

Community Recovery Information #5

This newsletter contains recovery information for people recently impacted by bush fires in the Northern Tablelands, North Coast and Mid North Coast regions.

New Bushfire Customer Care Service

For people impacted by bushfire, the **NSW Bushfire Customer Care Service** will help you navigate the support and financial assistance that's available across all levels of government.

Offering one-on-one support for people and businesses, available over the phone or in-person.

Call 13 77 88

7am to 7pm every day

Or visit www.service.nsw.gov.au for locations of Service NSW centres, and Mobile Service Centres.

All recovery services can now be accessed via Service NSW. However, if you prefer to continue contacting an agency directly, you can still do so.

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.

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:

- NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
- Beyondblue: 1300 22 4636
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Mensline: 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Tips for managing your recovery

- 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.

Free face-to-face support

Free face-to-face services with a mental health practitioner, such as a psychologist or mental health social worker, to provide people with strategies and techniques to manage mental health.

Connect to Wellbeing 1300 160 339

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Bushfire clean-up assistance and waste management

The NSW Government has announced that they will coordinate the clean-up of fire damaged residential and commercial properties.

This includes both insured and uninsured properties, and it also includes the clean-up of potentially hazardous materials like asbestos.

Residents who were impacted by the bushfires, will have the following services available to them:

- Containment and removal of asbestos and other contaminated materials released as a result of bush fire
- The removal of all dangerous debris including destroyed material and hazardous trees
- Removal of concrete slab foundations

Residents can call **the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88** to arrange for the clean-up and removal of bushfire debris.

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

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION NOTICE

THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN INSPECTED AFTER THE FIRE.
For your safety, we have indicated the possible hazards that may be present.

ASSESSMENT DATE:	
SITE DETAILS:	
ASSESSING OFFICER:	

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL HAZARDS:

Electricity (Mains)	Suspected Asbestos (no sample taken)	Dangerous Tree / Branches
Electricity (Solar)	Suspected Asbestos (sample taken)	Structural Instability
Gas (Mains)	Respiratory Irritant (Fibreglass etc.)	Sharps
Gas (Cylinder)	Bulk Flammable Liquids	Exposed edge (Fall Hazard)
Sewerage	Chemicals	Pool Fencing

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: These hazards may cause serious injury if asbestos is suspected, it is recommended you do not enter the property. For further information or advice please contact 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.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Hazard Identification Notices

You may find a hazard identification notice on your property when you return after a bushfire. This notice indicates your property has been visited and dangers like electrical risks, falling branches or asbestos may have been identified.

Only return home when you have been given approval. When you do, even if there is no sign, there may still be hazards on your property.

Please ensure you wear a P2 face mask, which can filter out very fine particles from the air.

If the Hazard Identification Notice indicates asbestos is suspected on your property, you can get further information from the Public Works Advisory on 1800 88 55 39.

Community Recovery Information #5

Beware dodgy tradies

Beware of travelling conmen and unlicensed traders, who target disaster-affected areas, offering cheap, cash-only repairs.

If you take up such offers, you run the risk of:

- Substandard work
- Being left out of pocket if the trader disappears before finishing the job
- Paying more to have a legitimate tradesperson repair shoddy work

Before you employ a tradesperson:

- Check your insurance policy and find out if you are covered
- Ask around for suitable tradespeople and get quotes
- Ask for a tradesperson's full name and licence number and check they are licensed to do the work
- Do not pay in full up front
- Be wary of door-to-door offers - get proof that the tradesperson is offering the deal legally
- Check with your local council if a building permit or other approval is needed

For further details call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Support for individuals

Disaster Relief Grants

Grants are available 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

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on 1800 018 444.

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.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

or Human Services: 180 2266 or humanservices.gov.au

Commonwealth Government Disaster Recovery Payment

\$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child for people severely affected by bushfires. An additional \$400 will also be provided for children, this payment will be applied automatically.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

or Human Services: 180 22 66.

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 Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

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 also covers people who would not normally be eligible for social housing.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

or NSW Housing Contact Centre: 1800 152 152 (available 24/7)

Community Recovery Information #5

Support for landholders

Local Land Services and NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) are providing assistance to landholders who have been impacted by bush fire through the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area (AASFA). Their priority is assisting you to ensure the survival and welfare of animals. Assistance includes:

Emergency fodder

AASFA provides emergency fodder and assistance for short-term relief (usually up to three days) to enable landholders to make alternative arrangements for livestock feed.

Emergency water for stock

AASFA is providing water to manage immediate animal welfare issues and are contacting those who have requested water.

Prioritisation of emergency water provision will depend on the:

- Significance of the impact on animal welfare; and
- Significance of the impact on other agricultural activities

Assistance for minor/temporary repairs to infrastructure to enable water supply is also available.

Reporting stock loss and damage

Landholders are encouraged to report damage to property.

This enables DPI to determine where and what assistance or resources may be needed.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or Animal and Agriculture Hotline on 1800 814 647

Emergency Bushfire Response in Primary Industries Grants Program

\$75,000 recovery grants, concessional loans and transport subsidies for eligible primary producers.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593

Title searches and plan images

NSW Land Registry Services (NSW LRS) is helping landholders affected by the recent NSW bushfires by providing title searches and plan images of their property free of charge.

Property searches and plans can assist landholders with insurance claims and development applications to council.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or NSW LRS on 1300 396 076

Fire-damaged fences

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) offers assistance under certain conditions to repair or replace fences bordering national parks in accordance with the NPWS boundary fencing policy.

This is of particular relevance to landholders who immediately border national parks and nature reserves affected by the recent fires.

NPWS is offering to purchase and supply an agreed quantity of fencing materials to reconstruct boundary fences.

This offer applies to the replacement or repair of pre-existing boundary fences only.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on 1300 361 967

Community Recovery Information #5

Disaster Response Legal Service NSW:

The Disaster Response Legal Service NSW can provide free legal advice to people affected by disasters on a range of issues, including:

- Insurance claims and disputes
- Financial hardship
- Centrelink
- Tenancy problems
- Your rights at work
- Replacing important documents
- Domestic violence advice

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or the Disaster Response Legal Service on 1800 801 529

Small Business Support

Small Business Grants

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available if your business has been directly affected by bush fire.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Bushfire Working Capital Loan

Offers up to \$50,000 to help businesses cover salaries or wages, rebuild infrastructure and purchase goods and services.

Also, the Bushfire Recovery Loan of up to \$500,000 is available for eligible businesses.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Business Connect

A free mobile advisory service is available to small businesses. Advice is offered about managing cash flow, planning the next steps, accessing financial support schemes and connecting to additional support.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or Business Connect on 1300 134 359 or register at

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/businessconnect

Dispute Resolution Service

A confidential and free dispute resolution service has been set up to help small businesses needing assistance to work through problems with other businesses or government.

Call the Bushfire Customer Care Service on 13 77 88

Or Small Business Commission on 1300 795 534 or visit smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au/dispute-resolution

For more recovery information and updates visit:

www.service.nsw.gov.au

Also, follow live updates from the Office of Emergency Management on Facebook:

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