

## State Recovery Controller Communique # 1

### Introduction

It has been nine weeks since my appointment as the Department of Fire and Emergency Services State Recovery Controller for Tropical Cyclone Seroja. Over this time I have felt inspired, challenged and determined to fulfil this role by focusing on enabling a coordinated recovery effort by Commonwealth, State and local governments for the affected communities.

The extent of damage across an area of 133,000 km<sup>2</sup> within 16 local government areas in the Mid West, Gascoyne and Wheatbelt regions has never before been seen in Western Australia. The cyclone has significantly impacted local governments and their communities economically, environmentally and socially.

Weekly meetings of the District Recovery Coordination Group (DRCG) and State Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG) provide the forums for local governments, State agencies and other relevant organisations to discuss current and emerging recovery matters, provide progress updates and minimise duplication of effort.

The purpose of this communique is to provide stakeholders with a snapshot of the issues we are currently working through.

**Below is a snapshot of the recovery matters discussed at the DRCG and SRCG meetings on 17 June 2021:**

- **Financial Assistance** – A range of financial assistance has been made available to affected residents, primary producers and small businesses. There is a focus to provide regular updates through multiple communication channels informing the community of the assistance available and how to apply.
- **Insurance matters** – DFES and local governments are working closely with the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) to alleviate insurance issues that are impacting residents, providing clarification around claims, clean-ups, securing of properties and disposal of building materials. ICA has completed a letterbox drop and advertising in local papers to communicate the end-to-end insurance claim process for residents.
- **Accommodation** – Temporary accommodation is a priority issue for both residents and trade workers. It is a critical and complex issue that is being, and will continue to be, discussed at length. After impact, the Department of Communities (DoC) provided displaced residents with emergency accommodation. Due to some exceptional circumstances, DoC are allowing some displaced families to remain in temporary accommodation longer than the usual 21-day limit.

Options for temporary accommodation are being scoped by the State government. It is important the right accommodation needs are clearly understood for the various community groups and that a relevant and suitable temporary accommodation is provided. Some local governments have identified suitable land for accommodation.

- **Accommodation and Housing Round Table** – A Ministerial Roundtable was convened in June, and number of critical issues were discussed between Ministers, the State Recovery Controller and industry representatives. Issues included building standards, supply and trade shortages, asbestos risk and implications for properties that are under-insured or uninsured.
- **Community Recovery Officers** – Advertising has commenced for four regionally based positions of Community Recovery Officers. The role will establish a local face-to-face presence to identify the needs of the community, assist with community development and engagement activities and events, and prioritise projects that are clearly linked to human and social recovery, rebuilding and renewal objectives. The jobs are advertised on [www.jobs.wa.gov.au](http://www.jobs.wa.gov.au) and close on 2 July 2021. Please promote these job opportunities amongst your networks and encourage suitable people to apply.
- **Welfare Support** – Welfare support commenced immediately after impact and has been provided by the Department of Communities (DoC) and the Red Cross to affected communities. The DoC's has two community recovery hubs operating in Northampton and Kalbarri. In addition, they are providing welfare support through mobile outreach teams who are visiting impacted people's homes. The Disaster Response Hotline remains open for those experiencing distress and need assistance. Communications promoting the hub locations and the hotline is ongoing.
- **Local Governments** – Local government CEOs advised of the key recovery issues they are currently experiencing. Some have established their Local Recovery Committees which will enable the provision for local government recovery discussions, issues and activities to feed up to the State Recovery Controller for support.
- **Roads** – Main Roads advised that all roads are open, and they are continuing clean-up works of felled trees on road sides. Replacement of damaged road signs is ongoing with all regulatory signs replaced and 'made to order' directional signs ordered.
- **Public Information** – Accurate and timely recovery information for the affected community's is being regularly published on the [emergency.wa.gov.au/recovery](http://emergency.wa.gov.au/recovery) website, the DFES Cyclone Seroja Facebook group, and hardcopy flyers being provided on the ground. We encourage agencies, local governments and community groups to post recovery information in the Facebook group.

For State Recovery information, including financial assistance available, please visit [emergency.wa.gov.au/recovery](http://emergency.wa.gov.au/recovery) or join the **DFES Cyclone Seroja Recovery Facebook Group**.

Community members experiencing personal hardship or distress as a direct result of the cyclone can phone the Department of Communities' Disaster Response Hotline on **1800 032 965**.

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