

Natural Disaster Financial Assistance Bulletin – 24 November 2023

NDFA Bulletin 3

The Bulletin will be sent out on a regular basis and will include updates and reminders around Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements and the CMS (Claims Management System) and will be emailed to all Council users who have access to the CMS portal.

Upcoming key dates

- **31 December 2023:** A reminder that all Immediate Reconstruction Works (IRW) for the Flood and Storm event on 6 October 2022 (AGRN 1037) will need to be completed by 31 December 2023. No extensions of time requests will be considered beyond this timeframe. Any incomplete IRW being undertaken after this date, will need to be lodged as Restoration of Essential Public Asset (REPA) works as part of the certified works estimate process. Councils are encouraged to plan ahead, so as not to delay the works that have commenced under IRW.
- **31 March 2024:** A Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) certified works estimates package for the Flood and Storm event on 6 October 2022 (AGRN 1037) will need to be lodged in the CMS for approval. Councils are however advised to submit REPA certified estimate packages well before this date and as the packages are developed by councils throughout the year.

Further information around this process is available under the '**DRFA Toolbox**' on the EMV Website. Your DRFA Assessor will also be able to assist you with the process.

<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-drfa/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-drfa-claims>

Claims spike is being experienced

There is a significant spike in claims being experienced at the moment, with the vast majority of the 2022-23 financial year claims being lodged after the end of the financial year. Our DRFA Assessor Team are working through the claims, however, to assist with completing the claim assessment and addressing the claims spike, please supply any additional information requested by the DRFA Assessors within the required timeframes. If the requested information is not provided within these timeframes, the DRFA assessor will finalise the claim assessment based on the information provided.

Going forward, we strongly encourage impacted councils to lodge claims as the expenditure is incurred throughout the year, as this disburses the claims (thereby flattening out the end of financial year claim spikes being experienced). This also represents sound financial management practice on behalf of councils. Also, when lodging claims, please do so in accordance with the Victorian DRFA Guidelines, providing all the required supporting documentation as listed on the CMS and in the Guidelines.

Timely assessment of claims requires a contribution from all stakeholders involved in the process from the council preparing and submitting the claims to the claim assessors.

Common issues with lodged claims

There have been a few common themes identified with claims lodged, which is impacting on the ability to undertake timely assessments. If the below issues could be checked prior to lodging your claim please.

- **Incorrect sub-clauses:** some claims are being lodged against the incorrect sub-clause. If you are unsure of which sub-clause to use, please seek advice from your DRFA Assessor. This information will also be available under the 'DRFA TOOLBOX' shortly.
- **Supporting documentation:** all supporting documentation for each claim type, is to be provided at the time the claim is lodged. The full list of documents with a lodged claim is available on the CMS and Guidelines.
- **Unreconciled financial transaction:** General transaction ledgers not reconciling to the claim lodged amount.
- **Day Labour** is eligible for natural disaster events occurring from 6 October 2022, and is only eligible for Emergency Works, Immediate Reconstruction Works and the Reconstruction of Essential Public Asset Works (in certain circumstances). It is not eligible for Category A or Counter Disaster Operation activities.

User Reference Group

- Following feedback from the User Reference Group members, the NDFA Team is currently working on revising Guideline 3 Early relief and recovery activities and counter disaster operations. This essentially will see the Guideline only refer to the policy and intent of each Clause/Measure under Category A and Category B Counter Disaster Operations which will link to the relevant DRFA clause.
- Examples and any information currently in the Guideline will be removed and included as either a Tip Sheet for each of the Clauses used by Councils or a 'How To' sheet. The Tip Sheet will also incorporate information currently included in Fact Sheet 3.
- Changes to the other Guidelines will also commence shortly and align with the changes to Guideline 3 and the new Tip Sheets.
- Suggested updates regarding the file structure to be uploaded with the claim on the CMS was presented to the URG and agreed to. The updated file structure will be uploaded to the CMS over the next couple of weeks.

Quarterly Reports for the Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets

- Quarterly Reports for the Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets (REPA) works currently underway (following approval of the certified estimate by the NDFA Team), are to be submitted through the CMS.
- A Quarterly Report needs to be provided for each event for approved estimate REPA packages, where REPA works are or have been scheduled.
- Please refer any queries in relation to the Quarterly Report to your DRFA Assessor.

The link to the Quarterly Reporting form on the EMV Website is provided below:

<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-drfa/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-drfa-claims/fd-victorian-drfa-claim-forms-quarterly-report-template>

Claims Management System help and new users

User Guides and Videos

- User guides and 23 videos are available in the CMS covering how to complete an event notification, all claim types, requests for advances etc. Each video is approximately 2 minutes in duration. These should be the first point of reference to questions on the CMS.
- Once logged into the CMS, this information is available under the User Guide tile from the Home screen.

New Users to the CMS

- Council's wishing to add a New User to the CMS portal – please email NDFA@justice.vic.gov.au and the form will be emailed. Please note the form needs to be signed by Council CEO before access can be arranged.
- Access to the CMS has been limited to three (3) users per council, noting that this will be capped at five (5) users per Council.