

MEDIA RELEASE



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HELP FOR DISASTER AFFECTED TRUCKING OPERATORS AND EMPLOYEES

Trucking operators and employees who have lost part of their income as a result of the floods or cyclone Yasi can still apply for help under the Australian Government's Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy.

The Government has now extended the deadline for applications to 31 March. You do not need to have lost all your income to qualify.

The Chief Executive of the Australian Trucking Association, Stuart St Clair, said small business owners and employees can get an allowance of about \$500 per fortnight for up to 13 weeks if they have lost income as a result of the floods or cyclone Yasi.

"Many trucking operators and employees have not applied for help because they are struggling on by working reduced hours or finding small amounts of work," Mr St Clair said.

"But you do not need to have lost all your income to qualify for the subsidy.

"You are eligible long as you can show your average income per fortnight in the eight weeks immediately following your loss of income was lower than your average income per fortnight in the eight weeks immediately before the start of the disaster.

"In other words, trucking industry employees working reduced hours or driving fewer kilometres are potentially eligible, as are the owners of small trucking businesses who have lost some, but not all, of their work."

Mr St Clair urged trucking operators and industry employees to apply to Centrelink rather than trying to decide on their own eligibility for help.

"During every natural disaster, people miss out because they assume they are not eligible. It's a particular problem in rural Australia and industries like farming and trucking, because we're an independent bunch.

"Instead, phone Centrelink on **180 22 66** and get an application form lodged by 31 March. Let them decide if you are eligible," Mr St Clair said.

Getting clarity about the DIRS income rules was one of the ATA's key objectives in working with the Queensland Trucking Association to secure extra disaster assistance for the trucking industry.

"As part of our lobbying efforts, we led a delegation of trucking operators to see the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Anthony Albanese. We also had very productive talks with the offices of the Minister for Human Services, Tanya Plibersek, and the Minister for Regional Australia, Simon Crean," Mr St Clair said.

“They listened to the evidence we presented on behalf of our members, considered it and took action,” he said.

More than 800 trucking operators and thousands of industry employees have been severely affected by the floods and the cyclone, with operators transporting fruit and vegetables particularly affected.

The ATA has published detailed fact sheets about the disaster assistance available, including an advice sheet for employees that businesses can modify and circulate with payslips. The fact sheets can be downloaded from www.atatruck.net.au.

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