

Free legal help available for cyclone-affected residents

Legal Aid NSW lawyers are on standby to provide free legal help to people impacted by Tropical Cyclone Alfred in NSW.

Our Disaster Response Legal Service (DRLS) can advise people about issues relating to insurance claims, tenancy problems, accessing disaster grants and payments, financial hardship, family violence and employment.

Disaster solicitor Ma'ata Solofoni said people impacted by severe weather events can get free legal advice about making an insurance claim. This includes situations where an insurer has declined a claim or where people are unsure if damage is covered by their policy.

“The earlier someone seeks legal advice, the better the outcome. We can assist by negotiating with insurers to resolve any issues with the claims process if your home has been damaged by recent weather events. We can also provide advice on what people should do straight away and whether damage is likely to be covered,” she said.

“We often assist people who need immediate help accessing support such as temporary accommodation provided through their insurer, or help negotiating urgent repairs for their damaged rental property or challenging an eviction. We also help with advice about eligibility for disaster grants or payments, and we support people negotiating with employers if their work is affected.”

Anyone needing legal help can call the DRLS Helpline on 1800 801 529 or visit the website. We also have a specialist, mobile team available and ready to respond including lawyers based in the Northern Rivers and Coffs Harbour regions. Our lawyers can provide in-person legal help at Recovery Centres and Recovery Assistance Points established by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

The Executive Director of the Civil Law division at Legal Aid NSW, Meredith Osborne, said timely legal help in disaster responses can avoid many flow-on social issues, like homelessness, financial hardship and unemployment.

“We know that access to timely legal advice before, during and after a disaster can prevent legal problems from escalating. If left unresolved, these problems can cause acute hardship, prolong recovery, and exacerbate trauma and disadvantage.

That is why it is crucial that legal help is part of the frontline response to disasters,” she said.

From 1 January 2020 to 28 February 2025 Legal Aid NSW provided 13,529 statewide services to over 6,500 individuals from communities impacted by disasters across 110 LGAs in NSW.

Media are encouraged to include the following messaging in their flood coverage:

- Free legal help is available to flood victims through the Legal Aid NSW specialist Disaster Response Legal Service. Call **1800 801 529** or visit disasterhelp.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Disaster relief lawyer Ma'ata Solofoni is available for interview.

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