



## Fencing

### Damage to fences caused by fire suppression agencies

The State Government will repair or pay 100% restoration costs of fences destroyed or damaged on private land as a result of machinery used in the control of bushfires by fire suppression agencies (this includes damage to fences to enable access by emergency vehicles).

The fire agency will pay for repair to or replacement of fences upon agreement with the landholder before works begin (excludes emergency repair to contain stock in which case the fire agency may inspect the repairs after the emergency works).

Damage caused by individuals or corporations to their own or other's property as part of their own fire suppression activities (for example construction of their own fire control lines) will not be paid for by the fire agency.

### Other damage caused by the creation of fire control lines

Government will fully fund the repair of fire control lines created as part of bushfire suppression activities, regardless of the origin of the bushfire. This includes the re-establishment of top soil and undertaking of erosion control measures so that the landholder can replant pasture or trees. Government will also provide pasture seed for the re-sowing of pasture by the landholder where the control line was established.

**Call the (VBIL) on 1800 240 667 or visit these websites: [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au), [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au) or [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)**

### Damage to private fences by bushfire

Primary producers – whose income from farming accounts for greater than 51% of their total income – are eligible to seek assistance in the form of grants and/or concessional loans including the Commonwealth and State Government's Cleanup and Restoration Grants, which can be used to assist with restoration of fences destroyed or damaged as a result of bushfire.

All landholders are expected to have insurance cover for boundary and internal fences, in the same way any business venture or private householder should protect and insure their assets.

**Call Rural Finance on 1800 255 925 or visit [www.ruralfinance.com.au](http://www.ruralfinance.com.au)**

The Victorian Government has provided direct financial support to the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) to employ coordinators in each of the fire affected areas and to support the volunteers who are helping rural landholders in restoring boundary fencing.

### Damage to fences adjoining Crown land by bushfire

Government will reimburse reasonable insurance excess to a maximum of four hundred dollars (\$400) on all insured Crown land boundary fences destroyed or damaged by bushfires (bushfire or fire suppression backburn) regardless of the tenure of the land where that fire originates. If you have a no excess policy you will also be eligible for reimbursement. Government will also repair or replace crown land boundary fences burnt by the fire agencies undertaking backburning during a bushfire emergency.

**Call the VBIL on 1800 240 667 or visit [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)**

### How do I volunteer to help or donate materials?

The VFF is registering details of volunteers willing to help with fencing activities and donations of fencing materials.

**To register call the VBIL on 1800 240 667 or VFF on 1300 882 833 or go to [www.vff.org.au](http://www.vff.org.au)**

## Have you been left homeless after the bushfires?

### Housing help is available

The bushfire recovery phase is now underway and the Department of Human Services is working to assist bushfire affected families with accommodation while homes and communities are rebuilt.

Call the Victorian Bushfire Accommodation Inquiry line on 1800 006 468 to discuss your accommodation needs.

## Telstra assistance package

Telstra is providing a relief package for its residential and small business customers whose Telstra services have been affected by the recent bushfires.

Under the package, Telstra offers customers who report a temporary loss of their Telstra fixed phone service due to natural disaster:

### Short-term measures

- Free call diversion from their fixed service to a fixed or mobile service of their choice, irrespective of carrier.
- For Telstra customers who have diverted their fixed line phones to their Telstra mobile, mobile calls will be charged at home line rates in accordance with their selected HomeLine plan for local and STD® calls (limited to one designated Telstra mobile per affected household/business).
- Telstra mobile customers who do not have a fixed line can receive a one off credit to the value of \$50.00 (limited to one mobile phone per household or business).

### Longer term measures

In addition to the above, customers who are unable to return to their homes due to damage resulting from the fires will be offered:

#### Phone

- Cancellation of their fixed phone service at their existing premises, with free number reservation for up to twelve months from the date of registration as a customer affected by a natural disaster.
- Free connection of a Telstra fixed phone service at one residence within twelve months from the date of registration as a customer affected by a natural disaster.

#### BigPond

- Cancellation of a Big Pond service at existing premises with free reconnection of a new BigPond service at one residence or business within twelve months from the date of registration as a customer affected by a natural disaster (in selecting this option customers will not be able to retain their existing username or email address); OR:
- Rebate of BigPond monthly access charges for three months (this enables customers to retain their username and email address).
- Connection of a BigPond Wireless Broadband 12 month contract with a free device. Customers will not be charged an early termination fee if the contract is cancelled prior to the 12 month period, provided a Telstra fixed broadband service is taken up. (With this option customers will have to pay for ongoing monthly plan fees and any associated excess usage) OR
- Wireless Broadband pre-paid offering customers a Free Device, (normally \$149 - USB modem ONLY) no bills or fixed term contracts with pay as you go per kilobyte

charging. There is no ongoing monthly plan fees with this option

#### Foxtel from Telstra

- Free connection of a FOXTEL from Telstra service within twelve months from the date of registration as a customer affected by a natural disaster, provided the customer remains in a FOXTEL service area (limited to one service per affected household/business); OR
- Suspension of their FOXTEL from Telstra service for three months; OR
- Cancellation of their FOXTEL from Telstra or Austar from Telstra service with no early termination charge (ETC) or equipment charges applied.

These offers are open to affected customers for a maximum period of three months from the date of registration as a customer affected by a natural disaster.

**To register as a customer affected by a natural disaster, please call Telstra on 13 22 03.**

### Offer from Green PC

GreenPC have offered free computers to families affected by the bushfire. This is to enable young people to continue with their education and training.

**Please note: Due to the high demand on their services there may be a slight delay in this service.**

You can fill in an online request for a computer at [www.greenpc.com.au](http://www.greenpc.com.au).

### DHS grants

The DHS minor grant – the Personal Hardship Grant: Emergency Grant will cease on 31 March 2009.

These grants are payments of up to \$1,067 per household to meet immediate needs after an event.

Normally the access to these grants are closed seven days after an event but they have been extended to 31 March due to the magnitude of this event.

DHS major grants - the Temporary Living Expenses Grant and the Re-establishment grants - will continue for some time.

**Applications for DHS grants are made with DHS grants officers – Contact the Latrobe City Bushfire Recovery Line on 1800 017 777 for more information.**

## **[bushfirerelief.infoxchange.net.au/i-need-assistance](http://bushfirerelief.infoxchange.net.au/i-need-assistance)**

If you cannot access an online computer to fill in the form, contact Mick Murphy at Baw Baw Latrobe Local Learning & Employment Network (LLEN) on 5633 2868.

## **Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund**

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund announced last week that further payments that will be made available through its rebuilding and recovery stage. The money to assist with rebuilding principal places of residence and replacing contents will be allocated in this way:

- Homeowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the bushfires will receive a Rebuilding and Recovery Grant of \$50,000. This consists of \$35,000 for rebuilding and \$15,000 to replace contents. This grant will be made available to people rebuilding in their community or relocating.
- Tenants whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the bushfires will receive a \$15,000 payment to cover contents lost or damaged.
- People whose principal place of residence was significantly damaged by the bushfires and who will have to relocate during rebuilding will receive a payment of \$15,000 for repairs and rebuilding.

A further needs-based payment will also be made to homeowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the fires.

**Please note that application forms are not available for this grant. People can register to receive more information regarding this payment by contacting the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on 1800 180 213.**

## **Local Heroes Receive Support in Bushfire Effort**

Members of the local community are being urged to nominate those individuals and small businesses who provided exceptional support to communities in the aftermath of the bushfires.

Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Panel Mr John Landy announced payments this week to small businesses and individuals who put the welfare and wellbeing of others before their own personal interest.

The \$8000 payments are to acknowledge those who literally opened their doors and their hearts to freely supply food, shelter and other necessities to victims and the emergency service men and women fighting the fires.

Mr Landy said these are not intended as compensation for lost income or outgoings, nor as payment to the many

people who provided voluntary services, but rather they should be seen as an acknowledgement of exceptional involvement.

The payments will be known as Exceptional Hardship Support Grants.

The recipients of these grants or payments must apply or be nominated to receive the payment.

Referees from the community or not-for-profit organisations are required to support nominations.

**For more information people can contact the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on 1800 180 213 or visit [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal)**

Mr Landy said that donations to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund now stood at \$245 million of which more than \$180 million has been allocated.

## **Launch of VECCI Business Relief Fund**

**– to assist businesses impacted by bushfires**

VECCI, in conjunction with the Victorian Government, has launched the VECCI Business Relief Fund (VBRF) to assist businesses indirectly impacted by natural disasters such as the Black Saturday bushfires by providing short-term financial support. Their press release notes:

“Normally Government financial assistance is made available to businesses directly destroyed or damaged, but those indirectly impacted are not eligible for such assistance even though trade can be seriously reduced or lost completely.

“The VBRF aims to support businesses that are suffering loss of trade but have not been damaged or destroyed by events such as the recent bushfires, and are therefore ineligible for government assistance. A panel of business and community representatives will assess grant applications for up to \$5,000 initially, in line with criteria that considers the size of the business, extent of hardship and the existence of other income.

**Contact Michelle Hayward 8662 5227 or email [mhayward@vecci.org.au](mailto:mhayward@vecci.org.au) for more information about the VBRF.**

In addition to the VBRF, VECCI is working with the State Government to provide business advisors to businesses both directly and indirectly affected by the recent bushfires. Businesses affected that would like to speak to an advisor should contact Ed Walta 0417 314 933 or email [edwalta@netspace.net.au](mailto:edwalta@netspace.net.au)