



Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Submission to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding

Response ID: IRCDF_1443_166

Consent option: Publish with name

Submitted by: City of Hobart

Q1. What experience have you had with Commonwealth disaster funding support?

The City of Hobart highlights that we do not have a direct line of sight into the Commonwealth Disaster Funding Support process as funds are coordinated and dispersed by the State Government on behalf of local councils.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements noted that those impacted by disasters often face several barriers when attempting to access financial assistance. Application processes are often difficult to navigate and in the aftermath of a disaster, some applicants may not have access to the evidence required. We suggest the Australian Government evaluate these processes to ensure financial assistance is accessible for all to access.

Q2. How could Commonwealth funding support communities to reduce their disaster risk?

Climate change is altering the risk and hazard profiles for local governments and communities, with more frequent, more extreme weather events intensifying the risk posed by existing and evolving natural hazards. The increasing complexity of extreme weather and the additional risk faced by communities due to the impacts of climate change, demonstrates the necessity of coordinated disaster funding arrangements.

The overall increase in a likelihood of natural disasters has significant social, environmental and political implications which will influence policy, emergency planning, funding and allocation of resources to all levels of government.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report stated that Australia needs a national approach to natural hazards which coordinates all levels of government. The City strongly encourages the Australian Government to develop a national framework which clearly outlines a coordinated strategy to manage and respond to natural hazards and emergencies.

Local government is often responsible for disaster assessments to manage and mitigate the risks posed by natural disasters. Given the increasing role for local government in asset construction and maintenance, land-use planning and disaster response and recovery, there is a critical need for investment in emergency management training and development.





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We emphasise that the Australian Government is best placed to increase investment in disaster resilience and betterment to ensure disaster recovery is quicker, effective and less costly. It is critical that communities receive coordinated support from all levels of government to build and maintain resilience.

The City of Hobart highlights the opportunity for the Australian Government to develop a national framework for monitoring and evaluating the disaster recovery process to inform and improve the effectiveness of the disaster response at all levels of government.

Q3. Please describe your understanding of Commonwealth disaster funding processes.

The City of Hobart emphasises that critical community infrastructure such as sporting, recreational and community facilities, and landfills and transfer stations are not considered 'essential' public assets under the existing Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

Additionally, the DRFA does not automatically support impacted local governments to recover and rebuild council assets that are able to withstand future extreme weather events. Rebuilding key council infrastructure is a key component of the recovery of our communities that helps to strengthen community connections after difficult events. Additionally, community recreational facilities are often used as evacuation centres of assembly points during a natural disaster.

Q4. Are the funding roles of the Commonwealth, states and territories, and local government, during disaster events clear?

In 2018, Hobart recorded over 236.2 millimetres of rain in one day. The subsequent flooding affected infrastructure, businesses, residences, university campuses and the electricity grid. This resulted in damages of \$135.2 million. The City completed damage assessments and repaired and rebuilt council owned assets at a cost of \$28.9 million.

Current funding arrangements favour disaster recovery rather than disaster prevention therefore reducing economic incentives for state, territory and local governments to invest in community resilience.

We welcome further opportunities to engage with all levels of government and non-government organisations to support improved disaster resilience.

Q5. Is there any further information you would like to provide?

The observed impacts of climate change include an increase in fire occurrence, an increase in severity, an increase in area burned and a lengthened fire season. The costs associated with natural disasters are expected to increase to \$39.3 billion per year nationally by 2050 – this equates to around \$600 million in annual costs for Tasmania.

Despite the increasing risk of natural disasters driven by climate change and the significant cost of response and recovery, there is currently no baseline funding to support dedicated local government staff positions to deliver specific resilience actions.

The City of Hobart emphasise that successful disaster recovery is not purely about the restoration of the built environment but is also about rebuilding our communities while ensuring their mental, emotional and physical needs are met.

