

ALGA FEDERAL BUDGET 2023-24 PRIORITY

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Commitment sought

\$250 million per year over four years on top of Disaster Recovery Funding to immediately enable disaster-declared regional councils to support communities, repair infrastructure and rebuild to a more resilient standard.

What is the issue?

Flooding over the past twelve months has caused significant damage to council and community infrastructure, which is often owned and managed by small councils facing significant financial challenges.

Why does it matter?

Building back infrastructure to be more resilient against future disaster events will save all governments money in the long term.

Additional information

According to the [National Emergency Management Agency](#), there were 46 disasters declared in 2022, with 524 disaster support declarations over 316 local government areas.

In late 2022 flooding across the east coast saw more than 82,000km of roads impacted by closures across NSW, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. In January 2023 Western Australia and the Northern Territory were also impacted by serious flooding as a result of Tropical Cyclone Ellie.

ALGA and its member associations have estimated the cost of repairing flood-damaged council roads across eastern Australia alone

to be well over \$3 billion, and this cost will rise even higher when other damaged community infrastructure is included.

Essential local government assets are covered by the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) including roads and road infrastructure, bridges, schools, levees and stormwater infrastructure. However, under the current Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), community infrastructure such as sporting, recreational and community facilities, and landfills/transfer stations are not considered 'essential' public assets. The arts, recreation, sport and other community events play an important role in community well-being and recovery and community infrastructure that is publicly accessible and publicly owned should also be included in the DRFA list of essential infrastructure.

Additionally, the DRFA does not automatically support impacted local governments to build back better.

DRFA is still under review, and disaster impacted councils need certain, immediate, formula-based ongoing support without the administrative burden of DRFA applications or the uncertainty of drip-fed state and federal funding.

Many of the regional councils that have been disaster-declared have small ratepayer bases and cannot afford to build roads and local infrastructure that will be more resilient to future disaster events.

A new fund targeted specifically to disaster-declared regional councils would support them to repair damaged roads and build back to a higher standard that will save all levels of government money in the long term.

