# Identifying and helping people with bushfire-related legal issues

## After a disaster such as a bushfire, many people don’t know they have a legal issue, particularly in times of distress.

## If you identify someone with a legal issue, please connect them with Disaster Legal Help Victoria for free information and advice.

### What is Disaster Legal Help?

Disaster Legal Help Victoria provides free legal assistance to Victorians affected by a disaster. It was originally formed to provide free legal support for those affected by the February 2009 Victorian bushfires.

Disaster Legal Help Victoria is a partnership between Victoria Legal Aid, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Law Institute of Victoria, the Victorian Bar and Justice Connect.

### How Disaster Legal Help can assist

Disaster Legal Help can assist people with legal issues by:

* providing information about common legal issues or questions
* providing advice about their legal options
* referring them to other legal or non-legal services for ongoing assistance or specialist support.

### How to refer people to Disaster Legal Help

If you are working at a bushfire recovery centre and identify someone with a legal issue, please direct them to our lawyers based at the centre if they are present.

If you have access to Crisisworks, you can tag legal issues in Crisisworks and a representative from Disaster Legal Help will get in contact with the person directly.

You can also direct the person to call Disaster Legal Help on **1800 113 432** to speak with someone, available 8 am to 6 pm weekdays, or visit [www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au](http://www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au) for general information.

### Issues to look out for

A range of issues can surface after a bushfire. Many of these are legal issues that can be addressed through legal information and/or advice, although it may not immediately be clear that the issue is a legal one.

Please see the following page for some of the issues you should look out for that Disaster Legal Help can assist people with.

### Credit, debt and financial

* difficulty paying their mortgage, rent, bills or loans
* loss of employment or income
* financial hardship
* issues with Centrelink entitlements and government grants
* small business or farm struggling financially
* access to superannuation
* judgement debt options
* wills and estates

### Insurance

* property or assets that have been damaged or destroyed
* unsure whether to make an insurance claim
* problems with insurance claims, including rejected claims
* been evacuated from home and paying for alternate accommodation

### Tenancy

* evacuated or can’t access rental property
* personal belongings have been damaged or destroyed
* termination of tenancy
* rental arrears
* issues with recovery of bond
* issues with condition of premises
* disputes with landlord or lease agreements
* emergency and crisis accommodation options

### Family law

* parenting and custody arrangements
* child protection
* child support
* family violence intervention orders
* existing legal issues that have been impacted by the bushfires