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Support for QFES Volunteers

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Register your interest now for the Volunteer Firefighters Compensation Package.

Purpose

The Volunteer Firefighters Compensation Package supports Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) volunteers, who have dedicated considerable personal time to respond to these extraordinary bushfires and incurred a financial loss of income as a result.

Eligible volunteers will receive up to \$6000 in compensation if they have volunteered to firefight on a fire ground, or provided direct operational support, for more than 10 calendar days between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.

A volunteer may only claim actual lost net (post-tax) income up to \$300 per day, with the total claim not exceeding \$6000.

The payments are tax-free, not means-tested and additional to any other forms of disaster support a volunteer may be eligible for.

This package is funded by the Australian Government, and administered by the Queensland Government, under Category D of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Eligibility criteria

QFES Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service volunteers must meet the following criteria to receive the package:

1. Experienced loss of income from being:

a. self-employed;

or;

b. employed by a small or medium-sized business, being a business with an annual turnover of less than \$50 million in the 2018-19 financial year, and has exhausted all available paid leave entitlements (not including long service leave, annual recreational or sick leave);

and;

2. Volunteered, as part of an operational response to bushfire firefighting on a fire ground or provide direct operational support for more than 10 calendar days between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020. This can include reasonable travel and recovery time but does not include training or participating in non-emergency operations (e.g. hazard reduction burns).

The Commonwealth Government has determined that eligible operational support activities include:

- airbase operations
- airbase management
- managing staging areas
- equipment officers
- peer support officers
- community educators
- Incident Management Teams at local, regional and the State Operations Centres.

The Commonwealth Government has determined the following activities are ineligible under the program:

- catering support
- brigade support members.

QFES volunteers deployed interstate as part of an operational response to bushfires firefighting on a fire ground or providing direct operational support may apply through this package.

Interstate volunteers deployed to Queensland to support bushfire response activities must apply through the Volunteer Firefighters Compensation Package of their own respective state or territory, if available.

What can be claimed

Eligible volunteers can claim lost income for the extra days they served – over the 10 calendar days minimum – between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020. The 10 days do not need to be consecutive or for a single fire event.

Volunteers can only claim lost income after 10 calendar days – i.e, if a volunteer undertakes 15 calendar days of eligible volunteer service, they can claim for five days of lost income (15 days - 10 day minimum = 5 days that can be claimed).

A volunteer may only claim actual lost net (post-tax) income up to \$300 per day, with the total claim not exceeding \$6000.

A volunteer cannot claim loss of income if they still have appropriate paid leave available (e.g. a community service leave or discretionary leave category) to them from their employer to undertake firefighting activities. A volunteer may still claim if they have used their own long service leave, annual recreational or sick leave to be absent from work to volunteer.

Multiple claims can be made, up to the maximum of \$6000. Applicants will need to fill out another claim form for any additional, eligible volunteer service up to 30 June 2020. The program will close on 31 July 2020.

Payments will be made directly to applicants via electronic funds transfer.

How to apply

Applicants will need the following information to complete their application:

- Membership/Volunteer ID number
- Name of business/employer
- Dates and locations of the 10 days minimum service
- Dates and locations for the days (after the 10 days minimum) you are claiming compensation for
- Total amount of lost income you are claiming
- Bank details
- Evidence of your claim, including timesheets, group certificates, BAS statements etc.

Register my interest (<https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency/volunteering-jobs/volunteer/support-for-qfes-volunteers/application-form>)

Eligible applicants can register online for this program.

Electronic applications are preferred and will result in a faster assessment and payment. Applicants may also contact 1800 268 462 to apply over the phone.

Key dates

Description	Timeframe
Period to undertake volunteering activities	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020
Expressions of interest open	7 January 2020 – 12 January 2020
Program application officially opens	13 January 2020
Application period closes	31 July 2020

Information and Record Keeping

We will ask you to provide personal information if you submit an application. The use of the personal information is only for the function for which it has been transferred and complies with the limitations under the [Information Privacy Act 2009](https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2009-014) (<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2009-014>).

Applicants must consent to the Queensland Government conducting an audit of detail provided in the application to verify the information provided with the claim.

Applicants must also provide authorisation for the Queensland Government to contact their employer to confirm or verify information provided the application.

Applicants must retain relevant documentary evidence (such as timesheets, pay slips, group certificates etc.) and provide on request should they be selected for audit validation.

Penalties apply where false or misleading information is provided.

Applicants must retain relevant documentary evidence (such as timesheets, pay slips, group certificates etc.) for five years should they be selected for audit validation.

Administration

This program is administered by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, with the assistance of the Department of Housing and Public Works.

Last updated: 7 January 2020



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