

# Natural Disaster Financial Assistance

Bulletin – 25 March 2025

## **NDFa Bulletin 11**

The Bulletin is sent out on a regular basis and includes updates and reminders around the Victorian Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) and the CMS (Claims Management System). It is emailed to all Council CMS registered users, Council contacts and Council's general email.

## **Close out of 2023-24 FY claims**

A BIG thank you for the effort by Councils who have responded to queries raised by the assessors on claims within the requested timeframes. Please continue to work with your assigned assessor as we seek to close out all the 2023-24 FY claims to meet the upcoming DRFA acquittal audit timeframes.

## **Quarterly Report template for Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets (REPA) to be updated**

The Commonwealth Government has increased its reporting requirements for the DRFA across all States noting the significant funding commitment across Australia provided for disaster events. As part of this increased reporting, the Commonwealth is seeking an update on REPA certified estimates. This includes actual expenditure incurred by Councils on the approved certified estimates.

The NDFa Team are in the process of updating the existing Quarterly REPA Report template to align with the Commonwealth reporting requirements. This is expected to be ready for the June 2025 quarter onwards. Further advice will be sent out once the template has been completed, along with further instructions.

## **What happens if the DRFA event financial threshold is not met?**

An eligible DRFA event is an event registered with the Commonwealth Government which then allows the State to cost-share. The Commonwealth Government allocates an Australian Government Reference Number (AGRN) for each event.

Even though an AGRN has been assigned by the Commonwealth for the event, should the total recommended amount (after the claim has been assessed) for all claims submitted for the event does not reach the \$240,000 threshold, the event is required to be re-classified as an 'NDFa' event. This will mean that the costs are not shared with the Commonwealth and the Council is then required to contribute the first \$100,000 of the council claim for the event.

## **Outline of Natural Disaster Financial Relief Trust Account and claim appeal process**

Claim (and funding advances) are paid from the Natural Disaster Financial Relief Trust account which receives an annual budget supplementation from the Treasurer as required, based on forecast commitments. When the function was transferred to the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) in 2019, the governance arrangements put in place for the Trust, were that payments from the Trust account can only be for eligible expenditure that can be included in the DRFA acquittal submitted each financial year. The acquittal is subject to a rigorous dual external audit process (State and Commonwealth appointed auditors). Eligible expenditure is defined as expenditure that can be claimed under the Commonwealth DRFA determination and that meets the evidentiary requirements. The governance arrangements of the Trust do not provide DJCS (or Minister) any ability for discretionary payments.

If a council is seeking to contest a claim assessment, the appeal process is documented on the ERV website link below and involves a review of the claim by another Department of Transport and Planning assessor, and as a final step (if required), a review of the claim by an experienced external DRFA assessor (at the cost of Council, unless the appeal outcome is successful). If Council is considering an appeal, please have a clear understanding of the assessment outcome and reasons why particular item/s have been rejected, and have a clear understanding of what the issue contested is, and why you believe the claim assessment is not correct. The review will be undertaken based on information available at the time of the initial assessment. New information will not be considered. Council should also have an understanding of the DRFA requirements (Victorian DRFA Guidelines and Commonwealth DRFA Determination).

[Make a DRFA claim | vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/make-a-drfa-claim)

## Training on DRFA Guidelines and Eligibility

A reminder that Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Training is available in groups for all Council staff who are involved with the DRFA process and is extended beyond the registered CMS User/s. The group should include a cross section of staff involved with the DRFA activities including those from the following Council Teams: emergency management, asset management, engineering/infrastructure, parks, depot and finance. Training sessions are approximately 2 hours in length.

To arrange group training, please contact Lyndee Peters at: [Lyndee.Peters@transport.vic.gov.au](mailto:Lyndee.Peters@transport.vic.gov.au)

## User Guides and Videos

User guides and videos are available on the CMS covering how to complete an event notification, claims of various types, requests for advances etc. The 23 videos, each approximately 2 minutes in duration, should be the first point of reference for 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

Councils wishing to add a New User to the CMS portal should email [Ndfa@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:Ndfa@justice.vic.gov.au) and the form will be emailed. Please note the form will need to be signed by Council's CEO before access can be arranged. Access to the CMS has been capped at five (5) users per Council.

## Previous versions of the Bulletin

Previous versions of the Bulletin are now available on the website at the following link:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/ndfa-bulletin-library-councils>