



Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Submission to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding

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Consent option: Publish with name

Submitted by: Golden Plains Shire Council

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

Golden Plains Shire Council has been impacted by the Oct/Nov 2022 Flood Event that affected numerous Councils in Victoria. The impact included damage to homes, farms, businesses, roads, bridges, paths and public assets. Currently the cost of this damage is approximately \$4 million which is 8% of Council's budget.

Council contacted EMV and received an AGRN number straight away and began rectifying damage to our assets. With the extent of the damage Council's budget has been severely impacted and Council will need to rely on funding received via the DRFA process. As this process is difficult to administer, Council has employed an officer solely to recover costs in our recovery efforts.

The damage was so widespread that the initial timeframe for Emergency Works was not achievable and the extension was well received, however could have been extended for longer as there are still roads damaged that have not been repaired due to lack of time, access and resources. Council lost time within the 6 month period due to Christmas and summer holidays, where our contractors are unavailable to work.

The guidelines are extremely difficult to follow, let alone when changes are made without Council being notified or changes being tracked or noted in an amendment section of the document. For example, day labour coming into play a fair while after the event. It was 'vague' as to what could be claimed making it challenging for Council to put together a process for collecting this data.

As the process is so time consuming and difficult to interpret for one off events, employing staff to undertake data and claim submissions is a costly exercise and one that should be claimable under funding.

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

If DRFA in Victoria allowed for betterment instead of replacing like for like, the reduction in damage for further events would be greatly minimised. With Councils already stretched due to ongoing rate capping and increased costs for contractors, equipment and materials, on many occasions Councils do not have the funds to pay for the betterment of the asset so are replacing the asset with the same specifications as required to receive the funding. More money should be put into mitigation instead of replacing like for like and having to repair the asset at the next event.





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The DRF is a great inclusion, however the timelines for the last round were extremely tight and with Councils dealing with the Flood Event, many had no capacity to prepare a grant application.

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

Golden Plains Shire Council is of the opinion that the current funding processes after an emergency are extremely onerous, difficult to interpret and in Victoria they seem to be set up to fail for a large number of claims.

The evidence required to successfully submit a claim for an event of this scale is not achievable, for a number of small municipalities with very poor mobile reception, small workforces and heavy reliance on external contractors.

Our claims are assessed by Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). These are assessed by an individual assessor at DTP who may have different interpretations of the guidelines than Council or even other DTP assessors. Golden Plains Shire Council questions whether there should be rules instead of guidelines, as guidelines are always open to interpretation.

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

No as stated previously in this submission.

There is so much information that it is difficult to absorb it, especially since staff are right in the middle of the disaster and trying to tackle the relief/recovery requirements in a timely manner.

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

Ideally LGAs should be provided training (online training, workshops, networking etc) throughout the year so that there is a preparation and knowledge base when a disaster occurs.

Suggestion of the DTP assessor being placed 'on site at Council' once per week to provide support/guidance to the claims process and to view the damages and rectification works, to show that Council funds are being appropriately spent.

