

October 25, 2013

NSW bushfires update: ICA attending government community forum

Tonight the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) and insurance companies will attend the NSW Government's community forum on the NSW bushfires to provide general information about the insurance industry's response to the catastrophe.

The forum starts at 6.30pm in the Winmalee High School, High School Drive, Winmalee.

The Premier's NSW Bushfire Recovery Coordinator, Mr Phil Koperberg, will manage the forum and provide advice on the government recovery process. Workcover will also attend to brief the community on asbestos-related issues including safety, removal, government requirements and available services.

ICA CEO Rob Whelan said owners were starting to return to their properties following many days of challenging weather conditions and high fire danger.

"It's important for people to consider the advice of local authorities when returning to their properties," Mr Whelan said.

To date, 1011 claims have been lodged with insurers, with losses estimated at \$138 million.

"While claims lodgements have stabilised over the past couple of days, we expect these to begin climbing again as returning residents assess any property damage," Mr Whelan said.

This week, the ICA sent a team of disaster specialists to the Springwood recovery centre (church hall, 160 Macquarie Rd) to help bushfire policyholders with questions about their insurance claims.

"Insurance assessors have reviewed a number of properties with some policyholders already receiving payouts from their home or contents insurance," Mr Whelan said.

"Assessors will continue this review process and also begin inspecting damage in areas not previously accessible."

With the situation in the Blue Mountains remaining uncertain, the ICA urges anyone who knows they have been affected to contact their insurer as soon as they can to lodge a claim, even if they are not yet sure of the full extent of their losses.

The ICA is liaising closely with local and state government agencies, emergency services and community groups to help identify issues and resolve them as swiftly as possible.

The ICA's disaster hotline – **1800 734 621** – can help affected residents who are not sure which insurer they are with, or who have general inquiries about the claims process.

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