

Sunday March 18, 2018

Insurance Council declares Catastrophe for NSW and Victorian bushfires

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) tonight declared a Catastrophe for bushfires that have damaged or destroyed dozens of homes and other property in southern New South Wales and south-western Victoria.

The declaration means claims from affected policyholders will be given priority by insurers. Claims will also be triaged to direct urgent attention to the worst-affected property owners.

ICA CEO Rob Whelan said the extent of property losses might take several days or more to be determined, and it was too early to estimate the financial toll.

He said the catastrophe declaration was intended to help reduce the emotional and financial stress experienced by households and businesses affected by the bushfires.

"Insurance companies are standing by to help their customers through this traumatising time," he said. "I encourage anyone who has suffered property damage to contact their insurer as soon as possible to seek guidance on the claims process and the assistance they are entitled to under their policy."

Under the declaration the ICA has:

- Activated its disaster hotline – 1800 734 621 – to assist policyholders if they are uncertain of their insurance details, or have general inquiries about the claims process
- Mobilised ICA staff to work directly with local services and affected policyholders in affected regions
- Established an industry taskforce to address and identify issues that arise

Community members can also enquire via www.disasters.org.au.

Mr Whelan said insurers also continued to monitor damage from Tropical Cyclone Marcus, which struck Darwin and Palmerston on Saturday. Insurers have received about 500 claims so far. Most claims are for light property damage, broken windows, fences struck by trees and damage to vehicles, though several large claims have been reported.

"I can assure NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner that the insurance industry will treat its customers with respect and will seek to reduce the stress and heartache they experience during this difficult time."

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For bushfire recovery tips visit: <http://understandinsurance.com.au/types-of-disasters/bushfires>

For tips on recovering from a cyclone visit: <http://understandinsurance.com.au/types-of-disasters/cyclones>

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