



**SENATOR THE HON LINDA REYNOLDS CSC
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS**

**THE HON TROY GRANT MP
NEW SOUTH WALES MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES**

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 26 February 2019

**BUSHFIRE ASSISTANCE FOR PORT STEPHENS AND CESSNOCK
COMMUNITIES**

Disaster assistance has been made available for the Port Stephens and Cessnock communities who were affected by bushfires in November 2018.

Assistance is being provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

Assistant Minister for Home Affairs Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds, who has responsibility for Commonwealth disaster assistance, said financial assistance has been activated to support community recovery and cover operational response costs.

“The bushfires burnt through thousands of hectares of land, threatening life and causing major disruptions to nearby communities,” Assistant Minister Reynolds said.

“Many people are still recovering from the impacts of these bushfires and they can now access hardship support through the NSW Government.

“The assistance being announced today also provides funding to cover the costs incurred by local and state agencies in fighting the bushfires.”

NSW Minister for Emergency Services Troy Grant said significant firefighting operations were required in response to the bushfire.

“I would like to praise the efforts of our first responders, who acted quickly to protect the communities under threat,” Minister Grant said.

“The NSW Rural Fire Service battled against challenging weather conditions and deployed large numbers of firefighting personnel, appliances and aircraft to combat the fires.

“As always, our first responders did a remarkable job of protecting communities and I commend them for their efforts.”

The following assistance is available under the DRFA:

- Help for eligible people whose homes or belongings have been damaged;
- Support for affected local councils to help with the cost of cleaning up and restoring damaged essential public assets;
- Concessional interest rate loans for small businesses, primary producers and non-profit organisations;
- Freight subsidies for primary producers; and
- Grants to non-profit organisations.

For information on personal hardship and distress assistance, contact the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on 1800 018 444.

To apply for a concessional loan, grant or freight subsidy, primary producers, small businesses and non-profit organisations can contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593 or visit www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

Further information on disaster assistance is available on the Australian Government’s Disaster Assist website at disasterassist.gov.au and the NSW emergency information and response website at emergency.nsw.gov.au.

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