



Latest News

Councils must not be left carrying greater disaster recovery costs

17 August 2026

The Southern and Hills Local Government Association (SHLGA) is calling on the Australian Government to ensure proposed changes to national disaster recovery funding do not leave councils and their communities carrying a greater share of the cost of natural disasters.

SHLGA has made a submission to the Australian Government on its proposed new Disaster Recovery Funding Framework, supporting concerns raised by LGA South Australia and the broader local government sector.

The submission highlights that SHLGA councils supported efforts to make disaster funding simpler, faster and more focused on resilient recovery, but reforms must recognise the limited capacity of councils to absorb extraordinary disaster costs.

Natural disasters are becoming larger, more complex and more expensive, and councils are increasingly on the frontline of both response and long-term recovery. Any reform to national disaster funding must make sure councils are no worse off and that greater financial risk is not simply pushed down to councils and their ratepayers.

SHLGA has also raised concerns about proposed changes to thresholds for accessing disaster assistance, arguing that the impact of a disaster should be considered relative to the financial capacity of the affected council.

A disaster does not need to be large in national or state terms to have a devastating financial impact on a regional council. A localised bushfire, flood or storm can cause millions of dollars in damage to roads and community infrastructure. For a council with a small rate base and extensive infrastructure responsibilities, those costs can be extremely difficult to absorb.

The Southern and Hills region has significant first-hand experience of major natural disasters. This experience demonstrated that councils' role continued long after the immediate emergency had passed.

Councils clear and reopen roads, restore infrastructure, support emergency operations and help communities through what can be years of recovery, while still having to maintain their normal services and infrastructure.





Southern & Hills
Local Government Association

E. admin@shlga.sa.gov.au

W. www.shlga.sa.gov.au

T. 0424 795 935

Every dollar a council has to divert to an unreimbursed disaster cost is a dollar that cannot be spent renewing a road, maintaining a community facility or providing another local service.

SHLGA's submission calls for the new framework to ensure councils are no worse off, provide equitable thresholds for accessing assistance, recognise reasonable council staff and equipment costs, simplify funding arrangements and provide greater opportunities to rebuild damaged infrastructure to a more resilient standard.

Communities rightly expect all levels of government to work together when disaster strikes.

The new framework should strengthen that partnership and give councils greater certainty that they will be supported when extraordinary events occur - not leave local communities carrying a greater financial burden.

