Natural Disaster Financial Assistance for local councils
Relief and recovery expenditure

## Overview

Under Victoria’s Natural Disaster Financial Assistance (NDFA) scheme, financial support is provided by the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) to assist local councils with costs associated with particular relief and recovery activities following a natural disaster. Financial assistance is provided in accordance with the Commonwealth Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

Expenditure associated with relief and recovery activities are assessed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Eligible relief and recovery activities include the establishment of Relief and Recovery Centres or Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres (MECCs), and other relief and recovery activities such as emergency and/or temporary accommodation, the supply of immediate needs (i.e. food, water and clothing), as well as personal and financial counselling.

For eligible relief and recovery expenditure to be reimbursed, local councils are required to advise DTF as soon as practically possible after a disaster that they have incurred or expect to incur these types of costs to ensure that the event is notified to the Commonwealth as an eligible natural disaster under the NDRRA.

**As of 1 July 2017, local councils are required to advise DTF if further time is required to incur eligible relief and recovery expenditure post 12 months following an event.**

## Relief and Recovery Centres and MECCs

Some costs associated with the establishment of Relief and Recovery Centres and MECCs are eligible for reimbursement.

Examples of costs associated with relief or recovery centres and MECCs which are eligible, or ineligible include:

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| **Eligible Costs** |
| * **Establishment and operation** of a Relief and Recovery Centre or a MECC for a disaster which has been notified to the Commonwealth under the NDRRA.
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| * The **pre-deployment of resources** (staff) to establish a Relief and/or Recovery Centre or a MECC.
* **Relief and Recovery operational costs** associated with:
	+ - Provision of advice to residents regarding evacuation (i.e. communication to the public regarding evacuation information).
		- Emergency accommodation/shelter including short term accommodation for individuals at an evacuation centre or through a service provider such as a hotel;
		- Evacuation of patients from hospital and residents from aged/high care facilities;
		- The transportation of individuals needing to travel to emergency accommodation including travel vouchers or in-kind transportation for individuals);
		- The provision of catering such as bottled water, beverages and food for evacuees;
		- The provision of basic medical supplies and medication;
		- Extraordinary costs of emergency food or essential supply drops to affected communities.
		- Evacuation of companion or domestic animals (pets) including cost of establishing evacuation facilities and of providing basic care, such as food and shelter, where they are at risk of injury, isolation, hardship or distress if they remain at a location (even if the disaster has not reached that locality). Assistance is only provided for the duration for which the owners are receiving assistance such as residing in an evacuation centre or emergency accommodation.
		- Rental charges and power costs for the period a building is operating as a relief and recovery centre or MECC;
		- Establishment of a ‘tent city’ to accommodate displaced individuals and certain staffing costs i.e. overtime of existing staff or new temporary roles to provide this service;
		- acquiring, deploying and coordinating resources to support response, community support and relief and recovery activities,
		- providing accurate logging of information, communication and decisions for recording, debriefing and planning purpose;
		- collating community information and disseminating the information to relevant agencies;
		- registration of volunteer emergency workers;
		- contributing to the rapid impact assessment process, including maintaining and validating records relating to damage and loss assessment data
* **MECC operational costs** associated with:
* acquiring, deploying and coordinating resources to support response, community support and relief and recovery activities,
* providing accurate logging of information, communication and decisions for recording, debriefing and planning purpose;
* collating community information and disseminating the information to relevant agencies;
* registration of volunteer emergency workers;
* contributing to the rapid impact assessment process, including maintaining and validating records relating to damage and loss assessment data.
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| **Ineligible Costs** |
| * **Establishment and operation** of a Relief and Recovery Centre or a MECC for a disaster which has not been notified to the Commonwealth under the NDRRA.
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| * **Animal welfare assistance** such as fodder dropping operations.
* **Advertising** where not associated with an eligible NDRRA activity i.e. community events.
* **Capital purchases** including for computers, phones and software.
* **Evacuation** of commercial animals or those animals the owner has a business attachment to and/or requires a special licence or permit (such as livestock, race horses, animals kept for breeding purposes).
* **Evacuation** of companion or domestic animals (pets) where owners have made their own emergency accommodation arrangements or are not required to relocate.
* **Internal hire rates** for hire of council facilities.
* **Restoration** of community assets not damaged whilst used as a relief or recovery centre or MECC.
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## Other relief and recovery activities

Some costs associated with other relief and recovery activities are also eligible for reimbursement and include the following examples:

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| **Temporary relocatable accommodation** | **Personal and financial counselling** |
| * Assessments of temporary housing needs for people whose primary places of residence have been affected during a disaster.
* Extraordinary costs associated with the establishment and decommissioning of temporary relocatable accommodation for disaster displaced people including transportation and manning of the accommodation (i.e. overtime).
 | * The provision of financial counselling and psychological first aid to disaster affected individuals in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster including:
	+ - Assessment of the need to provide this assistance;
		- The provision of advice on the range of assistance available; and
		- Assistance with disaster related claims to insurance companies.

Eligible costs include:* + the engagement of contractors or third-parties to undertake counselling services;
	+ costs associated with transportation (i.e. car hire, fuel and accommodation) while undertaking the service;
	+ publication/printing of the specific counselling information for affected individuals, and
	+ overtime and allowances for state or local council counsellors.
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## Advice regarding eligibility

For any queries relating to the eligibility of relief and recovery expenditure, please contact the NDFA Team on (03) 9651 2327 or email ndfa@dtf.vic.gov.au.