

Bushfire Recovery Guide

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For some, the Australian bushfires have already passed through their communities. For others the threat remains, and may still remain for some time to come. The loss of life, homes and livelihoods won't be fully understood for many months. But Australians are resilient and our community spirit is strong. For businesses affected by the fires, it can be difficult to know where to begin in the recovery process.

This guide is designed to give you a high level checklist to help you start the recovery process alongside your advisor, whether that be Grant Thornton or another.

1 Assess your situation

First and foremost, it is important to understand what your situation is – are you, your people and your assets safe and what needs to happen immediately to create security and safety for everyone involved? This may also include emotional wellbeing. Many Australians are going through an extremely stressful ordeal and there are many trained professionals willing and able to assist in the recovery process.

3 Talk to your bank

Your banker will be invaluable in helping you over the next couple of months. Many banks have already begun to roll out additional funding packages and relief packages for businesses affected by the disasters – make sure you know what your bank is offering and consider what might be right for you. Plan early if you are going to need additional funding to get restarted. Make sure your banker is across your plans and understands where you are going.

2 Get on top of your cash flow

Getting on top of your projected business and personal cash flow should be one of your highest priorities.

Remember when planning to allow for the unexpected, as some of your people, customers and suppliers might also be affected and your cash planning cycle might need some additional headroom.

4 Set up cost controls

Over the recovery period expect demand for some goods or services to rise due to higher cost of delivery, shortage of supply or other unforeseen factors.

Make sure you have a good handle on any changes to input costs you might experience and allow for them in your business recovery plans.

5 Revisit your strategy

In situations where there has been an extreme change to the business environment it is necessary to reconsider your strategy. Look at whether or not you are in a position to continue to deliver your current service or product, or whether new pathways have arisen. We encourage you to consult your advisor for assistance in developing your short, medium and long term strategy.

7 Review your customer and supplier lists

Just as you have been affected and are re-planning, remember your customers and suppliers will be doing the same. Which customers will need extended terms from you and which suppliers might require different arrangements? Similarly how do you ensure your suppliers are able to support you as their customer over the coming period?

9 Government grants

Some of the government grants have already been announced, but many more will likely become available over the coming months. Ensure you have a method for keeping up to date with what might be suitable for you and what you might be eligible for or consult your advisor.

6 Understand your tax obligations and what assistance is available

The ATO has already offered delayed payment plans and other assistance to people who have been affected by bushfires. It is worthwhile seeking extensions early where necessary.

8 Insurance claims and review

Just as you begin to rebuild, ensure you have organised all the insurance claims that you need. In some situations claims, such as business interruption insurance, will take time – so starting early will help you get on top of what you need to do. You may need to consult an advisor for assistance in completion of some of these claims.

10 Get advice and look after yourself and your people

Many service providers want to help those affected so don't be afraid to reach out when you need further help. In addition, take care of yourself and your people – never underestimate the strain that this can put on everyone – including you! Make sure you use your advisors so you don't feel alone in dealing with this process.

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