

<b>Circular Details</b>	Circular No 20-01 / 6 January 2020 / A686940
<b>Previous Circular</b>	<i>Nil</i>
<b>Who should read this</b>	Councillors / General Managers / All council staff
<b>Contact</b>	Ms Karen Purser, Acting Director Policy and Sector Development <a href="mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au">olg@olg.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Action required</b>	Council to Implement

### Recovery Information for Councils impacted by bushfires in NSW

The Office of Local Government (OLG) has agreed to be the State coordinating agency between affected local councils seeking assistance and councils who have the capacity to assist. OLG has teamed up with the City of Sydney, Sydney Resilience Office and Local Government NSW to provide a disaster recovery council resource co-ordination service to assist councils impacted by the bushfire crisis.

#### What's new or changing

- This circular contains recovery information for council areas with residents recently impacted by bushfires in NSW.

#### What this will mean for your council

- Councils may become a go-to point for people recently impacted by bushfires who are seeking assistance.
- Council staff should make themselves familiar with recovery information sources available to the public.
- Councils may be called upon to help with clean-up activities and/or to waive tip fees for the disposal of material directly related to the recent fires.
- A councils helping councils resource sharing initiative called the **Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group** has been established by OLG, the City of Sydney, Sydney Resilience Office and Local Government NSW to enable unaffected councils to offer assistance, resource sharing and temporary deployment of relief staff to councils in need.
- The Office of Emergency Management convenes the State Recovery Committee. Two General Managers Working Groups have been established as part of the Recovery Committee process. The General Managers Working Groups will be the central point to establish priority needs of local councils with particular regard to the needs that could be met through the assistance of other councils. The General Managers Working Groups are meeting weekly with the State Recovery Coordinators to discuss recovery issues.

#### Key points

##### General

- A disaster welfare assistance line has been established on 1800 018 444.
- A number of grants have been made available, such as grants of up to \$15,000 for business owners directly affected by bushfires and grants of up to \$15,000 for bushfire affected primary producers.

- A number of allowances are available for individuals affected by recent fires, such as a one-off payment of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child for people who have lost their properties or whose properties have been severely damaged.
- Housing assistance is available to support people via temporary accommodation.
- A number of disaster welfare assistance points have been established.
- Free mental health telephone support is available 24/7 via the Mental Health Line, Lifeline, Mensline, Kids Helpline and Beyond Blue.

### Waste disposal

- The NSW Government is waiving waste levy fees for residents disposing of bushfire-generated waste at nominated facilities.
- Councils should check whether the fees adopted for council operated tips already include a provision allowing council to waive fees in circumstances of a bushfire emergency.
- If there is no such provision councils may choose to explore the use of their power under section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 to grant financial assistance to fire-affected persons.
- This could occur by way of free waste disposal vouchers. Alternatively, councils may resolve to grant a “tip fee” amnesty. To adopt either option council will need a resolution. The terms of the resolution would authorise the nature and terms of the amnesty.
- Whether public notice of 28 days would be required under section 356(2) will depend on the nature of the proposed amnesty. It could apply uniformly to all persons within the council's area or it could apply to a significant group of persons within the council's area.
- Councils must keep records of the total value of any amnesty or financial assistance provided for future financial reporting requirements. Councils should later ratify the loss in revenue due to the amnesty as an expense against the revenue budget.
- In establishing an amnesty councils should be guided by their own legal advice.

### **Where to go for further information**

- For recovery information, information fact sheets and updates please visit the following useful sites:
  - [www.emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au)
  - <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/Northern-Fires-November-2019.aspx>
  - <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/community-recovery-information-november-northern-nsw-fires-2.pdf>
- **To offer resources** and/or specialist staff assistance, please contact the **Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group** on 02 9246 7709 or [recovery@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:recovery@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au).
- **Requests for assistance** can be directed to the Office of Emergency Management State Recovery Committee - General Managers Groups, or directly to the Office of Local Government on [olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au).

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