



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

News Note

4th January 2020

BUSHFIRE RELIEF AND RECOVERY RESOURCES

Information concerning bushfire relief and recovery assistance is very dynamic and frequently being updated. This News Note provides a snapshot of current resources available to assist with member enquiries. Updates can be found at http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#financial_assistance

East Gippsland and Towong Assistance

Households in the local government areas of East Gippsland and Towong can now access the following emergency payments to relieve personal hardship.

Emergency Relief Assistance Payments

Emergency relief assistance is available for up to seven days after the event if you are unable to access or live in your home because of an emergency.

Payments of up to \$560 per adult and \$280 per child (up to a maximum of \$1960 per eligible household) are available to help meet immediate needs, including emergency food, shelter, clothing and personal items.

Visit a [relief centre](#) for more information and to find out if you are eligible.

The payments are designed to help eligible people experiencing personal and extreme financial hardship due to the fires.

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

- \$1000 per adult and \$400 per child
- For people who have been seriously injured, have lost their homes or whose homes have been directly damaged, or are the immediate family members of a person who has died, as a direct result of the bushfires.
- Further information including eligibility can be found at <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/victorian-bushfires-december-2019-australian-government-disaster-recovery-payment>

Disaster Recovery Allowance

- Up to 13 weeks income support for those who have lost income as a direct result of the bushfires
- Equivalent to Newstart or Youth Allowance
- Further information is available at: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/victorian-bushfires-december-2019-disaster-recovery-allowance>

Personal Hardship Grants

Emergency Re-establishment Payments

This assistance is being provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

- Emergency re-establishment assistance is available if your principal place of residence (your home) is uninhabitable for more than seven days because of an emergency.
- Provides up to \$42,250 per eligible household experiencing financial hardship, who have been affected by fire at their primary place of residence.
- The grants will be available for clean-up, emergency accommodation, repairs, rebuilding (a principal place of residence), and replacing some damaged contents.
- Re-establishment assistance is available to individuals or families who do not have building (home) insurance or contents insurance.
- Further information is available from: <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-hardship-assistance-program>

Households should contact their local council, or visit a relief centre, to discuss assistance options.

VFBV Welfare Fund

Operating since 1913, the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria welfare Fund provides fast small grants to CFA volunteers, long serving former volunteers and their families, who are experiencing significant financial hardship. Typical cases involve prolonged illness, bereavement, loss of earnings, or the accommodation and travel costs associated with supporting a relative in hospital.



The Welfare Fund is run under Australian Tax Office rules, independently audited, and grant decisions are made by a committee of long serving CFA volunteers. The Fund has helped close to 1,200 volunteers, with more than \$1.8 million in grants made over the years.

- Grants up to \$5,000
- Available to all members and long serving ex-members and their families of subscribing Brigades
- Contact the VFBV Welfare Fund Secretary on (03) 9886 1141 or your VFBV Support Officer or State Councillor to discuss eligibility and application process.

Other Services

Financial counselling

The Rural Financial Counselling Service is available to farmers, offering free and independent financial support to primary producers and non-agriculture related small businesses. The service can be contacted on **1300 735 578**.

Financial counsellors are professionals, regulated by federal legislation and employed by not for profit community organisations. They provide information, advice and advocacy support free of charge, assisting people in dealing with life situations involving debt and hardship, dealing with creditors, and stabilising finances. The National Debt Helpline is staffed by financial counsellors and can be contacted on **1800 007 007**

Insurance

If you have property or contents insurance you should contact your insurance company as soon as possible after the fire.

- Ask your insurer for advice on actions you should take
- Do not discard or throw away damaged items without first consulting your insurance company
- Make a list of items that have been damaged and take photographs if possible
- Keep receipts for any emergency repair work

For assistance with insurance contact the Insurance Council of Australia on **1800 734 621** (24 hour hotline). You can find information on lodging a claim following a disaster here: www.disasters.org.au

Replacing documents and identification

The Australian Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages will replace certificates that were lost in the recent bushfires, free of charge. You can call the Department of Justice on **03 5215 8500** and they will mail the forms to you.

If you've been affected by the recent fires VicRoads can:

- refund your remaining registration without any admin fees for any fire damaged vehicles or,
- replace your licence/learner permit/marine licence card for free.

Visit the VicRoads website for more information: <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/>

Donations

Material goods are not requested at this time. Clothing and supplies is difficult to transport to fire affected areas and relief centres have been inundated with donations. The best way the public can help is by donating money to the Bushfire Disaster Appeal or to a registered not-for-profit organisation helping with the relief and recovery effort (or to a local Community Relief Fund, if established).

Bendigo Bank has established a Bushfire Disaster Appeal to support community members affected by the recent bushfires in East Gippsland and Hume.

You can donate at: <https://www.communityenterprisefoundation.com.au/make-a-donation/bushfire-disaster-appeal/>

National appeals such as the Salvation Army and Red Cross can be accessed from:

Salvation Army: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/donate/make-a-donation/donate-online/?appeal=disasterappeal>

Red Cross: https://www.redcross.org.au/campaigns/disaster-relief-and-recovery-new-years-eve?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=socialorganic&utm_campaign=201913_drr_disaster-relief-and-recovery_don_transient_bushfires_none

Information on how members of the public can donate to CFA Brigades can be found at: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about/supporting-cfa>

VFBV Welfare Fund Donations

VFBV delegate and officials are working with affected Brigades to access support available through the VFBV Welfare Fund. With the large number of members directly impacted, we are expecting high demand.



If Brigades and members wish to donate to the VFBV Welfare Fund they can do so by making a deposit to the following account:

Account Name:	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Welfare Fund
Account Number:	135 312 478
BSB Number:	633 000

If you email details of your deposit to j.laing@vfbv.com.au a receipt can be arranged.

MEMBER WELFARE AND SUPPORT

Support services are available to provide you additional support:

CFA WELLBEING SUPPORT LINE
1800 959 232
Providing CFA members and their immediate family access to 24 hour support 7 days a week. Psychologists – Counsellors – Peer Support - Chaplains

Lifeline: 13 11 14 - provides crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 - to talk with a trained mental health professional.