

Support available for NSW businesses (current as at 30 March 2020)

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Bushfire and Disaster Related Financial Assistance

Table 1: Summary of available Government bushfire or disaster recovery financial assistance for selected businesses in NSW based on type of impact (direct or indirect)

Financial Assistance	Directly impacted (Physical damage)	Indirectly impacted (Loss of income/business)
Concessional loans	Special Disaster Relief Loans	
	Disaster Relief Loan	Small Business Bushfire Support Grant
Grants	Disaster Recovery Grant	
	Disaster Recovery Allowance	
Other financial assistance	Disaster Recovery Allowance	

Grants

NSW Small Business Bushfire Support Grant - New \$10,000 grant for small businesses

Eligible small businesses can now apply for a new \$10,000 grant in the most severely affected bushfire areas, as determined by state governments. The grant can help with expenses such as salaries, wages, utilities, fuel and financial advice. In addition to fulfilling other requirements, businesses must have experienced a 40 per cent drop in revenue over a three-month period, compared to the previous year, as a result of the bushfires. Applications can be made via the Service NSW website (see the first link below), or by visiting a Mobile Service Centre or Recovery Centre. Below are some links to more detailed information and the application form/portal on the Service NSW website.

Link to more detailed information and the application form/process

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-small-business-bushfire-support-grant>

Detailed application guidelines:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/nsw-small-business-bushfire-support-grant-guidelines>

Bushfire Recovery Grant – Small business and non-profit organisations

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available to eligible small businesses and non-profit organisations that have suffered direct damage to their premises or equipment as a result of the NSW bushfires. Grants are designed to help cover the costs associated with the clean-up and reinstatement of entities' operations, such as the removal and disposal of damaged goods and materials, the hire or purchase of essential goods and/or replacing stock needed to resume operations.

Information -

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-bushfire-recovery-grant-directly-impacted-small-businesses#introduction>

Special Disaster Grants – Primary Producers

Up to a maximum of \$75,000 in grant funding is now available to eligible primary producers in areas directly affected by the NSW bushfires and other declared Natural Disasters. Grants are designed to help primary producers pay for immediate costs associated with property clean-up, reinstatement activities and other emergency measures, such as disposing of dead stock, and rebuilding or replacing damaged or destroyed on-farm infrastructure. Applications close 31 July 2020.

Information -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/special-disaster-grant-bushfires>

Online application form -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/special-disaster-grant-bushfires/special-disaster-grant-bushfires>

Concessional loans

Special Disaster Loans – Bushfires (Primary producers, small business and not-for profits)

Provides low interest loans of up to \$500,000 over 10 years (with a two-year repayment and interest free period) to eligible primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profits directly and indirectly affected by the recent NSW bushfires. Loans are designed to assist entities that have suffered significant damage to their assets and/or a significant loss of income (e.g. a reduction in trade from road closures and booking cancellations) as a result of the NSW bushfires.

Information -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/special-disaster-loan-bushfires>

Online application form -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/special-disaster-loan-bushfires/raa-special-disaster-loans-bushfires>

Disaster Relief Loans (Primary producers, small businesses and not-for profits)

Provides low interest loans of up to \$130,000 over 10 years (with a two-year repayment and interest free period) to eligible primary producers and small businesses, up to \$25,000 for not-for profits, and up to \$10,000 to sporting and recreation clubs directly affected by a declared natural disaster (e.g. floods, fires or storm damage). Loans are designed to help eligible small businesses and primary producers return to their normal level of trading or until the next major income is received, and/or replace and repair damage caused to property and assets not covered by insurance.

Information -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/disaster-recovery-loans>

Online application form -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/loan-application-online-form> Other financial assistance

Other financial assistance

Disaster Recovery Allowance (Primary producers, small businesses and individuals)

Provides short term (up to 13 weeks) income support payments to eligible individuals, small businesses and primary producers who live or work in a disaster affected region, if a declared disaster has resulted in a loss of income. The maximum payment amount is equivalent to the rate of Newstart or Youth Allowance, and is dependent on applicants' specific circumstances, such as income pre and post declared disaster.

Information -

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/nsw-bushfires-september-2019-disaster-recovery-allowance>

Application -

The fastest way to apply is by calling Services Australia on 180 22 66

Natural Disaster Transport Subsidy – Primary producers

Transport subsidies of up to 50 per cent of total transport costs (up to a maximum of \$15,000) are available to eligible primary producers in areas directly affected by the Victorian Bushfires. Eligible activities may include: the transport of emergency fodder for stock to fire-affected properties; transport of stock to sale or slaughter; transport of emergency stock drinking water.

Information -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/natural-disaster-transport-subsidy>

Online application form -

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/ndts-forms/transport-subsidy-natural-disaster>

Other support services (e.g. financial counselling services)

Rural Financial Counselling Service (Primary producers and small business in regional/rural Australia)

The NSW Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) is a free and confidential service that provides information and assistance on financial position, budgets and submitting applications.

Contact: Call 1800 686 175 to be referred to your nearest RFCS office.

General information -

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service>

NSW – Contact list for rural financial counsellors (based on region)

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service/nsw>

Service NSW – Business Concierge Service and bushfire customer care specialist

Service NSW is the ‘one stop shop’ for all businesses and residents who need support and information about bushfire recovery. Specific services include Business Concierge Service and bushfire customer care specialist.

Business Concierge Service

The Business Concierge team is available to provide personalised assistance to businesses impacted by the bushfires over the phone to:

- replace government documentation like licenses, permits and certificates that might have been destroyed or lost in the fire;
- understand eligibility requirements for financial support including small business grants, concessional loans and other federal, state and local government support packages available to help rebuild;
- source free local business advisors;
- connect with relevant financial and wellbeing counsellors.

To request a call from the Business Concierge Service
<https://mybusiness.service.nsw.gov.au/concierge>

Bushfire customer care specialist

This service allows individuals and business to receive personalised, case managed assistance with connecting to various support services and programs available through government and other organisations, such as available financial assistance, access to mental health and wellbeing services, and access to insurance and legal support, among other support services.

For more information about the service and to 'request a call' from a customer care specialist, please see:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/bushfire-customer-care-service/request-call-bushfire-customer-care-specialist>

Small Business Bushfire Support Line

The Government has established the Small Business Bushfire Financial Support Line. The Support Line will be staffed by small business specialist financial counsellors who will be able to provide information on the assistance and support available to small businesses in bushfire affected regions.

You can contact them on 13 28 46 for assistance

Coronavirus (COVID-19) financial support measures

In response to the significant economic impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Federal Government has announced several economic stimulus measures totalling approximately \$320 billion. The most recent measure, announced on 30 March 2020, is the largest stimulus package to date – worth approximately \$130 billion – and provides eligible businesses significantly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic with a wage subsidy to encourage businesses to keep more workers on and earning an income during the crisis.

The main elements of the stimulus packages announced to date are listed below.

Federal Government Stimulus Packages – Support for business

Business Hotline

The Federal Government has expanded the Business Hotline to provide specialist advisers to support small and medium businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Hotline operates seven days per week and provides an additional two hours a day of support outside standard operating hours for the first month, answering calls from 7.00am to 11.00pm AEST.

Businesses can contact the Business Hotline on 13 28 46 or via email at <https://business.gov.au/Email-us>

JobKeeper Payment

The *JobKeeper Payment* is the cornerstone of the Federal Government's third and largest economic stimulus package, announced on 30 March 2020. The wage subsidy measure is designed to help businesses affected by the coronavirus to cover the costs of their employees' wages. The measure provides eligible businesses (including non for profits) with \$1,500 a fortnight per eligible employee (i.e. those on employers' books on 1 March 2020 and retained during the program) to cover the costs of their employees' wages for up to 6 months. Businesses must elect to participate in the scheme and can register their interest with the ATO via <https://www.ato.gov.au/general/gen/JobKeeper-payment/>.

Some of the key features of the program include:

- Payment is available to full time and part time employees, including stood down employees, and casual employees who have been with their employer for 12 months.
- Eligible employers (including self-employed individuals or sole-traders) are those with an annual turnover of less than \$1 billion who self-assess that have a reduction in revenue of 30 per cent or more, since 1 March 2020 over a minimum one-month period.
- Employers with an annual turnover of \$1 billion or more would be required to demonstrate a reduction in revenue of 50 per cent or more to be eligible.

More information about the JobKeeper payment for employers:

[https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact sheet Info for Employers 0.pdf](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact%20sheet%20Info%20for%20Employers%200.pdf)

More information about the JobKeeper payment for employees:

[https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact sheet Info for Employees 0.pdf](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact%20sheet%20Info%20for%20Employees%200.pdf)

Boosting cashflow for employers

Expanding on the initial support measures announced in the first package, small and medium-sized businesses and not for profit organisations (including charities) that employ people and have a turnover under \$50 million will now receive up to \$100,000 (with a minimum payment of \$20,000) tax free to enable businesses to continue operating and retain staff by covering essential business costs. This will be paid automatically by the ATO based on the total amount of tax withheld on employee salaries, with payments equivalent to 100 per cent of businesses' Business Activity Statements or Instalment Activity Statement from 28 April 2020.

The enhanced scheme has two parts:

- Employers will receive a payment equal to 100 per cent of their salary and wages withheld (up from 50 per cent), with the maximum payment being increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000. In addition, the minimum payment is being increased from \$2,000 to \$10,000; and
- An additional payment (being introduced in the July – October 2020 period). Eligible entities will receive an additional payment equal to the total of all of the Boosting Cash Flow for Employers payments they have received (in part one of the scheme). This means that eligible entities will receive at least \$20,000 up to a total of \$100,000.

More information:

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Cash_flow_assistance_for_businesses_0.pdf

Supporting apprenticeships and trainees

Eligible employers can apply for a wage subsidy of 50 per cent of the apprentice's or trainee's wage for up to 9 months from 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020. Where a small business is not able to retain an apprentice, the subsidy will be available to a new employer that employs that apprentice.

More information (see pages 5 and 6)

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Cash_flow_assistance_for_businesses_0.pdf

Increasing the Instant Asset Write-Off

The Government has increased the instant asset write off threshold from \$30,000 to \$150,000, while expanding access to include businesses with an aggregate annual turnover of less than \$500 million (up from \$50 million) until 30 June 2020.

For more information:

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_Sheet-Delivering_support_for_business_investment.pdf

Backing Business Investment – accelerated depreciation

Businesses with a turnover of less than \$500 million can, until 30 June 2021, deduct 50 per cent of the cost of an eligible asset on installation, with existing depreciation rules applying to the balance of the asset's cost.

For more information (pages 3 – 4):

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_Sheet-Delivering_support_for_business_investment.pdf

<https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Depreciation-and-capital-expenses-and-allowances/Backing-business-investment---accelerated-depreciation/>

Government SME Guarantor Scheme

The Government will provide a guarantee of 50 per cent for new unsecured loans, up to a maximum \$250,000, to be used for working capital by SMEs with a turnover of up to \$50 million. The Coronavirus SME Guarantee Scheme will provide small and medium sized business with timely access to working capital to help them get through the impact of the Coronavirus.

For more information:

<https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus/sme-guarantee-scheme>

Temporary relief for financially distressed businesses

The economic impacts of the Coronavirus and health measures to prevent its spread could see many otherwise profitable and viable businesses temporarily face financial distress. It is important that these businesses have a safety net to make sure that when the crisis has passed, they can resume normal business operations. The key elements of this package are:

- A temporary increase in the threshold at which creditors can issue a statutory demand on a company and the time companies have to respond to statutory demands they receive;
- A temporary increase in the threshold for a creditor to initiate bankruptcy proceedings, an increase in the time period for debtors to respond to a bankruptcy notice, and extending the period of protection a debtor receives after making a declaration of intention to present a debtor's petition;
- Temporary relief for directors from any personal liability for trading while insolvent; and
- Providing temporary flexibility in the Corporations Act 2001 to provide targeted relief for companies from provisions of the Act to deal with unforeseen events that arise as a result of the Coronavirus health crisis.

For more information:

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Providing_temporary_relief_for_financially_distressed_businesses.pdf

Income support for sole traders

Over the next six months, the Government is temporarily expanding access to the JobSeeker Payment to support sole traders if their income is negatively affected by the economic impact of the Coronavirus (see **Income support for individuals – Coronavirus Supplement**). This measure was amended on 30 March 2020 to increase the Income support partner pay income test. Under this amendment, an eligible person can receive the JobSeeker Payment, and associated Coronavirus Supplement, providing their partner earns less than \$3,068 per fortnight, around \$79,762 per annum.

The final amount received through the program is dependent (among other elements) on:

- a personal income test (the amount of income earned by the sole trader) – the individual must earn less than \$1,075 a fortnight; and
- a partner income test (if applicable) – an eligible person’s partner must earn less than \$3,068 per fortnight, or around \$79,762 per annum.

The assets test and previous employment arrangements for sole traders attempting to access income support payments (i.e. willingness to seek, and be available to take up, alternative work) will temporarily not apply. In other words, a sole trader who is eligible for a payment can meet their mutual obligation requirements during this period by continuing to sustain their business.

For more information (sole traders):

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Support_for_sole_traders.pdf

Early access to superannuation

The Government is allowing eligible individuals affected by the Coronavirus to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation (tax free) in 2019-20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020-21. Applications can be made via the myGov website: www.my.gov.au

To be eligible, applicants must satisfy one or more of the following requirements:

- They are unemployed; or
- They are eligible to receive a job seeker payment, youth allowance for jobseekers, parenting payment, special benefit or farm household allowance; or
- On or after 1 January 2020:
 - They were made redundant; or
 - Their working hours were reduced by 20 per cent or more; or
 - If they are a sole trader — their business was suspended or there was a reduction in their turnover of 20 per cent or more.

For more information:

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Early_Access_to_Super.pdf

Other ATO Coronavirus Support Available for Business

The ATO has set up an Emergency Support Infoline - 1800 806 218. The Infoline provides tailored advice to support small business who may be having difficulties meeting their tax and super obligations.

Payment deferrals

If you or your business has been affected by COVID-19, the ATO can work with you to defer some payments and vary instalments you have due. These include your income tax, activity statement, pay as you go (PAYG) instalments, FBT and excise payments by up to six months.

Other measures

In addition to the cash deferrals, the following other relief measures are available:

- Allow businesses on a quarterly reporting cycle to opt into monthly GST reporting in order to get quicker access to GST refunds they may be entitled to;
- Allowing businesses to vary Pay As You Go (PAYG) instalment amounts to zero for the March 2020 quarter;
- Businesses that vary their PAYG instalment to zero can also claim a refund for any instalments made for the September 2019 and December 2019 quarters;
- Remitting any interest and penalties, incurred on or after 23 January 2020, that have been applied to tax liabilities; and
- Working with affected businesses to help them pay their existing and ongoing tax liabilities by allowing them to enter into low interest payment plans.

More information about the ATO's assistance to businesses (including sole traders) experiencing financial difficulty as a result of COVID-19 is available at:

<https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Dealing-with-disasters/In-detail/Specific-disasters/COVID-19/>

Federal Government Stimulus Packages – Support for individuals

Income support for individuals – Coronavirus Supplement

The Government is temporarily expanding eligibility and access to income support payments and establishing a new, time-limited Coronavirus supplement to be paid at a rate of \$550 per fortnight for the next six months. This will be paid to both existing and new recipients of JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance Jobseeker, Parenting

Payment, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit, including sole traders negatively affected by the economic impact of the Coronavirus (see **Income support for sole traders**).

Current recipients of government support payments (such as those listed above) are not required to apply for the supplement payment; the payment will be added automatically to welfare payments for six months from 27 April 2020.

For more information (individuals)

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Income_Support_for_Individuals.pdf

Payments to support households

In addition to the \$750 stimulus payment announced on 12 March 2020, the Government will provide a further \$750 payment to social security and veteran income support recipients and eligible concession card holders, except for those who are receiving an income support payment that is eligible to receive the Coronavirus supplement. Eligible recipients will receive this payment automatically and will not be required to apply. The first payment will be made from 31 March 2020 and the second payment will be made from 13 July 2020.

For more information:

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Payments_to_support_households.pdf

Early access to superannuation

The Government is allowing eligible individuals affected by the Coronavirus to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation (tax free) in 2019-20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020-21. Individuals wishing to apply for early release of their superannuation will be able to do so from mid-April 2020 via the myGov website: www.my.gov.au

To be eligible, applicants must satisfy one or more of the following requirements:

- They are unemployed; or
- They are eligible to receive a job seeker payment, youth allowance for jobseekers, parenting payment, special benefit or farm household allowance; or
- On or after 1 January 2020:
 - They were made redundant; or

- Their working hours were reduced by 20 per cent or more; or
- If they are a sole trader — their business was suspended or there was a reduction in their turnover of 20 per cent or more.

For more information:

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Fact_sheet-Early_Access_to_Super.pdf

NSW Government Coronavirus Stimulus Packages

On 17 March 2020, the NSW Government announced a \$2.3 billion coronavirus stimulus package designed to boost the capacity of the health system and provide much needed economic stimulus to help keep workers in jobs during the crisis. This package was expanded on 27 March 2020 with the announcement of a second round of economic stimulus measures. The new \$750 million package is aimed at keeping people in jobs and helping businesses (through measures such as tax relief), while supporting the most state's most vulnerable in the face of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The key measures put forward to support local businesses and jobs are detailed below.

Payroll tax changes:

- Businesses with payrolls of up to \$10 million are entitled to a 3-month payroll tax waiver (for the remainder of the 2019-20 financial year) and an additional 3-month payroll tax deferral.
- Bringing forward the next round of payroll tax cuts and increasing the threshold limit from \$900,000 to \$1 million for the next financial year (1 July 2020).
- Deferral of payroll tax for 6 months for larger business with payrolls over \$10 million (up to \$4 billion deferred).

For more information about payroll changes, please see:

<https://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/taxes-duties-levies-royalties/payroll-tax>

Other measures:

- Deferral of gaming tax for clubs, pubs and hotels, and lotteries tax for 6 months, conditional on these funds being used to retain staff.
- Deferral of rents for 6 months for commercial tenants with less than 20 employees in all Government-owned properties.
- Waiver of select fees and charges (still to be announced) for small businesses such as bars, cafes, restaurants and tradespeople.

Please see the joint media releases from the NSW Government below:

Stage one:

<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Gladys%20Berejiklian%20Dominic%20Perrottet%20Brad%20Hazzard%20med%20rel%20%242.3%20billion%20health%20boost%20and%20economic%20stimulus.pdf>

Stage two:

<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/John%20Barilaro%20and%20Dominic%20Perrottet%20-%20Billions%20in%20tax%20relief%20for%20business%2C%20%241%20billion%20ofund%20for%20jobs%2C%20and%20help%20for%20the%20vulnerable.pdf>

Business Relief Package from Australian Banks

Businesses (including sole traders) and households that have been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) may be eligible to defer loan repayments for up to six-months (depending on the provider) under relief packages recently announced by the banking sector. The initial *Small Business Relief* package (announced on 20 March 2020) was expanded on 30 March 2020 to include loan relief options for commercial property landlords and businesses with total business loan facilities of up to \$10 million (up from the initial \$3 million small business threshold) that have been affected by COVID-19.

Businesses and households are advised to contact their bank to discuss the payment deferral options available to them. It should be noted that interest will continue to accrue during the repayment holiday period.

Some of the key measures announced as part of the package include:

- Loan payment deferrals for up to 6 months (depending on the provider) for businesses with total business loan facilities of up to \$10 million.

- Relief for commercial property landlords, on the condition that they can provide an undertaking to the bank that they will not terminate leases or evict current tenants for rent arrears as a result of COVID19, for the period of the interest capitalisation.
- Provision of business and other loans, including overdrafts, with no repayments for the first six months, at very low interest rates, supported by the Government, through an SME Loan guarantee (see *Government SME Guarantor Scheme* above)
- Other assistance can include fees waived, loans restructured, and further credit offered to get through the pandemic.

For more information about the business relief measures, please see:

<https://www.ausbanking.org.au/banks-to-help-commercial-landlords-who-help-tenants/>

<https://www.ausbanking.org.au/campaigns/financial-hardship/>

Banking measures – this link (towards the bottom of the page) provides an overview of the support offered to customers by individual banks:

<https://www.ausbanking.org.au/campaigns/financial-hardship/>