

Friday March 31, 2017

Insurance Council extends catastrophe declaration to Northern NSW

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) today expanded its latest catastrophe declaration to include areas hit by the remnants of Tropical Cyclone Debbie as it moves south.

The insurance industry will now prioritise claims from storm and flood-affected policyholders beyond those affected when the Category 4 cyclone crossed the Queensland coast between Bowen and Airlie Beach.

ICA CEO Rob Whelan said insurers were mobilising response teams to help households and businesses in northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland, where severe flooding was being reported.

He said insurers were closely monitoring the evolving disaster and were liaising closely with emergency services and governments in both states.

“I assure NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk that the insurance industry is harnessing its resources to help customers in a fair and timely manner,” he said.

“Though 7500 claims have been lodged from Queenslanders as of noon (Brisbane time) today, this is only the early stage of a natural disaster and I expect the insurance losses could reach into the hundreds of millions of dollars as householders and businesses return to their properties and lodge claims.

“This level of catastrophe has not been seen since ex-TC Oswald in 2014, when storms and flooding affected large parts of Queensland and NSW and caused insurance losses of almost \$1.2 billion.”

Under the catastrophe declaration the ICA has already:

- Established an industry taskforce to address and identify any issues that arise
- Activated its disaster hotline – [1800 734 621](tel:1800734621) – helping policyholders if they are uncertain which insurer they are with, or have general inquiries about the claims process
- Mobilised ICA staff to work directly with local services and affected policyholders in affected regions.

Mr Whelan said insurers were deeply concerned at the impact flooding was having on communities, and urged residents to avoid taking unnecessary risks such as driving through floodwater.

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EDITORS NOTE:

General guidance on recovering from floods includes:

- Return to your property when emergency services declare it safe to do so
- Only enter your property when you are certain you are not at risk
- If water has entered the property, don't turn on your electricity until it has been inspected by an electrician
- Contact your insurance company as soon as possible to check what your policy includes or excludes, and seek guidance on the claims process
- You can start cleaning up but first, take pictures or videos of damage to the property and possessions as evidence for your claim
- Keep samples of materials and fabrics to show the assessor
- Remove and discard any water or mud-damaged goods that pose a health risk, such as saturated carpets and soft furnishings
- Make a list of each item and include a detailed description, such as brand, model and serial number
- Store damaged or destroyed items somewhere safe
- Speak to your insurer before you attempt or authorise any building work, including emergency repairs, and ask for the insurer's permission in writing. Unauthorised work may not be covered by your policy
- Do not throw away goods that could be salvaged or repaired

Other flood recovery tips:

- If your home is unsafe, notify your local authorities and check with your insurance company whether you can claim temporary housing expenses
- If you need help from state emergency services volunteers call your local SES unit
- Do not be concerned if you can't find your insurance papers. Insurers have electronic records and need only your name and address
- Do not do anything that puts your safety at risk
- Avoid entering flood water, on foot or in a vehicle. Flood water can contain raw sewage and contaminants, can conduct electricity, mask hidden hazards, and pose a serious hazard to health. It may be deeper, or moving faster, than you expect
- Do not drive your vehicle if it has suffered water damage

Source: www.understandinsurance.com.au

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