your employment service provider about this if you need further information.

How you can help

This bushfire season has stretched many emergency response agencies to the limit. Your donation can support their work and enable them to offer recovery assistance to people and communities. Some of the key agencies that are working to deliver support to communities at this time include:

Anglicare

To donate to the Anglicare Bushfire and Emergency Relief Appeal, you can call 1800 18 77 68, or donate online [here](#).

Donating goods or clothing?

We ask that people give food, money or gift cards rather than clothing or bric-a-brac as it is difficult to store and distribute. Contributions of food can be dropped off at the Anglicare office at 30 Scotts Crossing, Canberra.

Bushfires and scams

There are currently a wide range of appeals raising funds for people and animals affected by the bushfires. Unfortunately, some of these are scams. You can get more information about scams from the ACCC at <https://www.accc.gov.au/update/bushfires-and-scams>

Get prepared for disasters

One of the most useful things you can do is get prepared for disasters, and encourage your friends and family to do the same. Everyone needs an emergency plan, no matter where they live. A good plan helps you stay calm, get information quickly, look after others, and protect what you most value.

A simple four-step plan is available at redcross.org.au/prepare and you can also download the Get Prepared app, which puts your plan at your fingertips always. You'll also find information tailored to people with a disability, children, older adults, people with chronic illness, and people with hearing impairments.

Learn first aid

Whether it's heatstroke, an accident or a burn, knowing first aid can make a huge difference in an emergency. Anglicare, Red Cross and other agencies offer first aid and CPR courses and kits.

Learn psychological first aid

Just as first aid is the help you give someone who is sick or injured, psychological first aid is about supporting someone who is suffering emotionally from a traumatic event. It helps people feel safe, connected, and able to help themselves.

[Psychological First Aid: An Australian Manual](#) is a useful guide for working with clients in disaster-affected areas.

Volunteer

Emergency service volunteers have been working overtime and the pool of volunteers is shrinking. You might need some training before you can help in an active emergency situation, but sign up now and get

the paperwork done, so you can be ready in the future. You can sign up to train as an Anglicare Disaster Recovery Volunteer [here](#).

Support people who have experienced an emergency

Whether it's living with extreme heat and smoke, facing the threat of a fire, being forced to evacuate, or worst of all losing homes and loved ones, many thousands of Australians are feeling the strain of the bushfire season.

If someone you know is affected, you can help by offering a listening ear, helping with practical chores, and giving them space and patience as they process what has happened.

Visit redcross.org.au/recover for resources to help with coping with crisis, cleaning up, returning home after an evacuation, and talking to children after an emergency.

Look out for people in heatwaves

More people die in heatwaves than any other natural disaster in Australia. People aged over 65, pregnant women, children and people experiencing anxiety and stress can be most at risk.

As the temperature rises, check on those who may be vulnerable. A good guide on how to help is available at redcross.org.au/heatwave.

Bushfire information

For information about fires near you and how to prepare for a bushfire, see your relevant fire service site below:

NSW Rural Fire Service: <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>

Country Fire Authority Victoria: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/home>

South Australian Country Fire Service: <https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/site/home.jsp>

Emergency WA: <https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#>

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