

Monday January 6, 2020

Insurers continue to help bushfire-affected communities

Tomorrow the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) and insurance industry leaders will meet Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Federal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg in Canberra to brief them on bushfire recovery efforts.

Insurance Council of Australia CEO Rob Whelan said: “The ICA will reassure the government that insurers have been and will continue to focus on helping customers who have been affected by this year’s devastating bushfires.

“The industry is well resourced to carry out repair and rebuilding work in partnership and collaboration with the community, governments and regulators, the building and construction sector and suppliers.

“Insurers will discuss all aspects of recovery, from assessments and property clean-up to rebuilding. They will also offer their expertise in assisting all levels of government with developing a national response.”

Insurance companies and their staff are working around the clock to help communities, householders and business owners affected by catastrophic bushfires in four states.

Since September 5, insurers have handled more than 6000 insurance claims from bushfire regions of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. Insurance losses are estimated at \$431 million this bushfire season.

“For the past four months, insurers have been working with bushfire-affected householders, business owners and communities to help them recover and rebuild their lives,” Mr Whelan said. “Australia is in the midst of a bushfire crisis, and insurers are helping their customers at a time of immense financial, physical and emotional stress.

“Emergency response teams are helping customers process claims and access emergency assistance in dozens of local communities. This past weekend alone more than 60 staff attended the evacuation centre in Melbourne to talk to evacuees about their needs.

“Insurers have booked hundreds of hotel and motel rooms and are providing emergency accommodation and financial assistance to many customers.

“And assessors have been mobilised from all over Australia and New Zealand to help examine properties in fire-affected regions as soon as it’s safe to enter them.

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Page 1 of 2

Monday January 6, 2020

-CONTINUES-

“Work has already begun to rebuild properties affected by bushfires at the beginning of this season and insurers will continue to prioritise these claims to assist these customers as soon as possible.

“Due to the large number of disasters that Australia has experienced over recent years, insurers have developed extensive expertise in helping communities recover from natural disasters. All claims are being prioritised.

“The ICA is working closely with state governments and emergency services, and is operating a 24-hour hotline – **1800 734 621** – to help fire victims with general information about claims and recovery.”

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