

7 January 2020

Media Statement - Optus Update – Australian Bushfires

Optus continues to support customers and bring mobile sites affected by the bushfires across NSW and Victoria back online, as access to fire affected towns and locations improves.

Optus Chief Executive Allen Lew said, “The bushfires in Australia are a live and evolving situation, and we are preparing for the impact of them to last for an extended period.”

“While a small part of Optus’ network in south eastern Australia has been adversely affected primarily by fire damage and power outages, we have used the opportunity of favourable weather conditions over the past 72 hours to top up generators and bring in satellite base stations to provide communications into the affected areas.”

Mr Lew said Optus continued to work with Emergency Services organisations in the affected states to monitor the situation.

“Our network remains resilient and our teams are dedicated to ensuring we restore services as quickly as possible and support customers and our own impacted employees during this challenging period.”

“At this time, we do not expect the financial impact of the bushfires to be material to Optus.”

Mr Lew said the situation had improved significantly from the weekend with 17 base stations down, of which seven locations confirmed as damaged due to fire.

“These sites will require partial or full rebuilds, but pleasingly, our intercity fibres that run through some of the impacted areas connecting Sydney to Melbourne are operational.”

“Maintaining network service continuity and refuelling generators to support our network remain a priority and while weather conditions evolve our contingency planning will best prepare us for any additional challenges.

“We know customers need to be connected and we are working diligently to restore services where it is safe to do so.”

Bushfire Support

Mr Lew said Optus had activated a range of initiatives for customers, firefighting volunteers and staff as a result of the bushfire crisis, with a dedicated customer hotline established for those affected by the bushfires (Ph: 1300 301 671).

Media release

Customer support

Optus has activated its financial assistance policy for customers affected by the bushfires, which may include:

- free call diversions from an Optus fixed home phone to any mobile or fixed number
- extended timeframes for bill payments
- bill waivers in instances of extreme financial hardship; and
- free suspension, relocation or cancellation of an Optus fixed service; and
- free prepaid credit which can be organised at our local stores.

“In addition, given the spike in internet usage, Optus will also provide unmetered access to a range of emergency services websites for customers in bushfire affected areas to ensure customers can access the information they need, without exceeding their plan data caps,” Mr Lew said.

Optus staff are providing on-the-ground support in bushfire affected zones including visiting evacuation centres and enhancing network experience with charging stations, pre-paid SIMs, satellite and mobile phone access, and other support as needed.

Volunteer Firefighter support

Elsewhere, Optus announced it would cover the costs of volunteer firefighters' mobile services for December and January to show appreciation for the efforts of volunteer firefighters protecting communities around Australia.

Optus Bushfire Customer Contact line: 1300 301 671

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