

Program Guidelines

AGRN1242: Victorian Bushfires January 2026
Community Recovery 2026-2028 grants program
Emergency Management Victoria



Justice
and Community
Safety

Table of contents

1.	About this grants program.....	3
1.1	Key dates	3
1.2	Program objectives	3
1.3	Funding available	3
2.	Eligibility	4
2.1	Who can apply?	4
2.2	Who cannot apply?	5
3.	Funded project activities.....	5
3.1	What types of costs and activities will be supported?	5
3.2	What types of costs and activities will not be supported?	6
4.	How to apply.....	7
4.1	Apply online	7
4.2	Important information for applicants	7
5.	Key selection criteria	9
5.1	Mandatory documents and attachments.....	11
6.	Assessment and selection process.....	12
7.	Successful grant recipients	12
8.	Emergency Management Victoria	14
8.1	How to contact the EMV Grants Team	14

Background

The January 2026 Victorian Bushfires were unprecedented in intensity and devastation, burning more than 435,000 hectares and significantly impacting communities, businesses and the environment.

On 14 January 2026, the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments announced \$15.278 million to deliver the Community Recovery Officers and Hubs initiative. As part of this funding, \$900,000 has been allocated to support delivery of the Community Recovery 2026-2028 grants program (the Program).

The Program is jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). These are the Commonwealth-state cost-sharing arrangements for providing financial support for relief and recovery activities, resulting from natural disasters and terrorist acts. As such, strict guidelines govern the use and acquittal of funds.

The Program will be administered by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), which now incorporates Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV).

1. About this grants program

The Program has been established to assist communities affected by the January 2026 Victorian Bushfires (AGRN 1242). The Program will assist the recovery of bushfire affected communities by providing funding for projects and activities that support priority, locally led recovery initiatives.

Applications are open to organisations playing a leading role in recovery, including community recovery and not-for-profit organisations, neighbourhood houses and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

1.1 Key dates

Applications are opening on Monday, 20 July 2026 and will close on Monday, 31 August at 11:59pm (AEST).

Funding under the program will support activities delivered by 30 June 2028. Projects must commence, be completed and have all funding expended within this timeframe to be eligible.

1.2 Program objectives

The key objectives of funding are to:

- fund locally led recovery initiatives that align with, or complement, recovery coordination being undertaken by the relevant Local Government Authority (LGA)
- fund staffing to support recovery activities
- foster community resilience and social connectedness
- empower Aboriginal communities to lead relief and recovery through localised decision making and delivering culturally safe, community-led activities
- support communities in their recovery from the impacts of the fire event, with a focus on psychological health and wellbeing.

1.3 Funding available

Grants of up to \$75,000 are available to support programs and projects that align with, or complement, recovery coordination being undertaken by the relevant LGA.

Applicants must select the appropriate funding tier for their proposed activities. Only one application per organisation may be submitted.

There are four funding tiers available. The tier an organisation is eligible for will depend on the LGA where the organisation is based, or where they will be delivering their activities.

The following table details these tiers, including available funding amounts and the LGAs eligible under each tier.

Organisations may apply up to the maximum amount of funding available within their eligible tier and are encouraged to request funding that reflects the actual costs and scope of the proposed project.

1 Tier 1	2 Tier 2	3 Tier 3	4 Tier 4
Up to \$75,000	Up to \$50,000	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$10,000
<i>Funding available to organisations in:</i> <i>Horsham Rural City</i> <i>Mount Alexander Shire</i> <i>Murrindindi Shire</i> <i>Strathbogie Shire</i> <i>Towong Shire</i>	<i>Funding available to organisations in:</i> <i>Colac Otway Shire</i> <i>Corangamite Shire</i> <i>Mansfield Shire</i> <i>Mitchell Shire</i> <i>Moira Shire</i> <i>Pyrenees Shire</i>	<i>Funding available to organisations in:</i> <i>Ararat Rural City</i> <i>Golden Plains Shire</i>	<i>Funding available to organisations in:</i> <i>East Gippsland Shire</i> <i>Wellington Shire</i>

2. Eligibility

2.1 Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply, an organisation must be a legal entity which is one of the following:

- incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2001 (Vic), the Corporation (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth), the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 (Vic), or a similar type of incorporation
- a social enterprise with a clearly stated purpose or mission specifically related to disaster event recovery or provision of services to the affected community being supported under this funding.

Applicants must also:

- be a community organisation, not-for-profit, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, Traditional Owner Corporation, Community Recovery Committee or a Committee of Management and demonstrate a leading role in recovery within their LGA
- have a current Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be registered for GST
- be delivering recovery support in one of the project location areas (see 'Key selection criteria')
- demonstrate the proposed project and all expenditure will occur by 30 June 2028
- have no outstanding final reports required for any previous Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) or Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) grant programs.

Applicants can confirm their current ABN details online at [Australian Business Registry \(ABR\)](#).

Incorporation status can be verified through the relevant registering body:

- [Consumer Affairs Victoria \(CAV\)](#) - incorporated associations, co-operatives, or organisations incorporated through other means
- [Australian Securities and Investments Commission \(ASIC\)](#) - companies
- [Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission \(ACNC\)](#) – registered charities

- [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations \(ORIC\)](#) – Aboriginal corporations

Organisations that are not incorporated or do not have an ABN may still be eligible to apply if supported by an eligible auspice organisation (provided the auspice still meets all the other criteria).

All registration details must match the name of the applicant or auspice organisation.

2.2 Who cannot apply?

The following are not eligible to apply under the program:

- unincorporated organisations and organisations structured as a trust (unless an auspice arrangement is in place)
- political parties and/or organisations
- individuals and sole traders
- organisations outside the listed LGAs, excluding Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations which deliver services and programs in the listed LGAs
- Government Related Entities (e.g. local councils, statutory authorities, state-owned corporations).

Organisations that are not eligible to directly apply may still submit an application by acting as an auspice organisation. If you are unsure about your eligibility, contact EMV to discuss before applying.

3. Funded project activities

Grant funding provided by EMV can only be used for eligible expenditure outlined in these guidelines. All expenditure must be a direct cost of the activity delivery.

Where possible, applicants are encouraged to engage local suppliers, contractors and businesses when sourcing project materials or services.

3.1 What types of costs and activities will be supported?

Examples of eligible activities and costs include but are not limited to:

Community recovery activities, such as:

- trauma informed and/or trauma awareness workshops
- foundations in recovery training
- development of physical resources for impacted communities (for example, 'Are you ready' brochures)
- targeted events specifically benefiting diverse groups, for example: youth, LGBTQI+, Aboriginal community, elderly and people with a disability
- activities that promote social connection, recovery and resilience, for example through the arts
- Traditional Owner on-Country recovery and healing activities

Community recovery workforce support, including:

- salary and on costs for a Community Recovery Worker (or similar role)
- superannuation and wages
- professional development or training.

Locally led recovery initiatives, such as:

- programs that help residents build digital capability (for example, using mobile devices or apps during emergencies)
- community wellbeing events and workshops

Community recovery committee activities, such as:

- leadership workshops for formal and informal community leaders impacted by the event
- trauma informed training for impacted communities

- psychological first aid training

Other eligible activities may include:

- development of Community Recovery Plans, aligned with broader LGA recovery plans, where appropriate
- resilience projects, such as emergency preparedness workshops, resilience training or community art and storytelling projects linked to recovery
- engaging with other services to deliver projects that support community recovery, resilience and social connectedness

EMV may consider alternative project types and activities on a case-by-case basis. Alternative project types and activities not listed above may still be eligible, if they align strongly with the program objectives and address a priority recovery need identified by the affected communities.

If you are unsure about the eligibility of your project activities or have an alternative project type, contact EMV before applying.

3.2 What types of costs and activities will not be supported?

Examples of ineligible costs and activities include, but are not limited to:

- business-as-usual operating costs, including:
 - purchase of core business capital equipment such as office equipment or motor vehicles
 - ongoing costs for administration, operation, or maintenance
- immediate relief needs already supported through Emergency Relief Centres (for example emergency food, shelter, relocation costs and emergency payments)
- purchase of assets (not eligible under the DRFA)
- activities not related to community recovery
- funding provided as sponsorships or donations
- repair works or activities covered by insurance, unless required to meet safety, accessibility, privacy, community or cultural requirements
- political and/or fundraising activities
- project management or administration costs exceeding 5% of total funding
- purchase of land, buildings or existing infrastructure, including the costs associated with the sub-division of land
- projects requiring ongoing or recurrent funding to succeed or deliver benefits
- offsetting existing operating costs or salaries for existing staff or contractors, prior to the signing of a Victorian Common Funding Agreement
- projects that fall under the responsibility of another State, Federal or Local Government program and/or are more suitably funded (or have already been funded) under another program
- activities that breach Federal, State, or local laws, or public health directions
- projects that may negatively impact the environment, heritage, existing businesses, services and/or communities
- purchase of alcohol, gifts, prizes, or incentives (for example, thank you gifts, gift cards or similar rewards)
- activities outside of the funded period, including retrospective funding for projects already underway or completed before funding is approved

All exceptions must receive prior approval from EMV and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

4. How to apply

Before applying, read these program guidelines carefully to ensure your organisation and proposed project activities are eligible and that your proposal aligns with the program objectives and requirements.

Key dates		
Application period	Open	Monday, 20 July 2026
	Close	Monday 31 August at 11:59pm (AEST).
<i>Announcement</i> ¹	<i>Announcement of application outcomes</i>	October 2026
Project delivery ²	Start date	Start date is contingent on when funding agreements are executed by EMV.
	Finish date	30 June 2028

¹ Please note, announcement dates are approximate and subject to change.

² Project activities must commence and be completed (and fully expended) within these dates to be eligible.

Contact EMV to discuss your proposal

Applicants are encouraged to contact EMV to discuss their proposal before applying.

EMV staff can discuss your project idea to help determine whether it is suitable for funding under this program, answer any questions, and provide guidance to ensure your application aligns with the program objectives.

To discuss your proposal, email the EMV Grants Team at grants@erv.vic.gov.au.

4.1 Apply online

Applications are now open.

To submit a new application, visit the [Community recovery grants for January 2026 bushfires](https://www.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-grants-2026-bushfires) website (<https://www.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-grants-2026-bushfires>) and select 'Apply now' to be directed to the Community Grants Portal.

Applications close Monday 31 August at 11:59pm (AEST).

Please note:

- applications must be submitted online via the [Community Grants Portal](#)
- to resume a draft application, you can visit the [Community Grants Portal](#) or refer to the system-generated email you should have received when saving your application
- applications received after the closing date will not be considered
- only one application can be submitted per organisation
- auspice organisations can support applications from multiple organisations.

4.2 Important information for applicants

Auspice arrangements

Your organisation needs to be incorporated, have an ABN, and be registered for GST. If not, you may still apply if supported by an eligible auspice organisation that agrees to manage the grant on your behalf.

An auspice arrangement occurs when an incorporated entity takes legal and financial responsibility for a grant on behalf of a smaller organisation that does not meet the above requirements (auspicee). The incorporated organisation is known as the auspice organisation, while the smaller group or organisation is the auspicee.

If your grant application is successful, your auspice organisation will:

- sign the funding agreement
- manage the grant funds on your behalf
- be legally responsible for ensuring the funding is used appropriately and acquitted in accordance with EMV requirements.

Overdue reports

Organisations that have received grant funding from either EMV or ERV must be up to date with all reporting and milestones under existing funding agreements to apply. This requirement also applies to your auspice organisation supporting the application.

To be successful in receiving additional grant funds, current grant recipients must demonstrate that previously awarded funding is being used in accordance with the funding agreement.

Applications may still be submitted; however, if outstanding reports are not provided before applications close, the organisation may be deemed ineligible to apply or receive further funding.

To confirm your reporting status, and ensure you are up to date, contact the EMV Grants Team at grants@erv.vic.gov.au.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Organisations must be registered for GST to be eligible to apply for this grant.

To confirm your current GST registration status, visit the Australian Business Number Lookup at: <https://abr.business.gov.au/>. For more information about GST, visit the ATO website at <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/GST/>.

Application budget - GST inclusion

All applicants should confirm their GST registration status before applying to ensure the application budget and total requested grant amount is correct.

- **Registered for GST:** You must not include GST in budget figures – outline all amounts as GST exclusive (including the total grant amount requested). If you are successful, GST will be paid on top of the amount awarded.
- **Government Related Entity (GRE):** You must not include GST in budget figures – outline all amounts as GST exclusive (including the total grant amount requested). If you are successful, you will receive the amount of grant awarded but GST will not be added on top.

5. Key selection criteria

All applications are reviewed and assessed against the key selection criteria outlined below. Applications will receive a weighted score based on how well the responses and the supporting documentation demonstrate alignment with the key selection criteria.

Key selection criteria	Requirements	Weighting (%)
Purpose <i>Criteria #1</i>	Applicants must provide a description of their proposed project, including how their activity will: • deliver direct benefits to the community affected by the natural disaster • support one or more of the program objectives.	20%
Community participation <i>Criteria #2</i>	Applicants must demonstrate how the activity will: • target community recovery in specified Local Government Area (see Location below) • align with, or complement, recovery coordination being undertaken by the relevant Local Government Authority (LGA) • foster community resilience and social connectedness • empower Aboriginal communities to lead relief and recovery through localised decision making and delivering culturally safe, community-led activities be inclusive and accessible • engage local communities for consultation, feedback and/or invite participation in project activities • be promoted widely to the community.	20%
Location <i>Criteria #3</i>	Applicants must demonstrate that activities will occur in one of the areas affected by the January 2026 Victorian bushfire event as outlined at section 1.3 of these guidelines: • Describe how the bushfire directly impacted their community • Demonstrate how they have been responding to the impacts of the bushfire (e.g., working or providing services within affected areas, supporting communities that were significantly affected etc.) • Demonstrate how they have been playing a leading role in their communities' recovery • Provide a Letter of Support from Council or a relevant community representative that outlines the applicant organisation's demonstrated role in community recovery	10%

Applicants must provide a clear description for how the activity will be delivered, including project planning details and the status of all approvals, permits and/or compliance requirements applicable to the project.

Project planning

The applicant has provided a detailed Project Plan (using the EMV template), which outlines:

- timeframes – clear and realistic delivery timeframes which have accounted for any required assessment or approval processes and confirm the project can be completed by 30 June 2028 (at the latest)
- project risks – potential risks identified, and suitable mitigations and response measures outlined
- relevant expertise - the applicant has detailed all responsible parties, their roles and confirmed they have the necessary, skills specialist expertise and/or qualifications to deliver the project (or will engage qualified personnel and/or contractors who have current and adequate insurance, licenses, permits and approvals for all works).

**Planning
and delivery**

Approvals, permits and compliance

40%

Criteria #4

The applicant has identified, planned for, and budgeted appropriately to meet any applicable project approvals, permits and/or compliance requirements, or has confirmed that there are no regulatory impediments that exist during delivery of the project, such as:

- permits and/or approvals – the applicant has obtained and has evidence of all permits and/or approvals to deliver the project (e.g., planning, construction, zoning, safety, permit, heritage, cultural, vegetation, or environmental), or is currently seeking them, with an understanding of the associated timeframes and costs
- insurance cover – evidence project activities will be covered by a suitable level of insurance as required by EMV for the duration of funding, including Public Liability insurance (and if required, other insurance such as volunteers or workers insurance)
- endorsement(s) – written evidence of endorsement by the building owner, landowner, or manager (e.g., for projects on public land – approval obtained from the local council or the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action [DEECA]).

Applicants must provide a clear and detailed budget for the project, which demonstrates how activity costs:

Budget *

- are accurate, reasonable and cost effective
- include an appropriate budget allocation for any potential permits, planning approvals and/or other similar costs
- have potential to benefit recovery of the local economy and create local employment opportunities
- are supported by any contributions from other funding sources or in-kind support (if relevant).

Criteria #5

10%

** Applicants should review the guidance under 'Important information for applicants' regarding the correct inclusion of GST in the application budget.*

5.1 Mandatory documents and attachments

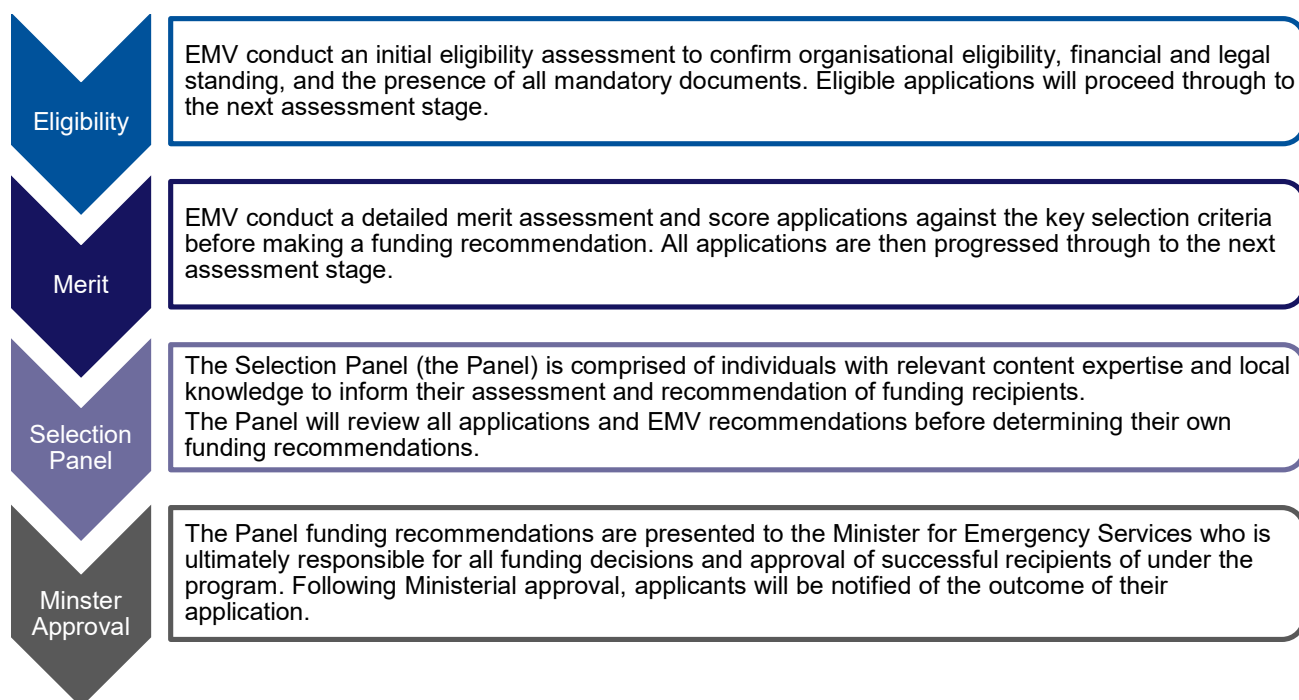
In addition to the selection criteria above, all applicants must provide additional mandatory documents and evidence along with their application which will contribute towards the assessment and weighted score. Applicants must ensure all required attachments have been provided.

Project Plan (mandatory)	A detailed breakdown of tasks and activities that will be undertaken during the life of the project. This should include anticipated start and finish dates, responsible parties and major budget allocations. The Project Plan must be completed using the required template, available online at https://www.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-grants-2026-bushfires .
Financial Statement (mandatory)	All applicants must provide a Financial Statement which is either: • a profit/loss statement for the most recent financial year (FY) • an organisational bank statement showing all incoming and outgoing transactions for at least the last 12 months. If the application has an Auspice organisation, a financial statement must be provided for both the Auspice and the main applicant, unless the applicant does not have an organisation specific bank account. For newly established organisations (less than 12 months old), alternative evidence may be provided, such as: • a bank statement covering the period of operation • a financial summary or budget; and/or • a statutory declaration outlining current financial position and governance arrangements.
Public Liability Insurance (PLI) (mandatory)	Provide a current copy of the Certificate of Currency in the name of your organisation (or your Auspice), or evidence that a PLI application is underway. EMV requires all prospective funding recipients to hold PLI for the duration of funded activities. PLI covers members of the public and protects the organisation from liability risks such as injury and property damage. Committees of Management covered by the DEECA must provide the Certificate of Currency along with evidence from DEECA (e.g., email or letter) confirming the organisation is included under the policy.
Letter of support (if relevant)	Provide a Letter of Support from the relevant Council or community representative. This letter must outline the applicant organisation's demonstrated role in community recovery and how these activities will align with, or complement, recovery coordination being undertaken by the relevant Local Government Authority (LGA). If applying with an Auspice organisation, you must provide a letter of support from the Auspice confirming they have agreed to support your application.
Other documents (optional)	Any other additional supporting documentation and/or attachments provided that may support the application, can also be attached. Examples include: • quotes or costings (if available) • pictures and newspaper articles.

6. Assessment and selection process

All applications received under EMV grant programs are carefully reviewed during a multi-stage assessment and selection process. All applications are assessed against the following:

- a) eligibility of the applicant organisation
- b) the strength of application responses to the key selection criteria
- c) if all funding specific requirements have been addressed, and
- d) whether all mandatory documents and attachments have been provided.



Please note that all decisions by EMV or the Minister for Emergency Services are considered final. This includes decisions relating to any aspect of the application or assessment process, any decision to offer or award a grant under this program, or a decision to withdraw an offer or cancel the grant funding agreement.

7. Successful grant recipients

EMV will contact successful grant recipients with a letter of offer, a funding agreement and other documents which must be returned to accept the funding.

Victorian Common Funding Agreement

Successful grant recipients must enter into a Victorian Common Funding Agreement (Agreement) with EMV to receive funding.

The Agreement outlines the terms and conditions of the grant, including:

- the approved use of grant funds
- the Agreement term (funding period)
- the due dates of all key deliverables
- grant payments and reporting requirements.

Organisations offered funding will have 30 days to sign and return the Agreement and all required documents. If the offer is not accepted within this period, the grant may be withdrawn.

Project Plan

The Project Plan (Plan) will form part of the Agreement.

Some grant recipients may receive part-funding or be approved subject to additional conditions and requirements. In these cases, successful grant recipients will have an opportunity to update their Project Plan to include any additional details required by EMV or to update activity dates if these have since changed.

Once updated, the Agreement will be finalised, and grant funds progressed.

Regular reporting and acquittal

Successful grant recipients must report on the funded activities and provide regular progress and expenditure updates throughout the funding period. A final report and financial acquittal will also be required at the completion of the project.

All reporting requirements will be outlined in the Agreement, and EMV will provide all report templates.

While reporting requirements may vary depending on the project, recipients should anticipate the following:

- End of Financial Year Financial Reports – submitted at the end of each financial year
- Progress and Financial Reports – every six-months
- Project Check-ins – every six-months, alternating with the Progress and Financial Reports
- Final Report and Financial Acquittal – due one month after completion of project activities.

Reporting, assurance and acquittal will be in accordance with existing requirements established under the DRFA.

EMV Acknowledgement Guidelines

Recipients of EMV grant funding must agree to comply with Acknowledgement and Publicity Guidelines, which outline how the government funding must be acknowledged in speeches, publications, presentations and other materials (for example, using the Victorian Government logo).

As this program is jointly funded through the DRFA, grant recipients must also acknowledge the Commonwealth Government's funding support.

The Guidelines also require successful grant recipients keep their funding confidential until a public announcement has been made by the relevant Minister or their representative. Project activities may commence once funding is received. However, the funded organisations cannot publicly announce or promote the funded project until the government announcement has been made.

Failure to comply with these requirements will be considered a breach of the funding agreement.

8. Emergency Management Victoria

Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) leads emergency management in Victoria by strengthening the ability of the emergency management sector to work together, and by supporting communities to plan for, withstand, respond to and recover from emergencies.

EMV supports the Emergency Management Commissioner to lead and coordinate emergency preparedness, response and recovery across Victoria's emergency management sector in collaboration with communities, government, agencies and business.

EMV is an integral part of the broader emergency management sector and shares responsibility with a range of agencies, organisations and departments for ensuring the system of emergency management in Victoria is sustainable, effective and community focussed.

The functions and responsibilities of the former Emergency Recovery Victoria were merged into EMV on 23 March 2026.

8.1 How to contact the EMV Grants Team

If you have questions about the program, how to apply or need assistance with your online application, contact the EMV Grants Team for assistance. They will be able to assist with your enquiry or refer you to the relevant EMV representative.

Email: grants@erv.vic.gov.au

Privacy

Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), an Administrative Office in relation to the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information.

Any personal information about an applicant or a third party provided in an application or in correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and other applicable laws.

This information may be provided to other Victorian Government agencies for the purpose of grant assessment and/or administration. If personal information about third parties is included in an application, the applicant must ensure that the third parties have consented to their information being collected and used to assess the application and are aware of the contents of this privacy statement and the [Information Privacy Policy](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/privacy/information-privacy-policy) (<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/privacy/information-privacy-policy>).

For more information about the policy, visit the [Information Privacy Policy](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/privacy/information-privacy-policy) webpage or contact the [DJCS Information Privacy Unit](#) (details below) if you wish to discuss the Privacy Policy or have enquiries about freedom of information and access to information about you held by DJCS.

Contact the DJCS Information Privacy Unit

Phone: 03 8684 0178

Email: privacy@justice.vic.gov.au

Post: GPO Box 4356, Melbourne, VIC, 3001

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