

Eligibility for DRFA during a pandemic

Fact sheet Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)

Note: All costs must be directly linked to an eligible DRFA activity and will be managed as per the usual process. If the DRFA is not activated in response to the disaster, any costs incurred by the local government or state agency will not be eligible for reimbursement under the DRFA.

Ongoing DRFA context

The broad eligibility and intent of the DRFA remains unchanged. The DRFA, if activated for an eligible disaster, will continue to reimburse local governments and state agencies for eligible expenditure incurred in undertaking eligible DRFA activities across all relief measures activated.

A DRFA-activated disaster may occur in Queensland at the same time restrictions relating to a pandemic are in place. If this occurs, local governments and state agencies may need to adjust how they undertake response and recovery activities in relation to that eligible disaster to adhere to Queensland Health advice applicable at the point in time. This could include advice about social distancing requirements and restrictions to gatherings.

Applying DRFA in the context of a pandemic

Pandemics are not covered under the DRFA and therefore costs associated with responding to pandemics remain ineligible. However, additional costs associated with adhering to Australian Government and Queensland Health advice in undertaking response and recovery activities for an eligible event may be eligible under the DRFA.

The Australian Government and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) recognise the delivery of response and early relief activities and emergency reconstruction works may differ due to the pandemic. If amended work practices or processes are implemented to align with pandemic restrictions and increased costs have been incurred, additional information may be required to support the delivery change and/or increased expenditure. Examples may include additional cleaning costs of the disaster coordination centre, hiring of additional vehicles to transport emergency services workers or crews to complete emergency repairs to essential public assets, or the purchase of personal protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitiser for evacuation centres. Additional information to support the increased costs could be evidence of relevant Queensland Health advice applicable at the time of the activity.

Counter Disaster Operations

Counter Disaster Operations (CDO) are the activities undertaken by local governments and state agencies to alleviate personal hardship and distress, address the immediate emergency needs of individuals and for the protection of the general public, immediately before, during and immediately after an eligible disaster.

Examples of CDO activities that may be impacted by pandemic restrictions include:

Establishment and/or operation of disaster coordination centres

During a pandemic, local governments and state agencies may incur additional costs in operating disaster coordination centres due to the need to conduct extra cleaning and provide additional floor area to meet physical distancing needs.

Eligible extraordinary costs could include additional cleaning, purchase of hand-sanitiser, disposable masks and gloves, rental of additional temporary office space, and security guards to limit access to a disaster coordination centre. Costs associated with the purchase of assets, such as computers, monitors, desks, etc to set up new centres or to allow staff to work remotely, will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as per *Queensland Disaster Relief and Recovery Guidelines, Section 8.4.6 Purchase of new assets required to undertake activities.*

Disasters requiring evacuation/emergency accommodation

During disasters, local governments and/or state agencies may be required to provide emergency accommodation for individuals who evacuate their property (either voluntarily or by direction) immediately before or during the disaster, and are unable to source alternative accommodation. This is eligible CDO activity.

It is acknowledged that evacuation centres may be a last resort option during a pandemic due to public health directives in place. However, if a local government or state agency uses commercial accommodation to house evacuated residents instead of an evacuation centre due to the pandemic, the extraordinary costs incurred may be deemed eligible under the DRFA. This may also include the provision of meals while residents are being accommodated by local government or state agencies and/or additional cleaning of rooms.

Additional information may be required to support the use of commercial accommodation, such as a public health directive and justification of the use of this type of accommodation (e.g. evacuation centre unsuitable due to physical distancing requirements or not economically feasible).

Additional information:

- Queensland Health Evacuation Management Guide for COVID-19
- Red Cross Evacuation Centre Planning

Restoration of Essential Public Assets, including Emergency Works and Immediate Reconstruction Works

Local governments and state agencies may be required to amend their delivery methodologies during a pandemic to ensure they align with safe work practices. The additional costs of delivering Essential Public Asset works in such situations may be considered eligible where in alignment with applicable pandemic directives.

Examples of amended work methodologies:

- Hire of additional vehicles to transport staff to/from work site, undertake inspections and other similar activities.
- Hire of additional facilities and cleaning for camps for remote works.
- Additional cleaning of vehicles and equipment.