

INFOSHEET – VERSION 1.0 (23/12/2021)

Tasmanian Relief and Recovery Arrangements Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

The Tasmanian Relief and Recovery Arrangements (TRRA) Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy provides financial support for local governments to defray the cost of eligible relief and recovery activities following natural disasters.

The TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy is administered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) Office of Security and Emergency Management (OSEM).

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

How does the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy relate to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)?

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) are an agreement between the Australian Government and the States and Territories through which the Australian Government provides financial assistance to State and Territory governments to support natural disaster response and recovery.

Eligible measures and reporting requirements under the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy are based on the DRFA. This allows local government costs to be included in Tasmania's state DRFA claims which helps to maintain the financial viability of the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy.

This infosheet should be read in conjunction with the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy and associated Guidelines. In case of inconsistency between this infosheet and the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy or any Guidelines, the Policy and Guidelines prevail.

Can Tasmanian local governments request support under the DRFA?

Tasmanian local governments cannot request support directly from the Australian Government through the DRFA. Support to local government is provided by the Tasmanian Government through the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy.

Activation

Whose responsibility is it to request activation of the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy?

It is the responsibility of local governments to monitor eligibility criteria and request activation of the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy if appropriate. This request should be in the form of a completed Notification Form.

OSEM monitors weather and other events throughout Tasmania and may contact local governments to offer support.

When is the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy activated following notification?

Submission of a completed Notification Form to OSEM does not automatically activate the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy. The policy is not activated until the Premier makes a decision to do so.

What information about costs is required with a Notification Form?

A completed notification form must include a reasonable estimate of eligible costs. This allows OSEM to provide advice to the notifying local government and the Premier about the likely financial consequences of activating the policy. It also helps OSEM to determine whether Tasmania will meet the cost thresholds to request activation of the DRFA.

Cost estimates at the time of notification do not need to be detailed and do not create a 'ceiling' for costs that local governments can incur.

Eligible Costs

Are costs from running evacuation centres eligible under the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy?

Yes. Please see TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy Guideline 3 for details. It is very important that local governments record the costs from running evacuation centres appropriately so that they can be identified and included in claims. This is particularly important for transportation, staffing costs and operational (e.g. rental and power) costs. Local governments must be able to identify those costs that directly relate to the running of an evacuation centre.

Are the salaries and wages of council employees undertaking reconstruction of essential public assets eligible under the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy?

Yes. Please see section 7 Eligible Expenditure of the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy. Note that salaries and wages of ongoing council employees delivering other measures are generally not eligible.

Essential Public Asset Reconstruction

When should damage assessments be completed?

Local governments should record evidence of pre-disaster condition and damage for all damaged essential public assets. Local governments must complete Schedule 3: Damage Assessment Form for damaged essential public assets that will not be fully reconstructed within 3 months of the relevant natural disaster.

Local governments are also encouraged to complete Schedule 3: Damage Assessment Form for all damaged essential public assets that will cost \$100,000 or more to reconstruct.

When should cost estimates be prepared?

Local governments must complete Schedule 4: Cost Estimation and Procurement Form for damaged essential public assets that will not be fully reconstructed within 3 months of the relevant natural disaster.

Local governments are also encouraged to complete Schedule 4: Cost Estimation and Procurement Form for all damaged essential public assets that will cost \$100,000 or more to reconstruct.

Cost estimates are not required for damaged essential public assets that do not meet either of the above criteria.

Who should sign off damage assessments?

Schedule 3: Damage Assessment Form should be signed off by a staff member with appropriate qualifications and experience. This does not need to be an engineer. Councils can use suitably senior and experienced works staff to sign off damage assessments. Evidence of the qualifications and/or experience of the person who signs off damage assessments must be provided to OSEM with Schedule 3: Damage Assessment Form.

Who should certify cost estimates?

Schedule 4: Cost Estimation and Procurement Form must be certified by a qualified engineer. This engineer can be (but is not required to be) a local government employee. Evidence of the qualifications of the certifying engineer must be provided to OSEM with Schedule 4: Cost Estimation and Procurement Form.

Schedule 4b must also be certified by the General Manager or an appropriate executive manager if any procurement processes have been relied upon during the preparation of cost estimates (e.g. when costs were estimated using market response).

Are local governments reimbursed based on estimated or actual costs?

Local governments are reimbursed for all work to reconstruct damaged essential public assets based on actual costs.

Reimbursement is not based on estimated costs. However, it is a condition of reimbursement that local governments establish cost estimates where required.

Claim Submission, Audit and Assurance

Where should completed claim forms be submitted?

Council claim forms should be submitted to the Tasmanian Audit Office for auditing in the first instance. As per the TRRA Natural Disaster Relief to Local Government Policy, local governments are responsible for the cost of the Tasmanian Audit Office audit.

Once its audit is complete, the Tasmanian Audit Office will provide its audit opinion and details of the claim to OSEM.

Our claim has been audited by the Tasmanian Audit Office and paid. Is that the end of the assurance process?

Local government costs are included in Tasmania's claim for assistance from the Australian Government under the DRFA. Tasmania's claims are subject to an additional level of assurance (the "collaborative assurance process") provided by an auditor appointed by the Australian Government.

The Australian Government's auditor occasionally selects local government transactions to review as part of the collaborative assurance activities. When this happens, it is necessary for OSEM to request supporting documentation from the relevant local governments.

The collaborative assurance process is distinct from the Tasmanian Audit Office process. If local governments have already provided relevant evidence to the Tasmanian Audit Office during the Tasmanian Audit Office audit, this information should also be provided during collaborative assurance. The selection of a local government transaction in a collaborative assurance sample does not indicate that there were any problems with the relevant claim or the relevant Tasmanian Audit Office audit.

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