

Our reference: ECM 878620 LS/MB

19 August 2026

Mr Patrick Hetherington
Interim Coordinator General
National Emergency Management Agency
Emailled: disastermanagementreform@nema.gov.au

Dear Mr Hetherington

Submission to the NEMA Disaster Recovery Funding Reform

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on NEMA's Disaster Recovery Funding Reform Discussion Paper. The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) seeks national disaster recovery funding settings that provide councils with funding certainty, reduce unaffordable local exposure, and support more consistent delivery through state arrangements.

South Australian councils face significant exposure under existing disaster recovery funding arrangements, including high thresholds, cash flow pressures, complex evidence requirements and uncertainty about eligibility for urgent works, internal costs and betterment.

There are examples, including recent ones, where disaster repair costs far exceeded council annual revenue, demonstrating the need for funding certainty, proportionate thresholds and mechanisms that prevent councils and ratepayers carrying unaffordable disaster costs.

Councils also continue to report that evidence collection, asset condition data, documentation, audit and acquittal processes are complex and resource intensive.

There are also significant differences between jurisdictions in how recovery funding is delivered to councils.

LGA supports the following:

- the submission provided by the Australian Local Government Association
- reform of Commonwealth disaster recovery funding where it simplifies claim processes and improves speed, fairness, funding certainty and consistency
- reforms that enable betterment and support resilience outcomes
- reforms that do not shift additional costs, risks or administrative burden to councils

**Helping local government
build stronger communities.**

LGA recognizes that outcomes for councils are greatly influenced by state-based disaster recovery funding arrangements, including SA's Local Government Disaster Recovery Assistance Arrangements (LGDRAA). LGA therefore seeks greater consistency across jurisdictions in the delivery of Commonwealth disaster recovery funding to councils.

LGA is advocating for national arrangements that inform and influence jurisdictional arrangements, that prioritize the following outcomes:

- Funding certainty and reduced council exposure, including immediate access to funding for emergency works, timely reimbursement, lower or more proportionate thresholds, and reduced gaps that councils are required to fund.
- Proportionate assurance and administrative requirements, including evidence, audit and acquittal processes that reflect council capacity, operational recovery realities and the need for practical templates, guidance and resourcing.
- Resilient and inclusive recovery outcomes, including clear pathways for betterment, recognition of community, recreational, cultural, environmental and tourism-related assets where they are critical to recovery, and dedicated support for local government mitigation, capacity and capability building.

The arrangements should also clarify the eligibility of short-term and long-term costs relating to damaged verge trees, road clearance and clean-up, and confirm councils' ability to recover direct counter-disaster operations costs from control agencies.

In addition, with respect to future risk reduction funding, LGA strongly supports long-term, non-competitive and preferably untied funding streams for local government mitigation, capacity and capability building, rather than short-term competitive grants that require co-contributions many councils cannot afford.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely



Victoria MacKirdy

Chief Executive Officer

Telephone: (08) 8224 2047

Email: Victoria.MacKirdy@lga.sa.gov.au

Copy to: DM Reform Team