

November 24, 2011

Insurance industry declares catastrophe for Margaret River bushfires

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has today declared an insurance catastrophe for the bushfires currently burning around Margaret River in Western Australia.

“An Insurance Taskforce has been established for this event, and the general insurance industry will work closely with the WA Government and local authorities in the community recovery process,” the CEO of the ICA, Mr Rob Whelan, said.

Insurance companies have call centre staff standing by to handle inquiries and a telephone hotline is open for this event.

Any policyholders who may be having difficulty finding their insurance documents, have a general inquiry or who have queries about who their insurer may be can contact the Insurance Council hotline on 1300 444 557 for assistance.

“It is too early to quantify the damage caused by the fires, but we expect it could be in the tens of millions of dollars,” Mr Whelan said. “Our sympathy goes out to those whose property and belongings have been damaged or destroyed.”

The ICA urges residents and property owners in the affected area to follow the instructions of emergency services and stay safe.

The Insurance Council encourages policyholders to:

- Make contact with your insurance company as soon as possible and seek advice about the claim process under your policy. Their staff are there to help
- Do not be concerned if insurance documents are not readily at hand. Insurance companies keep records electronically and only require the policyholders' name and address in order to locate a policy
- Contact your insurer before authorising repairs
- Make an inventory of possessions that have been damaged as a result of the fires. This will assist in the claim process.

Radio newsrooms: a short audio grab is available.

Please contact the media adviser on 0432 121 116.

Media contact: 02 9253 5161 0432 121 116