



As at 23 January 2020

Assistance for Volunteer Firefighters Affected by Bushfires

The Australian Government is supporting firefighters through the Volunteer Firefighters Financial Support Program.

Volunteer Firefighter Payment

The Australian Government is supporting volunteer firefighters this fire season with payments of up to \$300 per day, with a total cap of \$6000. The payments are tax-free and not means tested.

NSW and QLD are participating in this program and there are ongoing discussions to put in place the same arrangements with other states.

NSW and QLD

The payment is funded by the Australian Government, and administered by the relevant state government. It is for eligible volunteer firefighters who are self-employed or employed by small and medium businesses and have lost income. This payment is designed to help volunteer firefighters who have been called out for more than 10 days since 1 July 2019.

To be **eligible** you must be a volunteer firefighter who has lost income and:

- ▶ is registered with the relevant state emergency service agency.
- ▶ has been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days since 1 July 2019. The days do not need to be consecutive. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (for example, hazard reduction burns).
- ▶ is self-employed or employed by a small or medium business (a business with an annual turnover of less than \$50 million in the 2018–2019 financial year).

You are **not eligible** if you work for:

- ▶ a large business. Large businesses have more capacity to support their staff to help the community and are being encouraged to do so.
- ▶ government (state, federal or local). Talk to your employer about special leave provisions.

In NSW, for information call 13 77 88 or visit www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-volunteer-firefighter-payment. You can also apply in person at a ServiceNSW centre.



In QLD, for information call 1800 268 462 or www.visit.qld.gov.au/emergency/volunteering-jobs/volunteer/qfes-volunteer-compensation-package

Key Assistance

- ▶ **Volunteer Firefighter Payment for up to \$300 per day (capped at \$6000)**
- ▶ **Significant expansion of mental health services**

Paid Leave

Commonwealth public servants who volunteer with state rural fire services are now able to access a minimum of four weeks (20 days) of paid emergency services leave to work on the front lines separate to their regular annual and sick leave arrangements.

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).

Bushfire affected individuals and families, and emergency response career and volunteer 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 www.health.gov.au

Free counselling services are also available 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

Other Financial Assistance

State governments are providing financial assistance to individuals and families affected by the bushfires, including eligible volunteer firefighters.

National

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

Visit www.moneySMART.gov.au for other financial help available to support you after a bushfire.



Key contacts

National	
Disaster recovery Payment and Allowance	180 22 66
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
NSW	
NSW Disaster Welfare Services Line	1800 018 444
Service NSW (Volunteer Firefighter Payment)	13 77 88
NSW Bushfire Clean-Up Assistance	1800 885 539
VIC	
VIC Emergency Hotline	1800 226 226
Bushfire Clean-Up Program	1800 560 760
Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program	1800 560 760
SA	
SA recovery Hotline	1800 302 787
WA	
Emergency WA	13 3337
ACT	
ACT Emergency Services Agency	132 281
QLD	
QLD disaster and Alerts	132 500
QLD Volunteer Firefighter Payment	1800 268 462
TAS	
TAS Alert	(03) 6232 7551