

## State Recovery Controller Communique # 14

It has been nearly 16 months since the natural disaster and some cyclone affected residents are reaching out for the first time to find out what help is available for their situation. You may wonder, why now after all these months, but this time frame is normal when recovering from a natural disaster. For some people, they simply may not have been aware there was help for their situation and only found out through receiving information in their letterbox. For others they knew there were people worse off, so felt support should focus on those who need it more. And for others, experiencing months of stress trying to repair and rebuild, they have reached a point of needing some help. Whatever the reason, the State Government recognises recovery for those affected can be a long and challenging process and that is why we continue to provide recovery support through the local hubs, grant programs and welfare program.

Through my role as State Recovery Controller, and the agencies represented in the State Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG), we continue to collaborate with all levels of government, not-for profits and service providers to support the affected local governments and their communities. The SRCG convened meeting number 22 on 4 August 2022. It was the first in-person meeting for the group, and here is a snapshot of recovery activities to date.

- ❖ **Community Welfare and Outreach Program\*** – The Department of Communities continue to provide recovery support services through staff based in the recovery hubs, as well as the outreach being conducted by Red Cross staff and volunteers. The Red Cross recently conducted ‘Supporting the Supporters’ training in Kalbarri and Northampton. The purpose of the training is to raise awareness of recovery processes and focus on promoting wellbeing for individuals and communities. During August, the Red Cross will be door knocking in the Shire of Chapman Valley to check-in with cyclone affected residents.
- ❖ **Community Recovery Hubs\*** – The recovery hubs remain an invaluable resource for local communities. The success of the hub program is a direct result of the committed staff from Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Department of Communities and Red Cross who consistently go above and beyond with assisting community members. Hubs remain in Geraldton, Morawa, Kalbarri and Northampton, with staff frequently travelling to Mingenew, Nabawa, Perenjori, and Mullewa to provide face to face support. The frequency and opening hours of the hubs have changed, and details are promoted via local government newsletters, Facebook, and the recovery webpage.
- ❖ **Insurance** – The Insurance Council of Australia reported that up to July this year \$398 million worth of Cyclone Seroja damage claims are incurred, sitting at 85 per cent closure rate. There are currently 1400 claims that remain open. The insurance industry is currently experiencing a ‘hard market,’ meaning it is going through a period of rising premiums but reduced supply. As a result, insurers reduce or stop providing cover for certain types of risks. There is anecdotal evidence from the Mid West community that some businesses affected by the cyclone are having difficulty finding insurance for their needs, as well as premiums increasing significantly to cover cyclone risk.

- ❖ **Insured Residents Assistance\*** – The Recovery and Resilience Grants Program has seen an uptake in grant applicants with over 400 applications received. Installation of window shutters has been completed for some Resilience Grant applicants, with one Kalbarri family saying the shutters give them peace of mind should there be another cyclone. This grant program is a first of its kind in Western Australia and was developed for insured residents to cover costs to upgrade their homes against future wind events.
- ❖ **Uninsured Residents Assistance\*** – Clean-up works on uninsured residential properties is being undertaken and four properties are now complete. This program remains available for eligible uninsured residents to help them with the removal of cyclone related debris from their home.
- ❖ **Support for primary producers, small business owners and heritage asset owners** – Recovery grant programs remain open for primary producers, small business owners and heritage asset owners. The programs support the clean-up and reinstatement of assets for eligible applicants. Applications for the grant programs close in March 2023.
- ❖ **Evaluation and Monitoring\*** – Interviews, workshops and surveys with grant recipients, local government representatives and State government staff have been conducted. All the information collected will be compiled to formalise a mid-term evaluation report for State Recovery to get a clear picture of what is working well and what can be improved. A summary of the report findings will be made available to key stakeholders.
- ❖ **Public Information** – The power of storytelling is a focus for recovery information. Cyclone Seroja stories told first-hand by affected community members, local governments and recovery agencies are being published on the DFES Cyclone Seroja Recovery Facebook Group and sent to local governments for inclusion in newsletters. Stories are a powerful way to connect with the audience and share a sense of hope and resilience. The stories provide learnings and aim to encourage action for those still hesitant to seek support. The Facebook posts are receiving over 1000 views, and some local media outlets have published them.

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

**Deputy Commissioner Melissa Pexton – Cyclone Seroja State Recovery Controller**

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