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Drop-in centres – information for members of the public

Who establishes a drop-in centre?

The ACT Community Services Directorate (CSD) is responsible for establishing drop-in centres as part of its Community Recovery role under the ACT emergency arrangements. Drop-in centres are specifically aimed at offering shelter to people who choose to leave their homes when a catastrophic bushfire declaration has been made, irrespective of whether there is an active fire. Drop-in centres may also be established during periods of extreme heat.

Who is the drop-in centre for?

A drop-in centre is established to provide shelter to people who may be directly affected when a catastrophic bushfire period has been forecast or declared and do not have anywhere else to go – eg they live in an ember zone and have been advised as a precaution, to move to a safer place. Ember Zones are areas of the ACT that are considered to be more vulnerable to bushfires. Drop-in centres may also offer a place of temporary relief to people affected by periods of extreme heat.

Drop-in centres are established to provide basic shelter for those people who do not have any other options for support, such as family or friends.

What services are available?

Drop-in Centres are established to provide for basic immediate and essential needs of the affected community in the short term. The type of assistance available may include:

- Shelter
- Light refreshments – you will be required to buy main meals for yourself/ family
- Up to date information on the catastrophic fire warning, including advice from Emergency Services on the current situation
- Assistance with contacting family or friends to let them know you are safe

Canberra Connect (132281) will have up to date information about the drop-in centres, their location, details of the catastrophic fire warning and any advice from Emergency Services.



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What agencies are present in the Centre?

The Community Services Directorate will coordinate drop-in centres and have staff with a range of skills available to assist those who attend the centre. In some cases where the centre is opened within a community facility/ centre, staff of the community centre may also assist those who attend. If the forecast declaration changes and a fire occurs, CSD may establish evacuation centres.

What happens in a drop-in centre?

- The purpose of the drop-in centre is to provide a place of shelter, and information.
- The centre will provide basic services only and generally will be located next to shopping centres to allow you to easily access shops to buy any personal items you may require.
- We understand that it can be a very stressful time for some people who have had to leave home in a hurry, and may not have family or friends to help them. If you require assistance with anything feel free to discuss with the CSD representatives in the Centre – usually wearing a purple tabard or name badge. We will respect your privacy at all times.
- You do not have to sign-in to a drop-in centre and are free to come and go if you need to buy personal items from the shops, or go to the pictures, library etc while you wait .
- It is not always possible to provide access to telephones or other communications, but if you are concerned about letting family/ friends know where you are, please discuss your concerns with CSD staff.



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What are your responsibilities in a drop-in centre?

- Consideration for others - situations affect everyone differently. Please be courteous and respect the needs, privacy and culture of other people at the centre.
- CSD will care for any unaccompanied children at the centre. If you are responsible for a child or children you are expected to ensure that they are supervised at all times.
- Smoking, consumption of alcohol and use of drugs are not permitted in the centre.
- The safety of everyone is of utmost importance in a centre. If you see a safety hazard please let a CSD staff member know about it.
- While we appreciate that you may bring your family pet to the centre, you may be requested to keep your pet on a leash, or in a cage outside of the centre and make arrangements to ensure that it has food and water.