

# NORTHERN NSW FIRES | 15 November

## Community Recovery Information #1

This newsletter contains recovery information for people recently impacted by bush fires in NSW.

### Health and wellbeing

#### *Looking after yourself and others*

Bush fires can be distressing and you might feel things like sadness, frustration, anxiety or have trouble sleeping or remembering things. This is a normal reaction to an abnormal event and 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 into a routine
- continue a healthy lifestyle (eating, sleeping, exercise)
- take time out but don't isolate yourself
- 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.

*Keep checking in with your friends and neighbours and looking out for each other.*

#### **Free face-to-face support**

Free face-to-face or telephone counselling 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.

- **Hunter/New England – Healthwise**  
1800 931 540
- **North Coast - Connect to Wellbeing**  
1300 160 339

#### **Free telephone support**

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

Mental Health Line	1800 011 511
Lifeline	13 11 14
Mensline	1300 789 978
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636

*If you or someone you know is in immediate danger always call 000.*

### Are you insured?

If you are insured you should talk to your insurance company as soon as possible about how to make a claim. If you have clearance, you can start cleaning up immediately - but first take pictures 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.**

### Support for Individuals

#### *Disaster Relief Grants*

**If you are not insured and have limited income, you may be eligible for a disaster relief grant. Please call Disaster Welfare on 1800 018 444.**

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

Contact the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on **1800 018 444**.

### *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 \$1000 per adult and \$400 per child if your home has been destroyed or severely damaged – including smoke damage.

Call **180 2266** to apply.

### *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 **180 2266** or visit [humanservices.gov.au](http://humanservices.gov.au)

### *Fire Retardant Information*

Retardants are 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). This coloured foam will need to be flushed from roofs and water sources.

For assistance with removing fire retardant from your roof please call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on **1800 018 444**

### *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.

Disaster Welfare is working with NSW RFS to identify impacted properties.

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

### *Animal Welfare*

Local Land Services is assisting with emergency fodder, stock water and assessment of animals impacted by the fire. Landholders are encouraged to call the Agriculture and Animal Hotline to request assistance or report any stock losses.

**Animal & Agriculture Hotline: 1800 814 647**

### *Replacing personal documents*

Service NSW can help replace many of your personal documents free of charge if they were damaged or destroyed. This includes birth certificates, marriage certificates, licences and number plates.

For assistance please visit your nearest NSW Service centre, or call **13 77 88**

### *Legal Assistance*

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 and credit and debt problems.

Legal Aid NSW: **1800 801 529**  
[www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

## **Local Housing Contacts**

### **Mission Australia**

1/39 Gordon Street, Coffs Harbour

**1800 269 672**

### **Community Housing Limited**

**1300 245 468**

#### **TAREE**

183 - 185 Victoria Street

Taree NSW 2430

#### **PORT MACQUARIE**

Level 1, 16 Clarence Street

(PO Box 837)

Port Macquarie NSW 2444

#### **COFFS HARBOUR**

1/19 Park Avenue

(PO Box 2523)

Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

#### **KEMPSEY**

84 Belgrave Street

Kempsey NSW 2440

### **Compass**

**1300 333 73**

57 Albert Street

**Taree** NSW 2430

PO Box 99

1/9 Brown Street

**Newcastle** NSW 2300

PO Box 2135

Dangar NSW 2309

Shop 3A/11 Molly Morgan Drive

**Greenhills** NSW 2323

PO Box 597

East Maitland NSW 2323

114 Vincent Street

**Cesnock** NSW 2325

PO Box 597

East Maitland NSW 2323

1/56-58 Brook Street

**Muswellbrook** NSW 2333

PO Box 71

Muswellbrook NSW 2333

## **Housing Assistance**

In NSW, social housing providers can provide support and assistance to people who are affected as a direct result of natural disasters such as fires, floods and severe storms.

### **What types of service are available?**

Social housing providers in NSW can assist affected people with access to products such as:

**Temporary Accommodation** – time limited accommodation for clients who are experiencing immediate homelessness

**Emergency Temporary Accommodation** – short-term temporary housing for up to 3 months for clients in urgent need of housing because of natural disaster [who would not normally be eligible for social housing]

**Rentstart Bond loan** – an interest-free loan to assist eligible clients pay a rental bond for a tenancy

**Housing Assistance** – a range of housing assistance products and services [including the above] that a person may be eligible for.

### **Where to go for help during business hours**

During regular business hours 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, visit any social housing provider.

A list of social housing providers can be found at

[www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/contact/housing](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/contact/housing)

### **Where to get help after hours**

The Department of Communities and Justice Housing Contact Centre (HCC) operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The HCC can assist people with

- Temporary accommodation
- General housing enquiries
- Applications for housing assistance

### **Important numbers**

Link2Home - **1800 152 152**

For temporary accommodation – this information and referral service is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

DCJ Housing Contact Centre **1800 422 322**  
Available 24/7, 365 days a year.

## Starting your clean-up

Houses, sheds and other buildings that have been burnt in a bush fire can leave potential health and safety hazards in the remaining rubble and ash.

Hazardous household materials that may be present after a bush fire include asbestos, ash from burnt treated timbers, like copper chrome arsenate (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 or missing fencing panels around 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.
- 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.
- Wear a P2 face mask and protective clothing.

For more recovery information  
and updates:

[www.emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au)

FB @NSWDisasterRecovery