

February 2024

13 February severe weather events

Support for fire and storm-affected farmers

Farmers who have experienced fire and storm impacts across the state from the **13 February severe weather events** can contact **Agriculture Victoria on 0427 694 185** or at recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au for agriculture recovery assistance or advice, including technical support.

When phoning or emailing, please provide details that include a contact name, phone number and locality with a brief statement about the nature of your concern, so an appropriate member of the Agriculture Recovery Team can contact you.

Farmers who have been impacted by fire or storm events and have **urgent animal welfare needs**, please contact **Agriculture Victoria on 1800 226 226**.

Agriculture Recovery Resource Directory

This resource directory is a quick reference guide to available emergency and agriculture recovery support and ongoing services for farmers and growers.

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Agriculture Victoria technical and decision-making support

Agriculture Victoria is working with Victorian farmers and industry to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters, including fires, floods and storms. This includes delivering technical information and events to support farm business recovery on topics such as:

- grazing, cropping and pasture management
- irrigation and horticulture system rehabilitation
- soil erosion management
- land management
- animal health and nutrition
- farm mapping and planning
- water quality
- weed management.

Farmers requiring technical assistance can contact the Agriculture Recovery team on 0427 694 185.

Farmers are encouraged to [subscribe to the Resilience and Recovery digital newsletter](#) to access the latest events and information.

Emergency Recovery Victoria

Recovery support is available for people affected by the:

- February 2024 Victorian storms
- February 2024 Western Victorian bushfires
- December 2023-January 2024 Victorian storms and floods.

To get help, you can:

- fill out the [online form](#) or visit vic.gov.au/recovery-support
- call the Hotline on **1800 560 760** from 8 am to 7 pm, Monday to Friday and 9 am - 5 pm on weekends. Press 9 for an interpreter.

Emergency relief payments

Emergency relief payments are available for eligible community members whose homes have been damaged by the bushfires or storms in Victoria. Payments are \$640 per adult and \$320 per child, up to a maximum of \$2,240 per eligible family.

You are eligible for a relief payment if:

- your principal place of residence is in an evacuation warning area, or the fires or storms have damaged your home, and
- you have unmet immediate relief needs.

Find out more by calling the **Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760**.

Prolonged power outage

If your household or small business has experienced a power outage for at least 7 days (and you remained off power as at 12:01 am on Tuesday 20 February), you may be eligible for a Prolonged Power Outage Payment of \$1,920 per week for households and \$2,927 for small businesses. Eligible customers will be notified by their power distribution business.

If you have been impacted by power outages and require assistance from Agriculture Victoria, please email the State Agency Commander at sccvic.scmdr.ag@scc.vic.gov.au with:

- Name of the owner and address of the affected property
- NMI (meter number) of the affected property.

Power disruptions for more than 12 hours – major event day payment

If your power was disrupted for more than 12 hours during the February 2024 storm event, you are entitled to compensation. Under the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice, a distributor must make a payment to a customer of \$90 if the customer experiences an unplanned sustained interruption of more than 12 hours on a major event day, such as extreme weather or a storm. This payment will appear as a credit on your power bill from your electricity retailer within two billing cycles of the day your power was out.

To learn more visit energy.vic.gov.au/safety/power-outages or call 136 186.

Other financial assistance

Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF)

GERF works closely with **Gippsland local government agencies** to assess and deliver financial support to local residents who have been impacted by natural disasters. Support is available for people who have experienced significant property damage or if their permanent place of residence is uninhabitable. More information and to assess your eligibility is available at gerf.org.au/get-help or by contacting your local council to complete an assessment and lodge an application.

Managing immediate impacts

Emergency disposal of milk

Emergency disposal of milk may be necessary in certain situations such as:

- refrigeration failure due to power failure or breakdown in cooling system leading to milk spoilage
- when tankers are unable to access property due to emergency events, fire, flood, or transport issues
- when the milk is contaminated on the farm, therefore making it unsuitable for processing
- if the farm is placed under quarantine with restrictions to access. This could occur in the event of an animal disease outbreak such as the presence of an animal disease.

More information is available on the Agriculture Victoria webpage [Emergency disposal of milk](#).

Assistance cleaning up debris on-farm

For assistance disposing of green waste and debris, contact your local council for advice. See below for a list of local council contacts.

What to do after a bushfire

The Agriculture Victoria website has information about what to do after a bushfire covering topics including: stock water, pasture recovery, finance and insurance, carcass disposal. More information is available at [What to do after a bushfire](#) or visit agriculture.vic.gov.au and search for the page.

WorkSafe Victoria

The [WorkSafe Victoria website](#) has information about safe work practices on the farm including maintaining managing the risks associated with [bushfire recovery](#) and tips on [working safely with chainsaws](#) and other farm equipment

More information is available at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Wildlife impacted by natural disasters

Under Victorian emergency management arrangements, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is the lead agency for wildlife welfare arising from declared emergencies. Injured wildlife can be reported to the DEECA **Customer Contact Centre on 136 186**, via the Wildlife emergency app or by phone (download from Google Play or Apple Store) or by contacting Wildlife Victoria on 03 8400 7300.

Farm Business Support

Rural Financial Counselling Service

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) offers free and independent financial information, options, decision-making support and referral services to farmers and small, related rural businesses who are in, or at risk of, financial hardship.

A Rural Financial Counsellor can help farmers prepare for discussions with their banks to make informed decisions for the future benefit of their business. They can also assist farmers to apply for financial assistance.

To connect with your closest service call **1300 771 774** or visit the [RFCS network website](#).

Farm Debt Mediation

In Victoria it is compulsory for banks and other creditors to offer mediation to farmers before commencing debt recovery proceedings on farm mortgages.

Under the *Farm Debt Mediation Act 2011*, farmers and creditors can access mediation for efficient and fair resolution of farm debt disputes. At mediation, a neutral and independent mediator helps the farmer and creditor to confidentially reach an agreement about current and future farm debt arrangements.

Farm debt mediation is a voluntary and confidential process that is accessible and low-cost. Farmers who are going to take part in farm debt mediation are encouraged to contact the Rural Financial Counselling Service, or their solicitor, accountant, or another suitably qualified professional.

More information about farm debt mediation program or help in initiating mediation is available on the [Victorian Small Business Commission](#) website, by calling 1800 878 964 or emailing enquiries@vsbc.vic.gov.au

Farmer Assistance Hotline

Contact the Farmer Assistance Hotline on **132 316** to find out about Australian Government support services available to farmers and rural communities.

Farm Business Resilience Program

The Farm Business Resilience Program is supporting farmers to develop knowledge and skills to improve their farm business and manage the impacts of a changing climate.

The program supports farmers to improve skills and management practices around 4 key areas:

- Business planning and risk management
- Farm finances and profitable decision making
- Managing people on farm, farm safety and wellbeing
- Climate adaptation and natural resource management including soil, water, crops and pastures.

For more information about the Farm Business Resilience Program visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/FBRP, or visit the [Our Farm, Our Plan web page](#) for information about the dairy program.

Business Victoria

The [Business Victoria website](#) has information and resources to support businesses including currently available [grants and programs](#).

Personal wellbeing and family support services

GPs and community health care providers

If in need of support during difficult times, visit your local Doctor (GP).

Community health services also provide a range of primary health care services that could include acute hospital care, medical centre, home and community care, district nursing, women's health, allied health services (podiatry, occupational therapy etc.), counselling, pharmacy, referrals.

Contact your GP or local Community Health service.

National Centre for Farmer Health

The National Centre for Farmer Health is supporting primary producers through the delivery of initiatives to boost farmer mental health and wellbeing, including:

- Distribution of mental health resources and support information
- [‘Managing Stress on the Farm’](#) book explores the common causes of stressors on farms and offers practical ways to deal with them. It also includes the Steering Straight plan, to help individuals manage their mental health with practical, useful steps.

More information is available on the [National Centre for Farmer Health website](#).

Gippsland Primary Health Network (PHN)

Gippsland PHN works with communities, general practice, allied health, hospitals and other primary and community health providers to drive, support and strengthen primary health in Gippsland to meet these needs.

More information is available at [Gippsland PHN](#) and see information about **Gippsland PHN mental health care** and suicide prevention program [here](#) AND [Gippsland Mental Health Service Directory](#)

Contacts: email info@ghpn.org.au **phone:** 03 5175 544

Gippsland Area Mental Health Service

Latrobe Regional Hospital provides community and bed-based mental health services for children and adults affected by serious complex mental illness within eastern and south eastern Victoria. Programs cover the LGAs of East Gippsland, Wellington, Baw Baw, Bass Coast, Latrobe and South Gippsland.

More information is available at [Gippsland Area Mental Health Service](#)

Western Victoria Primary Health Network

Western Victoria PHN works with the primary care sector to improve health outcomes for local communities.

More information is available at [Western Victoria PHN](#) and see information about **Western Victoria PHN mental health partnerships** [here](#) and resources on suicide prevention [here](#).

Contacts: phone: 03 5222 0800.

Rural Flying Doctor Service – Flying Doctor Wellbeing

Flying Doctor Wellbeing is a free mental health and wellbeing service for people in rural and remote Victorian communities.

More information is available at [Flying Doctor Wellbeing](#)

Contacts: email wellbeing@rfd.vic.gov.au or call **03 8412 0480**.

Agency, services and contacts

VicEmergency	Emergency relief payments are available for people directly impacted by the recent floods.	1800 226 226 https://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#january_2024_severe_weather_and_flood_support
Emergency Recovery Victoria	State government agency responsible for connecting individuals, families, communities, businesses and regions to rebuild and recovery after a disaster.	1800 560 760 vic.gov.au/emergency-recovery-victoria
National Centre for Farmer Health	Support resources and services for emotional and social wellbeing, farm business support, information for rural and health professionals, rural support organisations.	Call (03) 5551 8533 farmerhealth.org.au
Australian Red Cross	For people affected by Victorian Severe Weather and Flood.	1800 733 276 redcross.org.au/
Lifeline	24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.	131 114 lifeline.org.au
Beyondblue	24/7 telephone information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.	1300 224 636 beyondblue.org.au
MensLine Australia	24/7 service for men with relationship and family concerns.	1300 78 99 78 mensline.org.au
Family Relationship Service	Providing families with access to information about family relationship issues.	1800 050 321 familyrelationships.gov.au
Mental Health Care Plan	Provides Medicare rebates for up to 10 individual or 10 group appointments per year with a psychologist, occupational therapist or social worker.	Contact your GP for a referral healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-care-plan
Kids Helpline	Confidential telephone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.	1800 551 800 kidshelpline.com.au/

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Parentline	Counselling and information for families with children up to 18 years. Open 8am to midnight, seven days.	132 289 parentline.com.au/
NURSE-ON-CALL	Expert health information and advice (14 hours, 7 days)	1300 60 60 24
Rural Aid	Rural Aid offers free, confidential counselling to Rural Aid registered farmers and their families. Rural Aid also provides critical support to farmers affected by natural disaster through financial, water, fodder and volunteer assistance.	1300 327 624 contact@ruralaid.org.au www.ruralaid.org.au/
Better Health Channel	Health and medical information that is quality assured, reliable, up to date, easy to understand, regularly reviewed and locally relevant.	betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Other on-farm support

Blaze Aid	BlazeAid works alongside families and individuals in rural Australia to help rebuild fences and other structures that have been damaged or destroyed through natural disasters.	blazeaid.com.au
Need for Feed	Need for Feed is a project of the Lions Club of Australia. The assistance they offer is totally co-ordinated by volunteers. They accept and coordinate fodder donations and when they are delivering to an area one of their team will be in touch to go through your application. Applications can be made online.	needforfeed.org

Government and agency contacts

Agriculture Victoria

Agriculture Recovery Team	The team works with farmers and industry to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters. The ag recovery team can be contacted by phone or email. If leaving a message provide your name, contact number and locality, and a brief statement about the nature of your concern.	0427 694 185 recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au
Technical information	The Agriculture Victoria website has a wide of range of information and guidance on issues such as animal welfare, pasture renovation, irrigation and horticulture system rehabilitation, stock water quality and erosion control.	www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

Local government

Local Council	Find contact details for your local shire council	https://www.vic.gov.au/know-your-council
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Gippsland local government areas

Baw Baw	1300 229 229 bawbawshire.vic.gov.au
Bass Coast	1300 226 278 basscoast.vic.gov.au
East Gippsland	03 5153 9500 or 1300 555 886 eastgippsland.vic.gov.au
Latrobe City	1300 367 700 latrobe.vic.gov.au
South Gippsland	03 5662 9200 southgippsland.vic.gov.au
Wellington	1300 366 244 wellington.vic.gov.au

Western Victoria local government areas

Ararat Rural City Council	03 5355 0200 ararat.vic.gov.au
Horsham Rural City Council	03 5382 9777 hrcc.vic.gov.au
Northern Grampians Shire Council	03 5358 8700 ngshire.vic.gov.au

Water corporations and services

15 water corporations provide water supply (including recycled water) and sewerage and trade waste disposal services to customers throughout Victoria.

Barwon Water	1300 656 007 info@barwonwater.vic.gov.au
Central Highlands Water	1800 061 514 customer.enquiries@chw.net.au
Coliban Water	1300 363 200 coliban@coliban.com.au
East Gippsland Water	1800 671 841 egw@egwater.vic.gov.au
Gippsland Water	1800 050 500 www.gippswater.com.au/contact-us
Goulburn Valley Water	1800 454 500 mail@gvwater.vic.gov.au
Lower Murray Water	1800 808 830 contactus@lmw.vic.gov.au
North East Water	1300 361 644 info@newater.com.au

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South Gippsland Water	1300 851 636 sgwater@sgwater.com.au
Wannon Water	1300 926 666 info@wannonwater.com.au
Westernport Water	1800 249 090 westport@westernportwater.com.au

Four of the water corporations provide rural water services which comprise of water supply, drainage and salinity mitigation services for irrigation, domestic and stock purposes.

Southern Rural Water	1300 139 510 srw@srw.com.au
Goulburn-Murray Water	1800 064 184 reception@gmwater.com.au
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water	1300 659 961 info@gmwwater.org.au
Lower Murray Water	1800 808 830 contactus@lmw.vic.gov.au

Catchment Management Authorities

Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) are responsible for the integrated planning and coordination of land, water and biodiversity management in each catchment and land protection regions. These 10 authorities have the lead role in developing and delivering regional programs for waterway management.

Corangamite CMA	1800 002 262 info@ccma.vic.gov.au
East Gippsland CMA	03 5152 0600 reception@egcma.com.au
Glenelg Hopkins CMA	03 5571 2526 ghcma@ghcma.vic.gov.au
Goulburn Broken CMA	03 5822 7700 reception@gbcma.vic.gov.au
Mallee CMA	03 5001 8600 reception@malleecma.com.au
North Central CMA	03 5448 7124 info@nccma.vic.gov.au
North East CMA	1300 216 513 necma@necma.vic.gov.au
Melbourne Water (formerly Port Phillip and Westernport CMA)	131 722 enquiry@melbournewater.com.au
Wimmera CMA	03 5382 1544 wcma@wcma.vic.gov.au
West Gippsland CMA	1300 094 262 www.wgcma.vic.gov.au/about-us/contact-us

Translated resources

Department of Health	Translated information about health and wellbeing resources.	healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/
Emergency Recovery Victoria	Links to translated resources in relation to the current severe weather events.	vic.gov.au/emergency-recovery-victoria