

Surge in flood victims seeking legal help

Hundreds of people are seeking legal advice following widespread flooding on the Mid North Coast, Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Lawyers from the Legal Aid NSW Disaster Response Legal Service (DRLS), together with lawyers from Community Legal Centres, have been attending Recovery Centres established by the NSW Reconstruction Authority in flood-hit regions to help people deal with multiple issues.

The DRLS has seen over 500 clients and delivered 800 legal services since the floods began on 19 May, 2025. There has also been a 68 per cent increase in calls to the DRLS helpline 1800 801 529 since the start of the year.

“Many people have questions about what their insurance covers and those that don’t have flood cover are asking about their options. Our uninsured clients are checking their eligibility for government grants,” says Senior Solicitor Ma’ata Solofoni.

“We are also seeing many people in financial hardship who need our support in dealing with credit providers. Tenants are also reaching out for help with urgent repairs and rent reductions.”

DRLS and community legal centre lawyers will be at the following locations:

- Taree Recovery Centre
- Kempsey Recovery Centre
- Wauchope Recovery Centre
- Macksville Recovery Centre
- Wingham Recovery Assistance Point
- Manning Point Recovery Assistance Point

“Having supported communities through multiple disasters across NSW, our lawyers understand the legal complexities that arise following disasters and in times of crisis. Our experience ensures that those impacted in a disaster can access the help they need – quickly, confidently, and with clarity,” says senior DRLS lawyer Ma’ata Solofoni (pronounced marta solo-fon-ee)

“Our help often means insurance claims are resolved faster, people can access temporary accommodation avoiding homelessness and financial hardship”

“We can assist tenants to assert their rights – whether it’s compelling landlords to carry out urgent repairs or negotiating rent reductions and abatements.”

“For those who are uninsured, and in need of financial support to recover from the floods, we guide them through what may be complex processes of applying for government disaster grants, including preparing necessary evidence. Our goal is to remove the legal barriers that can delay or deny vital support for recovery.”

7,300 people supported across NSW since 2020

Since January 2020 the Disaster Response Legal Service has helped over 7,300 people in NSW across 113 Local Government Areas. About 4,700 of those people received face-to-face assistance from its lawyers at Disaster Recovery Centres. Total Legal Aid NSW disaster legal services since 1 January 2020 is over 15,000, comprising 11,820 legal services and over 3200 calls to the DRLS 1800 Helpline.

Minister for Recovery the Hon Janelle Saffin says: “Disasters are deeply traumatic events that are really tough to get through, and people end up coming into our recovery centres in desperate need of help, advice, and reassurance.”

“Flood affected communities needed someone to be in their corner and that’s exactly what our wonderful Legal Aid NSW lawyers have been doing. Thanks so much for all your work.”

Disaster Response Legal Service lawyer Ma’ata Solofoni is available for interview.
(Pronunciation: marta solo-fon-ee)

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