



## John Barilaro

Deputy Premier  
Minister for Regional NSW  
Minister for Industry and Trade

## Mark Speakman

Attorney General  
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **BUSHFIRES: \$5M BOOST FOR FREE LEGAL HELP**

Farmers, small businesses and regional communities recovering from the worst bushfire season in living memory will benefit from close to \$5 million in Commonwealth funding for NSW's legal assistance services.

Deputy Premier and Minister responsible for Disaster Recovery John Barilaro said free legal support is playing an important role in how well people, businesses and communities recover from disasters.

"Bushfires have devastated the homes, businesses and livelihoods of so many people across our regions and now anyone facing legal problems as a result will have access to more free legal support than ever before," Mr Barilaro said.

"Almost \$3 million in funding will be directed to legal assistance services for individuals navigating insurance claims, tenancy issues, financial hardship, social security entitlements and other legal problems caused by the bushfires.

"A further \$2 million will be invested in legal services for small businesses and primary producers. This will allow Legal Aid NSW to launch a new grants program, enabling private lawyers to access grants of aid to deliver free legal services to local businesses impacted by bushfires."

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the funding will boost the capacity of Legal Aid, Community Legal Centres and the Aboriginal Legal Service to support individuals in bushfire affected areas across the State.

"This is great news for anyone whose livelihood has been torn apart by the bushfires. More pro bono solicitors and more legal assistance will be available for farmers and small businesses seeking assistance and advice on the financial issues they face, including credit, banking and debt," Mr Speakman said.

"From the South Coast, to the Snowy Valley, to the Southern Highlands and to the North and Mid-North Coasts – anyone facing legal problems as a result of the bushfires will have access to more free legal support than ever before."

Today's \$4.9 million Bushfire Funding Agreement is part of the Australian Government's \$2 billion response to the 2019-20 Bushfire Disaster over two years.

The Agreement will deliver the following legal assistance supports:

### **Individuals**

- Boost Legal Aid's [Disaster Response Legal Service](#) to provide advice and referrals on issues including insurance claims, financial hardship, accommodation and CentreLink entitlements.
- Additional staff at five generalist Community Legal Centres (CLCs) in bushfire affected communities and three specialist CLCs delivering services to bushfire affected individuals.
- Increase the capacity of the Aboriginal Legal Service to provide its services to individuals in bushfire affected communities.

### **Businesses and primary producers**

- Establish and promote a new grants policy for private practitioners to deliver legal services to small business and primary producers for bushfire related issues.
- Extend Justice Connect's pro bono platform to link small business and primary producers with pro bono services.
- Support the Financial Rights Legal Centre to continue offering its services specialising in areas including consumer credit, banking, debt recovery and insurance to small business and primary producers.