OFFICIAL

Natural Disaster Financial Assistance

Bulletin 14– 1 December 2025

NDFA Bulletin 14
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.

New Items/Alerts:

Change to the claim lodgement date

A reminder that the claim lodgement timeframes have moved towards a **half yearly cycle** that was previously communicated in Bulletin 12. The only exception outside the dates listed below, are for the claims to be lodged against an approved certified estimate.

The objective of the change to a half yearly cycle is to reduce the claim assessment period, by diminishing the claim spike experienced at the end of each financial year.

Councils are strongly encouraged to lodge their claims on a regular basis and before the final dates outlined in the table below, which will distribute the assessment process and facilitate timely assessments.

Eligible expenditure period	Claims to be lodged on the CMS Portal by:	Claim type
1 July 2025 to 31 Dec 2025	28 February	All claims _**excluding**_ the claims for approved certified estimates. Additional flexibility is provided for claims relating to approved certified estimates. Claims are to be submitted by key project milestone stages or at 50% and 100% of project completion and expenditure can cross over financial years.
1 January 2026 to 30 June 2026	31 August	All claims _**excluding**_ the claims for with approved certified estimates. Additional flexibility is provided for claims relating to approved certified estimates. Claims are to be submitted by key project milestone stages or at 50% and 100% of project completion and expenditure can cross over financial years.

Estimates for events and 'draft' status claims/certified estimates

A number of estimates across events on the CMS are outdated. Please review and update the estimates across all the events for which your council has been captured in the DRFA event notification to the Commonwealth. The event estimates on the CMS are used to ascertain budget supplementation that may be required to meet forecast commitments and also to provide accurate forecasts to the Commonwealth.

In addition, please 'cancel' any claims or certified estimates that are in 'draft' status that council will no longer progress to 'lodged'. 'Draft' status is used to project upcoming assessor resourcing requirements.

Cheat Sheets on updating sub-clause estimates and cancelling claims on the CMS was included in the email with this Bulletin.

Retention payments

Following continued consultation with the Commonwealth, retention payments can be claimed ahead of the actual retention payment being made to the contractor. This will facilitate the close out of certified estimates upon the project's practical completion in the CMS and align with the quarterly reporting practice. Appropriate supporting documentation of the retention payment is required to be included in the final claim (for example, the extract of the relevant contractual clause).

Please make sure the 'final claim' box associated with the certified estimate has been ticked as this will facilitate the closure of the record.

Extension of time to complete asset restoration works for AGRN 1037 and AGRN 1096

A blanket extension has been provided to all councils impacted by the October 2022 Flood event (AGRN1037) and the Victorian Flood and Storm commencing 24 December 2023 (AGRN1096) to complete works for 'approved' certified estimates up to 30 June 2027.

Are you DRFA ready ahead of the summer season?

In late October 2025, Local Government Victoria hosted a directors forum attended by Victorian Councils. As part of this forum, the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) presented top 5 tips on being DRFA ready ahead of the summer season. It is encouraged that councils undertake a '*DRFA self-assessment health check*' based on the below tips provided in the presentation. Councils that have a good understanding of the DRFA process and requirements, ahead of a disaster occurring, consistently achieve a better claim outcome and experience. As the saying goes, 'plan for the worst and hope for the best':

DRFA self-assessment health check

1. Understanding:
- What is the DRFA and what can you expect from it.
- What are the evidence requirements and how will Council comply.
- Damage repaired must be directly attributable to an event.
- Timelines: completion of works, claims lodgment dates.
- What elements can be embedded in Council's BAU processes?

2. Plan and Practice:
- Proactive rather than reactive.
- Plan for the big events, practice on the small.
- Regular interactions with the DRFA to keep knowledge fresh.
- Stay up to date with changes.

3. Resourcing:
- Who will manage claims.
- Who will coordinate the works and activities.
- Whole of council responsibility.
- Succession planning.
- Claimable versus non-claimable resourcing costs.
- Managing indirect costs

4. Chart of accounts:
- How will Council set up to allow clear financial tracking.
- Every claim needs to be supported by a detailed general ledger or transaction report.
- Less is best, minimise number of transaction listings required to support a claim. Aim for 1.
- Aim to minimise journals.
- How will Council track and claim project versus program costs.

5. Know your Assessor:
- Engage early.
- Assessors are the best point of contact for DRFA information, help and guidance.
- The aim of the Assessor Team is to get the best return for Council and the state within the rules of the DRFA.
- The more well prepared the claim is, the easier and quicker the claim is assessed and processed through the system.

Seasons Greeting from the NDFA Team

Lastly, the NDFA and Department of Transport and Planning Teams would like to wish you all best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a safe and disaster free New Year. Special thanks to those that have participated in the Victorian DRFA User Reference Group and have joined the discussion.

Standing Items:

DRFA User Reference Group (URG)

If your Council is currently not represented in the Victorian DRFA User Reference Group, we encourage that you join the conversation. The time commitment is around 1 hour per month and is a great way for sharing challenges and experiences, providing feedback on the CMS and Victorian DRFA Guidelines and also networking amongst councils (community of practice). Please send an email to chad.ryan@erv.vic.gov.au or ndfa@justice.vic.gov.au to be included in the invitation list.

Training on DRFA Guidelines and Eligibility

A reminder that group training sessions on the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements is available for all Council staff 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

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 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