
From: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 5:00 PM
To: Meagher, Benjamin s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@pmc.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@pmc.gov.au)>
Subject: FW: Support for Volunteer Firefighters during the Extraordinary 2019-20 Fire Season

Hi Ben, a question set from QLD who are visiting on Thursday to resolve – I have told them we are trying to get NSW right and use those agreed parameters as the base model.

We have addressed points 2 & 3 with QLD already and reached a satisfactory outcome.

Most of the others are straight forward, although there are a few obscure ones....

John Gibbon
Assistant Secretary
Disaster Recovery Branch
Emergency Management Australia
Department of Home Affairs
P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@qra.qld.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@qra.qld.gov.au)>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 4:24 PM
To: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@qfes.qld.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s.22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@qfes.qld.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @gra.qld.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted])
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @dsdmip.qld.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @premiers.qld.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @premiers.qld.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @premiers.qld.gov.au>;
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @qldra.org.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @homeaffairs.gov.au>

Subject: Support for Volunteer Firefighters during the Extraordinary 2019-20 Fire Season

Good afternoon John,

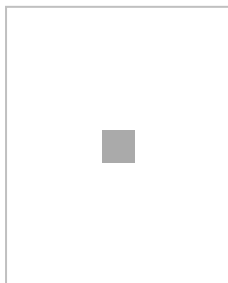
I refer to the support for volunteer firefighters during the extraordinary 2019-20 fire season. Could I please ask for your consideration and response to the attached questions which seek clarification of this measure?

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Acting Deputy Commissioner John Bolger and I will be in your Canberra office on Thursday, and we look forward to resolving the matters raised.

If you have any questions in the interim, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks again.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]



s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Queensland Reconstruction Authority

P s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] E s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] @gra.qld.gov.au

M s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]

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Questions

1. Queensland Fire & Emergency Services (QFES) consists primarily of three professional & volunteer-based services: the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) and the Rural Fire Service (RFS) are mentioned; however, **State Emergency Services (SES) volunteers and volunteers in support roles** who have been of great assistance are not. They have assisted with tasks such as Airbase operations, Air Base Management, Managing Staging Areas, Operational Support, ensuring equipment is ready when the team return to the station (Equipment Officers), mental health support on ground (Peer Support Officers), community educators who door knock residents in advance of a fire amongst other roles within Incident Management teams and Regional and the State Coordination centres. Will SES volunteers and volunteers in support roles as mentioned above be eligible for compensation?
2. During the 2018-19 season to date, Queensland has experienced more than 7550 bushfires including three major events which were activated under the DRFA (Stradbroke Bushfires, 17-24 September 2019, Eastern Queensland Bushfires 8 November - 19 December 2019, and Southern Queensland Bushfires 6 - 12 September 2019). Many of the bushfires that were not activated under the DRFA were attended by volunteer firefighters, whose actions may have prevented the fires becoming larger requiring DRFA activation. Will volunteers attending activated as well as non-activated DRFA bushfire events be eligible for this package?
3. Additionally it is expected that some firefighters will reach the 10 day threshold through attending activated as well as non-activated DRFA bushfire events. How is this to be treated?
4. To ensure payments are made in a timely manner, please confirm that a **Statutory Declaration** (based on a supplied pro-forma) submitted by the Volunteer is a means of making a valid claim for compensation.
5. An individual must have been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days since 1 July. Are these consecutive days or cumulative or any part there of?
6. Individual must have been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days, is there a minimal number of hours that they have had to work per day, i.e. 5, 7, 10, 14 etc.
7. Will a Volunteer that works part time or casual e.g. 4 hours a day for a company still be eligible for the compensation?
8. How will a self-employed Volunteer prove their loss of income?
9. What compensation is available to a Volunteer if a large business (over \$50m turnover) chooses not to engage, how will the Volunteer be eligible for compensation?

10. Information released indicates that an individual cannot claim loss of income if they still have appropriate paid leave available to them from their employer. What happens if the volunteer has had to take leave from a business, so they can attend fires, will there be any way that the government can have the leave recredited?
11. Is an Auxiliary Fire Officer (paid part-time) who has met the same criteria as the volunteer eligible for compensation to meet their normal wage?
12. If the Volunteer is on an aged pension or Government benefit and has been active fighting fires or in a key support role for 10 days is compensation available?

Financial Related Questions

13. Will compensation paid effect influence the Medicare levy?
14. Payments are not subject to income tax, being that the discussions are that the payment would be compensation, will this effect someone paying child support?
15. Similar to the agreement with New South Wales, would the Commonwealth consider pre-payment for the category D measure upfront?

Prepared by QFES

Acting Deputy Commissioner John Bolger

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@rfs.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 1:33 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@rfs.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: Volunteer Firefighter Program - latest update

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@service.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 31 December 2019 at 12:15:52 pm AEDT
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@rfs.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@minister.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@premier.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@service.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@service.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@dpc.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@dpc.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@dpc.nsw.gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@service.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@justice.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Volunteer Firefighter Program - latest update

Dear all,

We are making good progress on the end to end Volunteer Firefighter application process.

This morning we met with our Commonwealth and RFS colleagues and have reached agreement on the following decisions:

1. Light touch on an application process that has minimum red tape but covers due diligence.
2. NSW firefighters registered with the RFS qualify for payment regardless of which state the active fire was in.
3. The qualification will occur after 10 days of service, with the first payment on day 11. To qualify for maximum payment, a firefighter would need to serve 30 days, with a maximum payment of \$6,000 (this was confirmed post-meeting with DPC).
4. One free text field will be provided to capture data such as dates of service, incident name or number, and area of operations. This field will not be validated but will be used for audit purposes as required.
5. Self-declaration will be used for loss of income and days worked. The self-declaration will state that the recipient would need to provide data to validate if audited.
6. Validation checks will be built into the solution for ABN/ACN, list of valid SMEs, list of RFS volunteers that qualify, proof of identity.
7. Payment cap will be \$6,000 however multiple claims can be made up to the maximum.

The areas where we require policy clarification are:

1. Inclusion of the casual workforce - they appear to be excluded from the policy position and may be disadvantaged. Commonwealth to seek clarification from PMO.
2. If loss of income for an eligible volunteer is less than \$300 per day, do we still pay the \$300 per day figure? To administer an individual per day payment model would be difficult and costly to administer. Risk matrix currently being developed to assist with the decision making on this issue. s. 22(1)(a)(ii) would be good to get your thoughts on this.

Actions and next steps

1. Confirm ATO list for SMEs will be provided (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) due 2/1)
2. Provide list of RFS volunteer roles that qualify (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) RFS 2/1)
3. Provide a definition of Day of Service (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) RFS, 2/1)
4. Provide risk matrix for variable payment option to all (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) F, 1/1)
5. Address 2 outstanding policy issues by cob today

FYI - Attached is the current definitions document

I understand that a media request on this matter has come through; this will

be directed to the Premier's office for clarification as it related to policy definitions.

Please give me a call if you require further clarification

s. 22(1)
(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

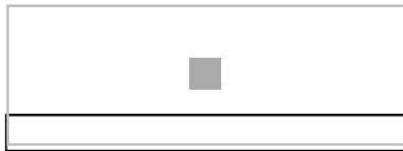
Level 20, McKell Building, 2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket, Sydney
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Executive Assistant: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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RFS Criteria, Assessment Process and Validation

| Commonwealth Criteria | Definition | Assessment Process | Validation Step |
|--|--|---|---|
| Volunteer is defined as a volunteer firefighter from a recognised NSW firefighting organisation (confirmed RFS only). | Confirmed member of a local brigade and a qualified firefighter. | Proof of Identity Check s. 22(1)(a)(ii) to provide a list of all confirmed members who are qualified firefighters. May need to actively update this list to ensure it remains current. | Cross reference list of confirmed and qualified members using RFS data. SNSW log-in transaction. |
| Payments are in place only for 2019-20 financial year. | Operational response for FY 2019-20 | Trust based via upfront declaration. | Self-declared |
| Self Employed – cohort 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual must be self-employed and demonstrate loss of income. Individual must have been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days since 1 July. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns). Individuals are only able to claim for loss of income arising after the threshold (10 days) has been exceeded. | Current registered business. Operational response for more than 10 days – qualifies for payment at day 11. Payment will then be backdated to day 1 to a maximum of 20 days paid. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns outside of active fire response). | ABN and ACN look up – to confirm current “active” registered business. Self-declaration to confirm loss of income. Self-declaration to confirm days worked | ABN and ACN validation Self-declaration General text box |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Employed by Small or medium business – cohort 2 | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual must be employed by a small or medium-sized business with an annual turnover of less than \$50 million in the 2018-19 financial year. Individual must have been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days since 1 July. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns). Individuals are only able to claim for lost income arising after the threshold (10 days) has been exceeded. An individual cannot claim loss of income if they still have appropriate paid leave available to them from their employer. Appropriate paid leave does not include paid annual | <p>Employed by a current registered business with an annual turnover of less than \$50 million in the 2018-19 financial year.</p> <p>Operational response for more than 10 days – volunteer qualifies for payment at day 11. Payment will then be backdated to day 1 to a maximum of 20 days paid. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns outside of active fire response).</p> | <p>Validation of registered company listed as the employer.</p> <p>Validation that the company is a registered small to medium business with turnover of less than \$50m – CONFIRM IF ATO CAN PROVIDE A LIST OF COMPANIES</p> <p>Self-declaration to confirm no other appropriate paid leave available</p> <p>Self-declaration to confirm days worked</p> | <p>ABN and ACN validation</p> <p>List of qualifying small to medium business provided by the ATO or list of large companies that are excluded</p> <p>Self-declaration</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| recreational leave or sick leave. | | | |
| The cap of \$6,000 has been calculated assuming a maximum daily, tax-free, payment to volunteers in the field of \$300. This would equate to 20 days of support. | Operational response for more than 10 days – volunteer qualifies for payment at day 11. Payment will then be backdated to day 1 to a maximum of 20 days paid. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns outside of active fire response). | Self-declaration to confirm days worked. System to cap a max payment of \$6000. POI to cross reference RFS volunteer number. | |

Add general text box within the form:

- Fire incident name
- Area of operations
- Dates Worked
- Income lost of a minimum of \$300

Declare it is true and accurate (tick box)

31 December 2019

The Hon Anastacia Palaszcuk MP
Premier of Queensland
PO Box 15185 City East
BRISBANE QLD 4002


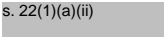
Dear Premier

Thank you for your letter of 30 December 2019 regarding access to relief payments for Queensland volunteer firefighters over this extraordinary 2019-20 bushfire season.

I am pleased to agree to your request to access payments for Queensland volunteers under Category D of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The payments will be made on equivalent terms to those offered to the New South Wales Government, and in accordance with the framework discussed between our Offices (attached for reference).

In recognition of the extraordinary severity, scale and duration of the current bushfire season, the Commonwealth will provide grants of up to \$6,000 (with a \$300 daily cap) for volunteer firefighters who are self-employed or employed by a small or medium business who have lost income as a result of volunteering to fight the fires. The payment is only applicable to those who have volunteered for more than ten days over the financial year.

As we discussed prior to the announcement, these payments are open to all states and territories, and will cover the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. All Queensland volunteers fighting fires during this period will potentially be eligible.

Under this arrangement the Queensland Government will administer the payments, develop detailed implementation guidelines and bear any associated administration costs. This is consistent with the agreement we entered into with the New South Wales Government. I understand officials from Emergency Management Australia (EMA) are working closely with your Government to ensure delivery of the payments. The key contact in EMA for this matter is Mr John Gibbon, Assistant Secretary Disaster Recovery Branch ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}  ^{s. 22(1)(a)(ii)}  @homeaffairs.gov.au).

The Australian Government will continue to work closely with the Queensland Government to provide the necessary support to respond to these catastrophic bushfires and alleviate their impact on our communities.

I have copied this letter to the Treasurer, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, the Minister for Finance, Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, and the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management, the Hon David Littleproud MP.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Morrison', with a stylized, cursive script.

SCOTT MORRISON

Additional Support for Volunteer Firefighters in the Extraordinary 2019-20 Fire Season

| Cohort | | 2019-20 Cap (\$) | Notes |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| In scope | | | |
| 1 | Self-employed volunteers who can demonstrate loss of income due to volunteering on fires | Total cap = 6,000 Daily cap = \$300 | Payment under Category D of DRA Framework. Commonwealth support at 100% in the 2019-20 financial year, with any future payments subject to COAG agreement on a long term funding arrangement covering extraordinary fire seasons. |
| 2 | Volunteers employed by small and medium businesses who can demonstrate loss of income due to volunteering on fires | | Payment under Category D of DRA Framework. Commonwealth support at 100% in the 2019-20, with any future payments subject to COAG agreement on a long term funding arrangement covering extraordinary fire seasons. Small business to be defined as any business with less than \$50 million turnover in the 2018-19 financial year. |
| Out of scope | | | |
| 3 | Volunteers who work for large businesses who can demonstrate loss of income due to volunteering on fires | | Large businesses need to do their part and support staff who volunteer. Through this measure, we are effectively supporting staff of small and medium-sized businesses to be in the field. |
| 4 | Businesses that can demonstrate loss of income due to staff volunteering on fires | | We are encouraging large businesses to act as good corporate citizens to support volunteers through this extraordinary fire season. |


Eligibility Criteria

- These eligibility criteria set out the broad parameters for the payments. Within these parameters states will have flexibility to work out details of administration and verification process (e.g. exactly what documents or data required to demonstrate eligibility).
- Payments are to mitigate:
 - loss of income for self-employed individuals volunteering as fire-fighters; and
 - loss of income for employees of small and medium businesses volunteering as fire-fighters.
- Individual is defined as a volunteer fire-fighter, residing within the relevant state, and from a recognised state fire-fighting organisation.
- State to administer payments and bear all associated administration costs.
- Payments are in place only for 2019-20 financial year.
- Payments are not subject to income tax and are not means tested, but are targeted to those most likely to suffer financial loss as a result of volunteering.
- Cohort 1:
 - Individual must be self-employed and demonstrate loss of income.
 - Individual must have been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days since 1 July. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns).
 - Individuals are only able to claim for loss of income arising after the threshold (10 days) has been exceeded.
 - Commonwealth pays 100% of the grant amount for cohort 1.
- Cohort 2:
 - Individual must be employed by a small or medium-sized business with an annual turnover of less than \$50 million in the 2018-19 financial year.
 - Individual must have been volunteering as part of an operational response to bushfires for more than 10 days since 1 July. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns).
 - Individuals are only able to claim for lost income arising after the threshold (10 days) has been exceeded.
 - An individual cannot claim loss of income if they still have appropriate paid leave available to them from their employer.
 - Appropriate paid leave does not include paid annual recreational leave or sick leave.
 - Commonwealth pays 100% of the grant amount for cohort 2.
- Cohorts 3 and 4 are not eligible for payments.

Notes

- These payments are in addition to the existing support available for individuals and communities facing this extraordinary 2019-20 fire season.
- The cap of \$6,000 has been calculated assuming a maximum daily, tax-free payment to volunteers in the field of \$300. This would equate to 20 days of support.
- We are putting this arrangement in place at the request of the relevant state government.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



FAQ's

1. What is the purpose of this new payment?
 - a. To support Australia's volunteers who have put considerable personal time into these extraordinary fires and, as a result, may have incurred a financial cost.
2. Who will it apply to and how much can they get?
 - a. Self-employed volunteers and volunteers employed by small and medium-sized businesses are eligible for up to \$6,000 (with a daily limit of \$300) to mitigate lost income
3. Does it only apply to volunteer fire-fighters? What about other volunteers
 - a. It applies only to volunteer fire-fighters. Recognising the severity of this year's fire-season it is available only for this year.
4. How do people apply for the money?
 - a. The state will administer the payments in accordance with their existing disaster relief framework.
5. Are these loans or grants?
 - a. These are grant payments – tax free and not means-tested.
6. Is this new money?
 - a. This is new money on top of our existing support.
7. Do people have to choose between this payment and other disaster support if eligible?
 - a. No. This payment is for a specific purpose and is in addition to any other forms of disaster support an individual may be eligible for.
8. Will people have to pay tax on these payments?
 - a. No – the payments are tax free and not means-tested.
9. Will volunteers from other states who helped in [relevant state] be eligible?
 - a. No – only volunteers from [relevant state] are covered by this measure, though these volunteers may be covered if similar arrangements are in place for their home state.
10. Will state volunteers who helped in other states be eligible?
 - a. Yes, provided they can demonstrate they meet the criteria.
 - b. Volunteers from the state can count time spent volunteering on fires in other states this fire season towards eligibility for the payments.
11. Does it apply only to people in fire affected areas or more broadly?
 - a. These grants are available for any volunteer in the state that meets the criteria.
 - b. We expect the majority of recipients will be in or adjacent to fire-affected areas, but we also acknowledge volunteers have been deploying all around the state.

12. How many people / what percentage of the workforce are covered by this measure?
- Nationally, approximately 7.7 million people (60% of the workforce) are employed by small and medium-sized businesses with turnover of less than \$50 million.
13. Why do volunteers have to work 10 days on the fires before they are eligible?
- Volunteer fire-fighters sign up expecting to dedicate some of their time to protect the community.
 - But the length and severity of this fire season is testing that commitment, with many volunteers in the field already for weeks or more.
 - These payments will help support those who have incurred financial loss by going above and beyond.
14. Why aren't volunteers who work for large businesses above this threshold covered?
- Larger businesses have more capacity to support their staff to help the community.
 - We encourage these businesses to step up. We are leading by example with the APS 4-week minimum paid volunteer leave.
15. What legislation will these payments be made under?
- Payments will be made under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018, underpinned by a National Partnership Agreement and appropriations under the Appropriations Act.
16. What is the state contributing?
- The Commonwealth is covering 100% of the grant costs.
 - The state is bearing the cost of administering the payments.
17. Will you continue this payment into next season / make it permanent?
- We anticipate this arrangement will help over the next few months. We will monitor the situation, as we have been all fire season, and make any adjustments necessary as we go.
 - We will review all arrangements and discuss at COAG. Any long-term framework beyond this season needs to be considered carefully and agreed by all governments.



Premier of Queensland
Minister for Trade

For reply please quote: C&GS/FM – TF/19/14067 – DOC/19/248113

30 December 2019

The Honourable Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

1 William Street Brisbane
PO Box 15185 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7000
Email ThePremier@premiers.qld.gov.au
Website www.thepremier.qld.gov.au

Dear Prime Minister

I refer to our telephone conversation on Saturday 28 December 2019 regarding compensation for volunteer firefighters who are self-employed or working for small-or medium-sized businesses and who have been called out for more than 10 days this bushfire season – a scheme that was announced for New South Wales firefighters yesterday.

The bushfires that Queensland and other states of Australia have faced since September have been unprecedented. This is the first time Queensland has experienced conditions like this so early in a bushfire season, which have then continued beyond what would be considered our typical bushfire season.

Queensland's emergency services personnel have demonstrated incredible skill and effort to contain the bushfires and, fortunately, the recent bushfires have not resulted in any loss of life in Queensland. I commend the efforts of our first responders and the extraordinary response deployed to address the large expanses of country that have been scorched during the recent bushfires.

As I stated on Saturday evening, announcing a national scheme would have ensured that volunteer firefighters in all states and territories would have been able to access the same arrangements that have been announced for those in New South Wales at the same time.

I also said I would write to you as soon as you had provided more information to Queensland regarding the nature of the scheme following your announcement on Sunday.

I believe that it is important to support those who are on the front line responding to these fires and important we do everything possible to ensure that lives are not lost and that damage to homes and properties is minimised.

Accordingly, I formally request that the compensation scheme for volunteer firefighters that you recently announced for New South Wales also apply to Queensland.

Queensland's volunteer firefighters deserve the same level of Federal Government support as do other volunteer firefighters across the country.

I thank you and the Federal Government for the ongoing support already provided under Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements and I hope this request will be positively received.

I would appreciate your earliest advice on this matter to enable communities to continue their recovery journey.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a long horizontal line.

**ANNASTACIA PALASZCZUK MP
PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND
MINISTER FOR TRADE**

From: Meagher, Benjamin s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@pmc.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 9:01 PM
To: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

No - sorry. I followed up but not sure of ETA. Some of the issues might require discussion between the offices of the Premier and the PM.

On 31 Dec 2019, at 5:27 pm, John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au> wrote:

Thanks Ben, sorry to bother you again, any indication which way they will go (or when we might get an answer)? I suspect NSW will start asking me soon (given its critical to the system design etc)

John Gibbon
Assistant Secretary
Disaster Recovery Branch
Emergency Management Australia
Department of Home Affairs

P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au

From: Meagher, Benjamin s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@pmc.gov.au](mailto:ben.meagher@pmc.gov.au)>

Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 2:36 PM

To: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:john.gibbon@homeaffairs.gov.au)>

Cc: Rob CAMERON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:rob.cameron@homeaffairs.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@pmc.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@pmc.gov.au)>

Subject: Re: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Thanks, John. I've put to the PMO. Will let you know their response.

Was there a further attachment attached to your email of 2:16pm? Just checking I didn't miss anything as I couldn't see anything new in it.

On 31 Dec 2019, at 1:55 pm, John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:john.gibbon@homeaffairs.gov.au)> wrote:

Ben – here is the two options from NSW – I think the key point about the \$300 option is that from an implementation perspective it is simpler and cheaper to deliver in an acceptable timeframe (and apparently strongly supported by the Premier's office).

Have a read and let us know what PMO think, and whether we need another policy teleconference this arvo

Cheers

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

John Gibbon
Assistant Secretary
Disaster Recovery Branch
Emergency Management Australia
Department of Home Affairs
P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>

Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 1:39 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@rfs.nsw.gov.au);

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>; John

GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@rfs.nsw.gov.au)

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@dpc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@dpc.nsw.gov.au)>

Subject: RE: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Commonwealth to seek clarification from PMO.

2. If loss of income for an eligible volunteer is less than \$300 per day, do we still pay the \$300 per day figure? To administer an individual per day payment model would be difficult and costly to administer. Risk matrix currently being developed to assist with the decision making on this issue.

Actions and next steps:

1. Confirm ATO list for SMEs will be provided (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) due 2/1)
2. Provide list of RFS volunteer roles that qualify (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) RFS 2/1)
3. Provide a definition of Day of Service (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) RFS, 2/1)
4. Provide risk matrix for variable payment option to all (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) F, 1/1)
5. Address 2 outstanding policy issues by cob today

FYI - Attached is the current definitions document

Regards,

(s. 22(1)(a)(ii))

(s. 22(1)(a)(ii))

Level 19, McKell Building, 2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket, Sydney NSW 2000

M (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) E (s. 22(1)(a)(ii)) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:(s. 22(1)(a)(ii))@service.nsw.gov.au)

service.nsw.gov.au 13 77 88 <image001.jpg> <image001.jpg>
<image003.jpg> <image002.jpg> <image005.jpg>

<image003.png> <image004.png>

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<Daily payment options - advantages and disadvantages.xlsx>

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From: John GIBBON

Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 2:36 PM

To: Meagher, Benjamin <s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@pmc.gov.au>

Cc: Rob CAMERON <s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>

Subject: FW: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Early data/intel

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Assistant Secretary

Disaster Recovery Branch

Emergency Management Australia

Department of Home Affairs

P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au

Released by Department of Home Affairs
under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>@service.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 2:34 PM
To: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Hi John, 271 pre-registrations to date and over 1600 page views.

Of the 271 there is a 40/60 split, 40% Self-employed.

s. 22(1)
(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Level 20, McKell Building, 2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket, Sydney
NSW 2000

M s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]> **E** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>@service.nsw.gov.au

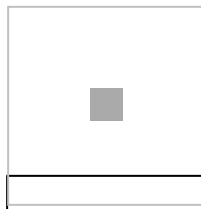
Executive Assistant: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>

M s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]> **E** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>@service.nsw.gov.au

service.nsw.gov.au 13 77 88



Image removed by sender.



From: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 2:27 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]>@service.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Thanks s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]> I have passed onto PMC

As an aside, do you have any information on the number of people who have expressed interest in the scheme via your portal? (we are trying to work out the possible size of the target group – any info/intel would be welcomed)?

Cheers

s. 22

John Gibbon
Assistant Secretary
Disaster Recovery Branch
Emergency Management Australia


P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [REDACTED]
E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [REDACTED] @homeaffairs.gov.au

Thanks ^{§. 22(1)}_{(a)(ii)} John further to our phone conversation the strong preference from NSW is to stick to a standard \$300 per day payment. This is in line with the intent of policy and is able to be implemented within the timeline.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Level 20, McKell Building, 2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket, Sydney
NSW 2000

Executive Assistant: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted]
M s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] E s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [redacted] [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:service.nsw.gov.au)



From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>
Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 1:38 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>;
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>;
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>;
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@service.nsw.gov.au)>;

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @rfs.nsw.gov.au
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @rfs.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @rfs.nsw.gov.au
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @rfs.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @dpc.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Hi Everyone,

Please find attached an assessment of the daily payment options.

Kind Regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 31 December 2019 12:33 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @service.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @rfs.nsw.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @rfs.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @dpc.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Check In - Full Application Solution, RFS Volunteer Payments

Dear All,

Thank you for attending today's meeting. Please find minutes below:

Agreement on the following decisions:

1. Light touch on an application process that has minimum red tape but covers due diligence.
2. NSW firefighters registered with the RFS qualify for payment regardless of which state the active fire was in.
3. The qualification will occur after 10 days of service, with the first payment on day 11. To qualify for maximum payment, a firefighter would need to serve 30 days, with a maximum payment of \$6,000 (this was confirmed post-meeting with DPC).
4. One free text field will be provided to capture data such as dates of service, incident name or number, and area of operations. This field will not be validated but will be used for audit purposes as required.
5. Self-declaration will be used for loss of income and days worked. The self-declaration will state that the recipient would need to provide data to validate if audited.
6. Validation checks will be built into the solution for ABN/ACN, list of valid SMEs, list of RFS volunteers that qualify, proof of identity.

7. Payment cap will be \$6,000 however multiple claims can be made up to the maximum.

The areas where we require policy clarification are:

1. Inclusion of the casual workforce - they appear to be excluded from the policy position and may be disadvantaged. Commonwealth to seek clarification from PMO.
2. If loss of income for an eligible volunteer is less than \$300 per day, do we still pay the \$300 per day figure? To administer an individual per day payment model would be difficult and costly to administer. Risk matrix currently being developed to assist with the decision making on this issue.

Actions and next steps:

1. Confirm ATO list for SMEs will be provided s. 22(1)(a)(ii), due 2/1)
2. Provide list of RFS volunteer roles that qualify s. 22(1)(a)(ii) RFS 2/1)
3. Provide a definition of Day of Service (s. 22(1)(a)(ii) RFS, 2/1)
4. Provide risk matrix for variable payment option to all (s. 22(1)(a)(ii) 1/1)
5. Address 2 outstanding policy issues by cob today

FYI - Attached is the current definitions document

Regards,

s. 22(1)
(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Level 19, McKell Building, 2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket, Sydney NSW 2000

M s. 22(1)(a)(ii) E s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:service.nsw.gov.au)

service.nsw.gov.au 13 77 88



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Volunteer Firefighter Daily Payment Assessment Options

Option 1 - Pay all qualifying volunteers a fixed daily rate of \$300/day

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| Simple calculation amount where one day always equates to simple dollar amount | Some cases may result in a daily payment in excess of the actual post-tax daily wage lost |
| This will create a simple volunteer experience where they will be able to always know how many more days they can claim before reaching the threshold | Minimum daily wage (from ABS data) is \$148.16 and average daily wage (from ABS data) is \$326.80. |
| Creates equality as all volunteers will be recompensed for their lost wages as the same rate | Potential for a lesser Commonwealth payout sum if most volunteers earn less than the national average daily wage. |
| Low burden on the volunteer to justify daily salary (privacy and variability of information, pre or post-tax amounts required) | |
| e.g. self-employed volunteers in trades may have significant variation in daily income | |
| Simple reconciliation of financial payments to days across the program | |
| e.g. any claimant will have a payment minimum of \$300 and \$6000 maximum that will always relate to 1 to 20 eligible payment days | |
| Simplifies program definition of "day" against a more complex assignment or hours definition | |
| Improved customer experience and less likely to offend or trigger abandonment | |
| Simplified auditing of program as standardised calculations can be used for each sample case | |
| | |
| This simple model will demonstrate trust by C'th and NSW governments in the integrity of volunteer claimants | |
| From the sample EOIs submitted the majority of applicants have volunteered in excess of 30 days and will reach the \$6000 cap on claimable volunteer days | |
| Lower development and administration costs for the state on the program management | |
| Most likely to be delivered by the proposed date of 13/1/20 for applications | |
| Highest case of straight through processing | |

Option 2 - Pay all qualifying volunteers on a variable rate

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|--|
| Payments to qualifying volunteers will be made at the lesser of nominated rate \$300. Minimum daily wage (from ABS data) is \$148.16 and average daily wage (from ABS data) is \$326.80. | Some cases may result in a daily payment in excess of the actual post-tax daily wage lost |
| Allows a qualifying volunteer with daily earnings of less than \$300 to claim for more days (but still with the \$6000 cap but over a longer period) | Minimum daily wage (from ABS data) is \$148.16 and average daily wage (from ABS data) is \$326.80. |
| | Potential for a greater Commonwealth payout sum if most volunteers earn less than the national average daily wage. |
| | Creates inequality volunteers will be recompensed for their lost wages as different rates |
| | High burden on the volunteer to justify daily salary (privacy and variability of information, pre or post-tax amounts required) |
| | e.g. self-employed volunteers in trades may have significant variation in daily income |
| | Complex reconciliation of financial payments to days across the program (days wont equate to payments and individual reconciliations will be very complicated.) |
| | e.g. every claimant could have different payments per day, different number of days claimed and, most likely, still the same \$6000 payment cap. |
| | Likely to prompt a complex definition of "day" work hours versus volunteer hours. |
| | Poor customer experience and more likely to offend a volunteer or trigger abandonment of an online transaction that is complicated |
| | |
| | Complex auditing of program as each case needs to be individually assessed against the input data. |
| | This complex model may create a sense of distrust by C'th and NSW governments in the integrity of volunteer firefighter who have put themselves at risk for the community. |
| | From the sample EOIs submitted the majority of applicants will reach the \$6000 threshold before they have claimed all their eligible days anyway. |
| | |
| | Higher development, development and administration costs for the state on the program management. |
| | Likely increase in over the counter and call center requests to support applications. |
| | Least likely to be delivered by the proposed date of 13/1/20 for applications |

From: Meagher, Benjamin s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @pmc.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 30 December 2019 8:27 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @pmc.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @pmc.gov.au>; John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: Volunteer payments [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Thanks, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) I'll have read ahead of the 9:30 telecon tomorrow which I'll dial into.
Thanks
Ben

Begin forwarded message:

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>
Date: 30 December 2019 at 8:16:54 pm AEDT
To: "Meagher, Benjamin" s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @pmc.gov.au>
Cc: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) .gov.au>, s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @pmc.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Volunteer payments [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

For-Official-Use-Only

Thanks Ben – here's the do Service NSW has put together. There are some notable differences with ours.

Regards s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

For-Official-Use-Only

From: Meagher, Benjamin s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@pmc.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 30 December 2019 6:46 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Cc: John GIBBON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@homeaffairs.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@pmc.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: Volunteer payments [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Here is the policy overview doc that s. 22(1)(a)(ii) sent to jurisdictional counterparts today. Think it's the same in substance as the earlier doc I just flicked through (although I haven't done a comparison).

Let me know if you have any questions about points that need clarification.

Thanks

Ben

Begin forwarded message:

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@pm.gov.au>
Date: 30 December 2019 at 12:02:12 pm AEDT
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@homeaffairs.gov.au>
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Cc: John Gibbon s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@homeaffairs.gov.au>, "Meagher, Benjamin" s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@pmc.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: Volunteer payments [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Gents - example email I'm sending to interested states. John - I'll provide your details as primary contact for officials.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@pm.gov.au>
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@pm.gov.au>
Date: 30 December 2019 at 11:38:51 am AEDT
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@sa.gov.au>
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@sa.gov.au>
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@sa.gov.au>
s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <@sa.gov.au>
Subject: Volunteer payments [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii) passed me your contact details re SA access to payments for volunteer fire-fighters suffering financial loss.

Please have a read of the attached – these are the high-level parameters for the scheme. Feel free to give me a buzz to discuss any questions or concerns and to talk about next steps.

I'm tracking down contact details for appropriate officials so we can get them working together on the mechanics.

Cheers

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | Senior Adviser
Office of the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP
MG 8, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600
p. s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | m. s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
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From: John GIBBON

Sent: Monday, 23 December 2019 1:41 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>

Subject: FW: INFO: Volunteer Firefighters and Mutual Obligation Requirements. [SEC=OFFICIAL]
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

info

John Gibbon

Assistant Secretary

Disaster Recovery Branch

Emergency Management Australia

Department of Home Affairs

P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)

From: Rob CAMERON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>

Sent: Monday, 23 December 2019 1:37 PM

To: Joe BUFFONE s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>; John GIBBON

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)>

Subject: FW: INFO: Volunteer Firefighters and Mutual Obligation Requirements. [SEC=OFFICIAL]
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Sorry – pressed send to quickly.

UNCLASSIFIED

From: Rob CAMERON

Sent: Monday, 23 December 2019 1:36 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:s.22(1)(a)(ii)@rfs.nsw.gov.au)>

Subject: FW: INFO: Volunteer Firefighters and Mutual Obligation Requirements. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) this should help.

EMA colleagues – FYI.

Rob

Robert Cameron OAM

Director General

Emergency Management Australia

Department of Home Affairs

P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

M: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

UNCLASSIFIED

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@humanservices.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 23 December 2019 1:19 PM

To: Rob CAMERON <[REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au>

Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@humanservices.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) <[REDACTED]@humanservices.gov.au>

Subject: INFO: Volunteer Firefighters and Mutual Obligation Requirements. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Rob,

As mentioned, here is the advice from Dept of Employment

Where a person is engaged in firefighting, they should not have any impact on their income support payment. There are a few options here:

- If the firefighting is likely to be ongoing, the person can receive an exemption from their Mutual Obligation Requirements from Centrelink. These exemptions are for up to 13 weeks at a time, and can be extended where necessary. To have an exemption granted, the person just needs to provide some evidence to Centrelink. This can be in the form of a letter from their Rural Fire Services commander, for example.
- If the firefighting is only one or two days here or there, the person just needs to let their employment services provider know that this is what they are doing. Then their provider can excuse them from their requirements for the day/s they are volunteering.

The department has issued advice to employment services providers to clarify that people should be excused from their requirements if they are engaged in volunteer duties related to bushfires (or any natural disaster).

There is also a news article that has been published on the Department's News Room website that explains this further - <https://www.employment.gov.au/newsroom/exemptions-volunteer-firies>

The article is for public viewing.

Talk soon.

Regards

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Deputy Secretary, Health and Aged Care
Department of Human Services
Level 2, 143 Turbot Street, Brisbane

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @homeaffairs.gov.au>

Subject: FW: EMA - Options for providing financial support to volunteer firefighters [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

For-Official-Use-Only

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) – as discussed, – give me a call if you need more info

Cheers

John gibbon

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

For-Official-Use-Only

From: John GIBBON

Sent: Saturday, 21 December 2019 2:14 PM

To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @pmc.gov.au>

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; Meagher, Benjamin

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GRIGSON s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; Sanandan DASGUPTA

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>

Subject: EMA - Options for providing financial support to volunteer firefighters [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

For-Official-Use-Only

Released by Department of Home Affairs
under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

Hi Ben

Please see the attached paper on options for providing financial support to volunteer firefighters.

Regards s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

John Gibbon
Assistant Secretary
Disaster Recovery Branch
Emergency Management Australia
Department of Home Affairs
P: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
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For-Official-Use-Only

EMA – Options for providing financial support to volunteer firefighters

Context

The bushfires in NSW are extraordinary. Significant unprecedented firefighting effort has been ongoing since September and will continue at the current rate into 2020. Given this, many volunteer firefighters will not be able to continue to respond without financial support. Employed volunteers may have exhausted leave entitlements, and self-employed volunteers will have forgone income earning opportunity—and may now have to return to work—rather than continue to support the firefighting effort. In this context, Australian Government financial support for volunteer firefighters may be needed.

It is not yet known—and will not be for some time—how many volunteers have been involved in the response to date, or the duration of their involvement. The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) has approximately 72,000 volunteers. As such, accurate costings for providing any additional financial support are not available.

The following policy principles may be appropriate for providing financial support to volunteer firefighters:

- Financial support should be in recognition that the contribution of volunteer fire fighters has been crucial to the firefighting effort, has been sustained over many weeks/months, and may need to continue for a prolonged period.
- Financial support should be in the nature of helping hand for volunteer fire fighters who have suffered a financial hardship as a result of their volunteering efforts, i.e.: not compensation for loss.
- Financial support should be provided with the intention of assisting volunteer firefighters to continue to support the firefighting efforts.
- Financial support should not act a disincentive to the broader volunteering cause.
- Financial support should be tax-free and not income tested.

Important note: The options below refer to support for NSW RFS fire fighters only—they have spent most time of all volunteers fighting fires. Interstate volunteers deployed to NSW have generally spent less time on fire grounds. Nonetheless, decision makers should consider extending any support to the volunteers of all agencies with codified roles in the State emergency arrangements. In the interests of equity, decision makers should consider extending any support to Rural Fire Service QLD volunteers and other QLD volunteers who have faced a similar length season.

Options

The Australian Government could provide financial support to volunteer firefighters through the following mechanisms:

1. **PREFERRED OPTION: a \$2,000 payment to volunteer firefighters facilitated through a lump-sum payment to the state government under Category D of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)**
 - Category D assistance is a flexible measure which is intended to address circumstances presented by a disaster which are not addressed by standard of relief and recovery measures or other Commonwealth and state programs.
 - This option involves making a one-off lump sum payment to the NSW Government through Category D of the DRFA so that financial support could be provided to volunteer firefighters.
 - Funding could then be provided directly to NSW RFS as the agency is well placed to identify the volunteers who should receive support.

- Funding could also include a component for any additional administration costs incurred by NSW RFS in delivering the assistance—i.e. it could allow for the engagement of additional temporary staff to develop guidelines and administer the payments.
- Funding could either be cost shared on a 50:50 basis with the NSW Governments or 100 percent funded by the Australian Government.
- The Prime Minister is responsible for Category D funding decisions and funding can be paid quickly to the state.
- This option would require the agreement of the NSW Government as they would be responsible for administering the payments.
- DRFA Category D funding is effectively new money and not require Departmental offsets.

2. Ex-gratia payments of \$2,000 to volunteer firefighters

- This option provides for \$2,000 payments to be made to volunteer firefighters.
- Ex-gratia payments are a one-off, non-precedent setting payment, considered a gift from the government to an individual or entity.
- They can be made available under Schedule 1AA of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997*.
 - Item 402.027A allows the development of ex-gratia disaster recovery assistance.
- Policy parameters underpinning ex-gratia payments must be developed by the relevant department and approved by the Department of the Prime Minister or the Cabinet.
 - For the bushfires in NSW disasters the relevant department would be Home Affairs (EMA).
- Ex-gratia payments would be delivered by the Department of Human Services.
- The Prime Minister is the approver for ex-gratia assistance. Approval can be given via an exchange of letters between the relevant Minister and the Prime Minister.
- This option carries some implementation risk for the Commonwealth and will take time to implement.
- The Department of Home Affairs cannot provide offsets for ex-gratia payments—new money would be required.

3. An income support payment similar to Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA)

- DRA provides a short-term income support payment to assist those who have lost income as a direct result of the bushfires.
- Volunteer firefighters are not considered eligible for DRA because their place of employment has not been directly damaged.
- This option involves creating a payment similar to DRA, making volunteer firefighters eligible to apply, because of a loss of income following their involvement in firefighting operations.
- People eligible for DRA can access income assistance for up to 13 weeks, equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance.
- DRA eligibility criteria requires that a person must have an income under the relevant income cut off for Newstart. Volunteer fire fighters may have difficult qualifying under this criteria and therefore the reach of this option would be limited.
- This option carries significant implementation risk for the Commonwealth and will take time to implement.