

Important Notice—Assistance available for flooding and severe weather

As you may be aware, the recent Queensland flood disaster has had a significant impact on those in Queensland and the Northern NSW regions. We wish to offer our assistance to those affected by the recent natural disasters.

Below we have summarised the financial relief available to help get those affected back on track:

Premier's Flood Relief Appeal

An Appeal has been established to accept donations to assist those affected by the floods. At this time, information on how these funds are to be allocated has not been made available. The distribution of funds collected will however be managed by The Australian Red Cross.

Information for people wishing to make donations can be found on the [Queensland Government website](#).

Replace flood-damaged or lost certificates free of charge

The Queensland Government has announced that people who, as a result of the floods, have lost important certificates such as birth, death, marriage or change-of-name can apply for replacements free of charge. They simply need to contact the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages on 1300 366 430 or email BDM-mail@justice.qld.gov.au.

Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy

The Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy provides assistance to employees, small business operators and primary producers who lost income as a result of the flooding. This Subsidy will provide fortnightly payments equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart allowance (currently \$469.70pf (single) or \$424.00pf (each member of a couple)) depending on the person's circumstances.

The Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy was announced on 10 January 2011, for an initial period of up to 13 weeks.

More information is available on the [Centrelink Website](#) or by contacting the Emergency Assistance Hotline on 180 22 66 to receive claims for assistance.

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment will be provided to eligible people adversely affected by the Queensland flooding. The payment is to provide immediate, one-off financial assistance to eligible Australians adversely affected by the disaster.

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment rate is \$1,000 per eligible adult and \$400 per child. Claims for this assistance can be lodged at Centrelink until 4 July 2011 as application for the payment is available for a period of up to six months. The following conditions must be met for eligibility:

- aged at least 16 years, or
- receiving a Centrelink income support payment, and
- adversely affected by a major disaster where a person was present at the location of a disaster and suffered a serious physical injury, the disaster caused the death of a person's immediate family member or the person's principal place of residence sustained major damage or was destroyed.

Additional information is available on the [Centrelink website](#) or by calling 180 22 66.

Personal Hardship Assistance Grant

Provided by the Queensland Government, Personal Hardship Assistance may be available to individuals and families who do not have the capacity to meet immediate, unexpected basic costs for food, clothing, medical supplies or accommodation caused by the disaster. This grant is a non-means tested once-off payment of \$170 per person, up to a maximum of \$850 for a family of five or more.

Individuals and families can express an interest in this grant by calling 1800 173 349 or visit the [Queensland Government website](#) for additional information.

Queensland Government Essential Household Contents Grant

An Essential Household Contents Grant may be available to people who own essential household contents that have been lost or damaged in the disaster and who do not have contents insurance. This grant is a means tested once-off payment of up to \$1,705 per adult, up to a maximum of \$5,120 for a couple/family.

This grant is means tested and further information is available at the [Queensland Government website](#) or by calling 1800 173 349.

Structural Assistance Grant

A Structural Assistance Grant may be available to property owners whose home has been damaged by the disaster. The home must be uninsured for this disaster event, owned by the applicant and their sole place of residence at the time of the disaster. The grant provides a contribution towards repair of the residence to a habitable and secure condition. This grant is a means tested once-off payment of up to \$10,500 per individual, and up to \$14,200 for a couple/family, less amounts paid as an Emergent Assistance Grant and/or Essential Household Contents Grant.

The Essential Household Contents and Structural Assistance grants are means tested and will need to satisfy the following income and asset tests. Income and asset tests are as follows:

Upper income limits:	Individual: \$704/week + \$51 for each dependent Couple: \$930/week + \$51 for each dependent
Upper asset limits:	Pensioners: \$25,101 Others: \$6,135

This grant is also means tested and further information is available at the [Queensland Government website](#) or by calling 1800 173 349.

Special Disaster Flood Assistant for primary producers and small business

Grants of up to \$25,000 are available to assist eligible primary producers and small businesses for repairs to direct damage caused by flooding. The Assistance payments are summarised as follows:

- Initial claim: up to \$5,000 to assist you with immediate early recovery (subject to future QRAA audit)
- Subsequent claim: up to \$20,000 to recover costs that you have paid in order to repair direct flood damage.

Further information can be found on the [QRAA Queensland Government Website](#).

Low Interest Rate Loans

Low interest rate loans are now available under the state government's natural disaster assistance program. Finance can be obtained for requirements including the following:

- Repair and/or replacement of damaged plant and equipment
- Repairs to buildings and replacement; and/or
- Up to one month's supply of lost stock to maintain liquidity of your operation.

To be eligible to receive the special disaster relief flood assistance, applicants must:

- be a sole owner, partnership or proprietary company; and
- have sustained substantial damage to buildings, plant, equipment or stock as a result of an eligible natural disaster; and
- demonstrate inability to repair or replace the damaged assets or cannot return to viable operations from own resources without this assistance; and
- demonstrate that they have used up all liquid assets and normal credit sources; and
- demonstrate they have taken reasonable precautions to avoid or minimise loss or damage from the disaster; and
- demonstrate that with the assistance of this loan there are reasonable prospects of re-establishing the business on a viable basis; and
- demonstrate they are responsible for the cost of essential repairs or replacement of the damaged assets and as a result has had liquidity severely affected.

The loans are at an interest rate of 4% and are over a maximum of 7 years. All loans must be secured by satisfactory security. The amount of loan assistance is based on Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) assessment of the applicant's financial position, including any amount recovered under an insurance policy, and must not be more than the amount of the net loss to the business caused by the eligible natural disaster.

Please refer to the [QRAA Queensland Government website](#) for additional information.

Australian Taxation Office

The ATO have also offered assistance to those affected by the floods. If you are a sole trader or operate a business, you may be eligible for new measures to assist small businesses. These

measures are available to businesses with an annual turnover of less than \$2 million that are struggling to manage their tax payment obligations. The assistance involves:

- 12 month GIC-free payment arrangements, and
- Deferred activity statement payment due dates.
- Deferral of lodgement of December 2010 monthly activity statements
- In serious financial hardship circumstances the ATO may release you from your tax debt.

Further information is available on the [Australian Taxation Office website](#).

Financial Institutions

Many financial institutions are now offering assistance to those affected by natural disasters. The assistance may include:

- Suspension of home loan repayments
- Waiving of fees associated with early withdrawal of term deposits
- Waiving establishment fees for restructuring finance arrangements.

Please contact your financial institution to discuss relief eligibility and options.

We send our regards to clients, your families and friends who may be affected by this devastating event. Please do not hesitate to contact our office on 07 3209 2300 should you require additional information or to discuss your options. We are only too happy to assist you in getting back on track.