State Recovery Controller Communique # 12

Heading toward one year since Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja made landfall, the long-term recovery challenges are becoming increasing evident for everyone living through the process of having to clean-up and repair, get their business back on track, or just come to terms with what they are experiencing.

Recovery from a natural disaster is complex and at times frustrating process, but State Recovery remains committed to supporting the local governments and their community members with their long-term recovery efforts. Assistance remains in place for people in the form of grants and financial help, clean-up and rebuild support, wellbeing support services, and of course the local recovery hubs staffed by recovery specialists from DFES, Red Cross and Department of Communities.

A recent tour of the Mid-West with representatives from a range of State agencies and partner organisations including Legal Aid, Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Master Builders Association provided community members the opportunity to speak directly with specialists about their specific situation. In addition to the one-to-one meetings, representatives took the time to visit properties and listen to the resident's experience and challenges. It is this level of personal support that can make a big difference to someone going through a tough time. It is something I am proud to witness through my role as State Recovery Controller, not only for this tour, but on a daily basis through the dedicated recovery staff.

The Cyclone Seroja State Recovery Coordination Group convened meeting number 20 on the 17 March 2022. The group discussed recovery activities and issues. The below provides a snapshot of the work underway by recovery stakeholders.

❖ **Local Governments** – Each affected local government is leading their community's recovery through their local recovery framework. For some it is through their established Cyclone Seroja Local Recovery Coordination Group, and for others through their existing Local Emergency Management Committees. With the support from State Recovery, some local governments are undertaking consultative planning workshops with input from their community and key recovery partners. Determining things like the progress of reconstruction, understanding the welfare and wellness needs, hearing what types of community activities will increase social connection, all help to develop a robust Local Operational Recovery Plan that will make a difference to their community.

❖ **Temporary Accommodation for Workers Program*** – This demand driven program has seen two Mid-West local governments purchase caravans to house non-local builders and tradespeople. The caravans are providing much need accommodation for the workers, enabling residents to get their property repairs underway. Other Shires are also considering the use of caravans to solve the issue of lack of accommodation they are experiencing in their area.

❖ **Community Welfare and Outreach Program*** – The Department of Communities (DoC) continues to administer the Community Welfare and Outreach Program by coordinating a variety of specialist organisations to provide support. The latest to join the program is the

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Salvation Army's financial counselling service and Mission Australia's support services for Kalbarri and Northampton. This is in addition the other services already onboard, CentaCare, DV Assist, Australian Red Cross and Desert Blue Connect. Another new initiative is the donations platform GIVIT. DoC has partnered with GIVIT to set-up a dedicated Seroja appeal to enable the coordination of donated items or vouchers for residents in need.

Resilience building for Mid-West primary school children has been a focus for the Australian Red Cross, with their Pillowcase Program and RediPlan currently being rolled out. The Pillowcase Program helps teach students in years 3 and 4 to prepare, cope and respond to emergency.

❖ **Insurance** – The Insurance Council of Australia and insurers are visiting cyclone impacted communities to meet with policy holders on Tues 22 and Wed 23 March. One-on-one consultations in Kalbarri, Northampton, Morawa and Mingenew will give local residents the opportunity to discuss their insurance matters. As of 22 February there have been 9273 claims lodged for damage from the cyclone. The current estimated loss value is $346.7 million.

❖ **Financial Assistance*** – Financial assistance remains available for people experiencing personal hardship and distress as a result of the cyclone, as well as grants to reimburse clean-up costs for insured residents, primary producers, small business operators, heritage and cultural assets owners. The grant programs have seen an uptake in interest as a result of the recent Mid-West grants tour.

❖ **Assistance for uninsured residents*** – Clean-up assistance remains available for uninsured residents who need help with the removal of disaster related debris from their homes. Residents requiring help can speak with their local recovery staff, or express their interest via www.dfes.wa.gov.au/serojacleanup

❖ **Public Information** – The local media plays an important role in providing recovery information to their community. State Recovery have built working relationships with the Mid-West outlets, enabling the continued promotion of recovery activities and supports. The State Recovery Controller conducted interviews with all regional Mid-West media outlets in February. This proved invaluable in promoting the grants tour and reminding community about the recovery supports in place. The media is one channel, out of many others, including the recovery facebook group, EmergencyWA website, advertising in local papers and newsletters, flyers and face-to-face connections, that State Recovery use to provide recovery public information.

For all the latest State Recovery information please visit **emergency.wa.gov.au/recovery** or join the **DFES Cyclone Seroja Recovery Facebook Group**.

Melissa Pexton – DFES Cyclone Seroja State Recovery Controller

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