

Where to get help

Legal

Bushfire Legal Help

For advice and referral to ongoing legal help for bushfire affected people. See the website for bushfire legal information and details on information and advice sessions being held near you.

Tel: 1800 113 432 (Free call), Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

www.bushfirelegalhelp.org.au

Victoria Legal Aid

Free legal information over the phone, publications and workshops, public law library and advice at most courts and tribunals, or by appointment.

Tel: 9269 0120 (Metropolitan) and 1800 677 402 (Country callers), Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Federation of Community Legal Centres

For information on a community legal centre near you, including rural and regional, and specialist community legal services.

Tel: 9652 1500, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5pm

www.communitylaw.org.au

Law Institute of Victoria

Call their Legal Referral Service for referral to a specialist lawyer near you. All referrals are to Law Institute of Victoria members who have agreed to see clients for up to the first 30 minutes free of charge.

Tel: 9607 9550, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.liv.asn.au

Victoria Law Foundation

For a range of publications on many areas of law, free events and education and training, visit the website.

Tel: 9604 8100, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.victorialaw.org.au

See also Consumer Action Law Centre listed under 'Debt', JobWatch listed under 'Employment and small business' and Tenants Union of Victoria listed under 'Renting'

General

Department of Human Services (DHS)

For registration and help from a DHS case manager.

Tel: 1800 050 400 (Victorian Bushfire Case Management Registration Service), Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

For a wide range of bushfire information.

Tel: 1800 240 667 (Victorian Bushfire and Storm Information Line), Monday to Friday, 8 am and 6 pm, opening hours may vary in times of emergency

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/em/bushfire-recovery

Insurance

Financial Ombudsman Service

Tel: 1300 780 808 (General) and 1800 337 444 (Bushfire and Flooding Disaster Hotline), Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

Email: GIDisaster@fos.org.au

www.fos.org.au

Insurance Council of Australia

Tel: 1300 728 228, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.insurancecouncil.com.au/

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Debt', 'Fencing' and 'Property'

Property

Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority

For information and assistance with clean-up and rebuilding, agriculture and animals, and personal and financial support.

Tel: 1800 240 667, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm (opening hours may vary in times of emergency)

www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/

Department of Sustainability and Environment

For bushfire recovery information and assistance with fences and fire control lines, planning and surveying, agriculture, wildlife rescue, water replacement, trees and native vegetation.

Tel: 136 186, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm

www.dse.vic.gov.au

Building Commission

For bushfire related rebuilding information on new standards and assessments, controls and permits.

Tel: 1300 360 320, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.buildingcommission.com.au

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

Deals with disputes about renting, retail tenancies and owners corporations (body corporate). VCAT is also making special arrangements for bushfire-related hearings.

Tel: 9628 9700 (General) and 1800 001 099 (Bushfire Information Line), Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4.30 pm

Email: vcat@vcat.vic.gov.au (add 'Bushfire priority' into your subject header)

www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Dispute Settlement Centre

Can help people solve their own disputes and also provide the help of a mediator for conflicts involving fencing, trees, planning and environment, drainage and water runoff, and more.

Tel: 1800 658 528, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4.30 pm

www.justice.vic.gov.au

(Click on 'About Us > Our Organisation > Business Area Profiles > Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria')

State Revenue Office

Bushfire hotline for information on stamp duty relief for those who lost family homes or vehicles in the bushfires.

Tel: 132 161, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.sro.vic.gov.au/sro/SROWebSite.nsf/bushfire.htm

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Debt' (Consumer Action Law Centre and Consumer Affairs Victoria), 'Employment and small business' (Worksafe for handling hazards), 'Fencing' and 'Insurance' generally.

Fencing

Department of Primary Industries

For bushfire assistance with fencing, stock, other animals, property, energy issues and landcare.

Tel: 136 186, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm

www.dpi.vic.gov.au

(Click on 'Bushfire recovery information' on homepage)

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF)

Providing bushfire affected farmers with voluntary labour to put up boundary fencing.

Tel: 1300 882 833, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.vff.org.au

Magistrates' Court

For phone numbers see 'Court locations' on www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au and look for the courthouse closest to you.

Rural Finance

Administering clean-up and restoration grants and concessional loans to primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations whose properties have been physically affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. It is also administering on behalf of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund grants for rural property owners and for employees who lost tools of trade in the bushfires.

Tel: 1800 255 925 (Rural Finance Bushfire Hotline), Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.ruralfinance.com.au

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Insurance and 'Property'

Renting

Tenants Union of Victoria

Advice, assistance and advocacy for tenants of private and public residential properties and residents of rooming houses and caravan parks.

Tel: 9416 2577 (Advice line), Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9 am to 4 pm and Wednesday 1 pm to 8 pm.

www.tuv.org.au

(Click on 'Advice > Publications' for useful fact sheets)

Residential Tenancy Bond Authority

Holds all hold Victorian residential tenancy bonds including those applying to long-term caravan and rooming houses residents.

Tel: 1300 137 164, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.rentalbonds.vic.gov.au

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

Deals with disputes about renting, retail tenancies and owners corporations (body corporate). VCAT is also making special arrangements to make bushfire-related hearings quicker.

Tel: 9628 9700 (General) and 1800 001 099 (Bushfire Information Line), Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4.30 pm

Email: vcat@vcat.vic.gov.au (add 'Bushfire priority' into your subject header)

www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Office of the Victorian Small Business Commissioner

Assistance with mediating disputes that happen between owner and tenant for properties leased under the *Retail Leases Act 2003*.

Tel: 132 215 or 1800 136 034, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm

www.sbc.vic.gov.au

Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria

Tel: 1800 500 509, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.ewov.com.au

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Property'

Family

Victoria Legal Aid

For free family law and child support information, advice and clinics. See the website for family law and child support information fact sheets, publications and workshops.

Tel: 9269 0120 (Metropolitan) and 1800 677 402 (Country callers), Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Family Relationship Centres

For information and referral to family relationship centres and other services near you.

Tel: 1800 050 321 (Family Relationship Advice Line), Monday to Friday, 8 am to 8 pm

www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Family Assistance Office

For information on Family Tax Benefit Parts A and B, Baby Bonus, Child Care Benefit, Large Family Supplement and other benefits.

Tel: 136 150, Monday to Friday, 8 am and 8 pm

www.familyassist.gov.au/

Family Law Courts

Tel: 1300 352 000 (National Enquiry Centre), Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.familylawcourts.gov.au (Search for specific information under 'Victorian bushfires 2009')

Child Support Agency

See website for bushfire specific assistance.

Tel: 131 272, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 4.45 pm

www.csa.gov.au

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service

Tel: 9373 0123 or 1800 015 188 (country callers), seven days, 24 hours

www.wdvcs.org.au

(You might also want to find out more about Domestic Violence Victoria at www.dvvic.org.au or www.dvrcv.org.au/ServicesHub/ServicesIndex.htm for other services that can help you)

Men's Referral Service

For men who are thinking about their anger, behaviour, relationship issues or parenting, and need help and support, and people who are concerned about other men's behaviour.

Tel: 1800 065 973, Monday to Friday, 12 pm to 9 pm

www.mrs.org.au/

Centrelink

Bushfire recovery and disaster special assistance.

Tel: 180 22 11 (Victorian Bushfire Infoline), Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/emergency/vic_claiming.htm

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Counselling and support' (support services) and 'Legal' (for specialist child support community legal centres)

Employment and small business

JobWatch

A free and confidential telephone information and referral service, and legal help for Victorian workers. See the website for information on your rights and services offered.

Tel: 1800 331 617 (information line), Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm, closed Tuesday 12 pm to 2 pm

www.jobwatch.org.au

Workplace Infoline

Information for job seekers, employees and employers about workplace issues.

Tel: 1300 363 264, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 7 pm

www.workplace.gov.au

Workplace Ombudsman

Provides advice and assistance on workplace rights and responsibilities, investigates complaints, conducts workplace audits and litigates breaches of workplace laws.

Tel: 1300 724 200, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.wo.gov.au

WorkSafe Victoria (Work Cover)

See the bushfire recovery page (at 'About workplace') for information concerning handling hazards when searching through or clearing up bushfire affected areas.

Tel: 1800 136 089 (Advisory service), Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm and 132 360 (24-hour emergency response line)

www.workcover.vic.gov.au

Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC)

Helping with industrial dispute resolution, assistance regarding unfair and unlawful dismissal, awards and industrial action.

Tel: 1300 799 675, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 7 pm

www.airc.gov.au

See also the details of the Dispute Settlement Centre under 'Property'

Debt**Consumer Action Law Centre**

Tel: 1300 881 020 or 9629 6300 (Legal advice), Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 5 pm

Email: legal queries to advice@consumeraction.org.au

www.consumeraction.org.au

(Visit www.consumeraction.org.au/publications/fact-sheets for useful fact sheets on mortgages, personal, motor vehicle, utilities, debt and credit issues including home repossession, debt collection and more)

Consumer Affairs Victoria

For bushfire related information on credit and debt, renting, building and renovation, buying and selling property. You can also ring Consumer Affairs Victoria to get the number of a financial counsellor near you.

Tel: 1300 558 181, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

Email: consumer@justice.vic.gov.au

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Financial Ombudsman Service

Tel: 1300 780 808 (General) and 1800 337 444 (Bushfire and Flooding Disaster Hotline), Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

Email: GIDisaster@fos.org.au

www.fos.org.au

Credit Ombudsman

Tel: 1800 138 422, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.creditombudsman.com.au/

Financial & Consumer Rights Council

Tel: 9663 2000, Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm

www.fcrc.org.au

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)

Tel: 1300 302 502, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 6 pm

www.accc.gov.au

(Click on 'For consumers > Credit, debt and banking > Managing debts' for information on dealing with debt collectors)

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority

Tel: 1300 131 060, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 6 pm

www.apra.gov.au

(Click on www.apra.gov.au/Superannuation/ for information about accessing your superannuation early)

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

Emergency Support Infoline

Tel: 1300 304 975, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm

General enquiries

Tel: 13 28 61 (Personal tax) 13 28 66 (Business tax) 13 10 20 (Superannuation), Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm

www.ato.gov.au

Centrelink

If you are on a payment and you would like to see if you are able to get your superannuation early, you will need to call the telephone number for the payment you are on.

Tel: 13 27 17 (Disability Support Pension, Carers' Allowance), 13 28 50 (Newstart), Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm, (check the website for more phone numbers)

www.centrelink.gov.au

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Employment and small business', 'Family' and 'Utilities'

Utilities

Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria

Tel: 1800 500 509, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.ewov.com.au

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

Tel: 1800 062 058 (General) and 1800 046 686 (Bushfire and Flooding Helpline), Monday to Friday, 9 am and 5 pm

Email: BFA@tio.com.au (Bushfire and flooding)

www.tio.com.au

Essential Services Commission

Tel: 9651 0222 or 1300 664 969, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.esc.vic.gov.au

(Click on 'For Consumers > Energy or Water' for a list of energy (gas and electricity) and water companies in your area)

Department of Human Services (DHS)

For concession and information about the Utility Relief Grant, call the Concessions Information Line.

Tel: 1800 658 521, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions/home

Australian Broadband Guarantee – Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Tel: 1800 883 488 (Australian Broadband Guarantee), Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5.30 pm

<http://bcoms.dbcde.gov.au/BSL/Welcome.do>

(Check to see what broadband providers are in your non-metropolitan areas)

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Debt', 'Fencing' (Department of Primary Industries for energy information)

Wills and estates

Supreme Court of Victoria

Tel: 9603 9284 or 9603 9286 for bushfire related probate inquiries, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

www.supremecourt.vic.gov.au/

(Click on the Bushfire information kit at 'Probate - Bushfire Related Inquiries' on the homepage)

State Trustees

Bushfire related assistance with lost documents, finalising affairs and administering estates, managing financial affairs, funeral arrangements and locating next of kin and beneficiaries.

Tel: 9667 6073 (Bushfire helpline), Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5.30 pm

www.statetrustees.com.au

Coroner's process

State Coroner's Office

Tel: 1800 283 292 (Bushfires information line), Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm

www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

(Click on 'Bushfires assistance' on the homepage)

Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

Tel: 1800 243 650, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5.30 pm

Email: enquiries@royalcommission.vic.gov.au

www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/

Counselling and support

Nurse-On-Call Bushfire Health and Counselling Line

Support and counselling to anyone affected including emergency workers, volunteers and service providers.

Tel: 1300 606 024, seven days, 24 hours

www.health.vic.gov.au/nurseoncall/

Beyond Blue

Tel: 1300 224 636, seven days, 24 hours

www.beyondblue.org.au

(Click on 'Bushfires – where to get help' on the homepage for immediate assistance and other services that can help. Includes a link to 'Emotional responses after a natural disaster - information card')

Lifeline

Counselling support.

Tel: 131 114, seven days, 24 hours.

www.lifeline.org

(Click on 'Find help > Community disaster recovery' for bushfire specific support information and resources such as *Helping your children cope with the after effects of bush fire disaster*, which has tips for parents and teachers, beating the blues toolkit and more)

Griefline

For confidential counseling for anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one.

Tel: 9596 7799, seven days, 12 pm to 3 am

www.griefline.org.au

Parent Line

Offers telephone counselling service to parents and carers of children aged from birth to 18 years old.

Tel: 132 289, week days 8 am to midnight and weekends 10 am to 10 pm

www.parentline.vic.gov.au

Kids Helpline

For children and young people. Offering telephone counselling, email counselling or web counselling, and where to get help in your local area.

Tel: 1800 551 800, seven days, 24 hours

www.kidshelpline.com.au

Rural Support Line

Tel: 1300 655 969, seven days, 24 hours

See also the details of organisations listed under 'Family' for domestic violence, relationships and men's referral services

Free help with English and for hearing impaired

Interpreters – Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

To speak to someone in your own language, call the number and ask the interpreter to put you through to the service you need. This service is free for most government and community organisations that you are calling.

Tel: 131 450, seven days, 24 hours a day

Hearing impaired – National Relay Service

If you are hearing impaired, call these numbers for help. This service is free.

Tel: 133 677 (TTY service) and 1300 555 727 (Speak and listen), seven days, 24 hours a day