

Frequently Asked Questions

AGRN 965 Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja Clean-up and Restoration of Heritage Assets Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH)

The objective of this assistance measure, provided under the *Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements*, is to support the clean-up and restoration of heritage assets damaged by the Severe Tropical Cyclone (STC) Seroja on 11-12 April 2021.

This support is provided through a Heritage Assets Grant program. Reimbursement grants of up to \$20,000 will be made available to private organisations, individuals and local governments who own or operate heritage assets within the activated local government areas to assist the costs of clean-up and restoration of eligible heritage assets damaged as a result of STC Seroja. Restoration may also include works to increase the property's resilience to future natural disasters.

Basic concepts – clean-up, repair, restoration and resilience

1. What's a heritage asset?

The recovery grants are available to any historic heritage place identified by the Heritage Council or your local government, and any Aboriginal heritage site. For historic heritage, this means that places need to be identified in:

- a local heritage survey
- a heritage list
- a heritage area
- the State Register of Heritage places
- the Heritage Council's assessment program

The Heritage Council has published an [information sheet](#) that gives further information on finding heritage places using the PlanWA mapping system. Any queries on heritage status can also be put to the Cyclone Seroja Heritage Asset Grants helpdesk on 6551 9993 or at heritagesupport@dplh.wa.gov.au.

PlanWA also maintains mapping of Aboriginal heritage sites. These may mark out a particular area, or indicate the general location of a site. A final decision as to whether a place is an eligible heritage asset lies with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH).

2. What's covered / not covered in the Cyclone Seroja Heritage Assets Grant program?

Clean-up means activities required to remove materials damaged in the cyclone, or that have been deposited on site as a result of the event. This could be removing debris, felling of damaged trees, transport and disposal of

solid or liquid waste, clearing damaged roofing sheets, or any similar activities.

Repair and restoration may be any works necessary to return property to its pre-cyclone condition. In general this would mean replacing any damaged elements in the same material, so may include salvaging materials capable of being reinstated. Some changes may be acceptable to bring a property up to current building codes or to replace hazardous material. Repair would not indicate an upgrade in facilities or condition. Guidance from a heritage advisor, engineer or architect can assist in identifying any key information that your builder may need.

3. What about these 'resilience' works?

Resilience works are those aimed at improving a property's resistance to future natural hazards, including flood, fire, cyclone and earthquake. These should be in addition to repairs already being undertaken to your property. This could include actions such as tie-downs for roofs, bracing of chimneys or parapets, or other works that strengthen heritage fabric against natural hazards.

The period when you have scaffolding up to make repairs, or have a builder working on your roof, is the most cost-effective time to add elements such as tie-downs that will help your building to better resist future events. Owners are therefore being invited to claim grant funds to support such works. Any works recommended or approved by a structural engineer may be eligible to be claimed.

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements funding package includes budget for the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) to contract heritage professionals, so we can engage an engineer or architect to provide advice.

4. Will the grant pay for all clean-up, repair and resilience works?

The maximum grant under the heritage program is \$20,000. Grants for works may also be claimed from other components of the recovery fund. Resilience works to insured residences are also funded through the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

5. Can I do repairs then think about resilience works later?

No. The intent is for resilience works to be part of a general repair program, to gain maximum benefit of having trades already on site and other works under way. The amount of funding available has been based on the likely need for associated works, so it will not be possible to fund all potential resilience works for heritage places. This restriction ensures that funding is directed to those places that have demonstrated vulnerability to cyclone damage.

For places on the State Register, there is the option to seek funding for separate strengthening and resilience works at a later date under the Heritage

Council's Heritage Grants Program. This is a competitive grant process that can offer matched funding for heritage projects.

6. What do I do about damaged asbestos?

Any hazardous material must be removed and disposed of appropriately. In the case of asbestos this must be a licenced asbestos removalist. Further information on testing for asbestos and finding a removalist is available from the [Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety](#).

Permits, approvals and contracts

7. What permits and approvals will I need?

Where repairs are made to a heritage place on a 'like for like' basis and there are no structural works, an application for development approval is not necessary. Works beyond like-for-like repairs may need approval depending on the place and the works proposed.

The need for a building permit is not affected by heritage status, with a permit generally required for structural work.

Owners are advised to contact their local government for advice on both planning and building matters.

8. Should I have a building contract?

A 'home building work contract' would generally be required for works between \$7,500 and \$500,000. The contract is intended to give written evidence of the agreement you have with your builder on the scope and cost of works. Further information on building contracts is available from the [Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety](#).

9. What happens if I have problems with my builder?

You can [make a complaint](#) to the Building Commissioner if there is a dispute between you and a builder about a building contract.

10. I don't know where to start - can I get some advice?

To support the recovery program the DPLH has contracted a number of heritage professionals to assist owners and provide technical support. DPLH staff may also be able to provide some assistance to owners. All owners who register an interest in the heritage assets funding will be contacted to discuss their needs and relevant advice offered.

For questions about development approvals and building permits you may also find assistance from your local government.

Eligibility

11. Which local government areas are included, and why?

To be eligible, the heritage asset must be within one of the sixteen local government areas identified within the notice declaring Tropical Cyclone Seroja as a natural disaster event. This declaration activates grants from the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements for those areas, which is why the heritage asset grants program is restricted. The local governments are:

- City of Greater Geraldton
- Shire of Carnamah
- Shire of Carnarvon
- Shire of Chapman Valley
- Shire of Coorow
- Shire of Dalwallinu
- Shire of Dandaragan
- Shire of Irwin
- Shire of Koorda
- Shire of Mingenew
- Shire of Morawa
- Shire of Mount Marshall
- Shire of Northampton
- Shire of Perenjori
- Shire of Shark Bay
- Shire of Three Springs

12. How do I demonstrate that damage was caused by the cyclone?

The DPLH has access to aerial photography from before and from shortly after the cyclone event for some affected regions. Major impacts such as substantial roof damage should be evident from these. Interior or structural damage, or property outside the areas covered by aerial surveys, may require additional photographic evidence from the applicant. If this is not available, we may require access to your property to allow our engineer or heritage consultant to undertake an assessment.

13. Can I do strengthening/resilience work to buildings that have not been damaged?

No. The intent is for resilience works to be part of a general repair program, to gain maximum benefit of having trades already on site and other works under way. The amount of funding available has been based on the likely need for associated works, so it will not be possible to fund all potential resilience works for heritage places. This restriction ensures that funding is directed to those places that have demonstrated vulnerability to cyclone damage.

14. Are not-for-profits eligible?

Yes. Owners may be from any sector other than State agencies or Government Trading enterprises.

15. The grants are available to owners and operators - who should apply?

The applicant should be whichever party is responsible for building insurance. This will generally be the owner, but may include tenants with a long lease. For tenants, a copy of the lease will be required to demonstrate the responsibility for insurance.

16. There are old and new buildings on the site – can I claim for both?

Generally, no. The grants are intended to deliver community benefit through repair and resilience works to heritage places. This is considered to be only those elements of a heritage site that contribute to the cultural heritage significance of a place. In some cases the elements that contribute to significance will date from different periods, but they will rarely be ‘new’ buildings. The DPLH will take advice from its heritage consultants and local government to determine where grant can be applied.

17. Can I apply if I am a tenant or operator on a State-owned property?

Activity on property owned by State agencies is a specific exclusion of the grant process. This considers that the State is responsible for recovery and repair works. If you are able to demonstrate that this is not the case, an application under the Heritage Assets Grant program may be considered. Please contact the DPLH for further advice if this applies.

18. Is there anything else that may affect my ability to claim?

Government funds will not be applied to works that are in breach of any legislation, direction or legal agreement or do not meet necessary standards or requirements. Likewise, works that are already a requirement of a legal direction from a government body will not be funded under the program.

If you are served a heritage conservation notice, building order, demolition order or repair order, works required under such a direction cannot be claimed.

Where a place is subject to a heritage agreement, an owner who is in breach of this agreement would be ineligible to make a claim.

Importantly, this also means that works that take place without a necessary building permit or development approval will not be eligible. Whether a permit or approval is needed is covered in Question 8.

Full details of eligibility and exclusions are available from the [program guidelines](#).

Insurance

19. Can I claim my insurance excess?

No. Unfortunately this is a cost that owners need to meet. However, if the total cost of works is below the value of your insurance excess and you therefore gain no benefit from the insurance policy, you are eligible to claim 50% of the costs you incur in undertaking repairs.

20. Can I use insurance funds to do other works and get the grant for repairs?

No. Any available insurance claim must be made and the funds applied in full to the necessary repairs.

21. What happens if my insurance doesn't cover the cost of repairs?

Whether your insurer has paid out an insurance settlement or is undertaking works on your behalf, it is possible that the insurance claim will be lower than the final cost of works. You may therefore be asked to pay the identified shortfall from your own funds. This shortfall can be claimed as a reimbursement, up to the maximum grant. Note that this excludes the amount payable as the insurance excess.

22. Will my insurer be willing to add strengthening works to their builder's instructions?

Each insurer works differently so if you would like to add resilience or strengthening works to the repair program please talk with your insurer and builder. If you pay costs to the insurer or to the builder for approved resilience works, this cost can be claimed as a reimbursement up to the maximum grant.

23. Can I claim if I am uninsured?

Owners without insurance can claim 50% of incurred costs up to the maximum amount of \$20,000.

If you have a heritage agreement but do not have insurance you are likely to be in breach of the agreement. Under these circumstances you would not be eligible to apply for a grant under this program.

The grants process

24. How does the application process work?

Submitting an application to the SmartyGrants platform registers your intent to undertake works, or gives access to a claim form for works already completed.

Rather than ask you for information that we can get from elsewhere, we will gather data that you have already submitted under any other disaster recovery program, as well as checking other sources to fill out the information we need. Where necessary we will send a heritage consultant to the property to provide a report – this is not charged to you.

If you have completed works and are ready to claim we will ask you to submit the necessary evidence, including details of any insurance claim, and begin the process of paying your reimbursement grant.

An application relating to proposed works will be assessed and will result in an assessment of eligibility. This assessment will either identify that the proposed works:

- are eligible and may be claimed once complete;
- are not eligible as proposed but could result in a successful claim if they are amended in a specified manner;
- are not eligible for a claim under the Heritage Assets Grant program.

If there is sufficient information in the initial application to identify that a claim is likely to be successful you will be provided with access to the claim form.

25. When can I claim?

Grants are made as a reimbursement of incurred costs so a claim form can only be submitted once works have been undertaken and associated costs paid. Evidence will be required that any invoice supplied to support the claim has been paid.

Where the DPLH has advised that a claim will be valid only if specified changes are made to the works, these changes, or an alternative approach agreed in writing with the DPLH, must be made for a claim to be successful.

Changes to an approved works program may result in it being ineligible. Check with the DPLH if your insurance company or builder proposes any changes that you haven't told us about.

26. What if I don't have funds to pay for works?

The Cyclone Seroja Heritage Assets Grant fund is established to operate through reimbursement of incurred costs. It is therefore not possible to pay grants in advance of works being undertaken even if you have restricted cashflow. Applicants must therefore source funds for repair from other sources.

Other disaster recovery assistance may be available, such as payments from the [Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund](#).

To minimise the amount you have to pay out before claiming it back as a reimbursement, the DPLH can agree to staged claims. It is expected that applicants will be asked to make no more than four claims, and the total claim will still be limited to a maximum of \$20,000.

27. Are there conditions?

Eligibility criteria need to be met in order to make a successful claim. However, there are no conditions attached to the receipt of disaster recovery funding under the Heritage Assets Grant program.

28. How will the priority process work – will I have to wait for all 'State heritage interest' places to claim first?

No. All eligible applicants should submit their initial application and claims at the earliest opportunity. The DPLH has identified that it may prioritise places of State interest when scheduling consultants and planning communication programs.

29. Can I claim from multiple programs if one grant doesn't cover the cost of works?

Yes. The guidelines identify that the Heritage Assets Grant program may be supplemented by the Recovery and Resilience Grants for insured residents or the State appointed clean-up for uninsured properties.

If you own an uninsured heritage residential property you may be eligible for State workforce assistance to clear and remove debris, as well as the heritage grants. Applying to both programs would allow funds secured under the Heritage Assets Grant program to be directed towards repair and resilience.

Similarly, owners of an insured heritage residential property may propose resilience works and seek assistance from both the DFES-operated fund and the Heritage Assets Grant program. In this way eligible resilience works of up to \$40,000 can be recovered from State disaster recover assistance.

Once you have submitted an initial application to either DPLH or DFES we will work with you to identify any funding gaps in your intended repair and resilience works, and potential programs that may assist in meeting these costs.

30. If I am eligible for more than one program but need less than \$20,000, which should I apply to?

If you are likely to require less than \$20,000, you are recommended to register your interest with the Heritage Assets Grant Program. We will work with other agencies to identify the best way to meet your needs and, if necessary, bring in another agency to finalise your grant should your need for funding increase. If you find that you are not eligible to claim under this program we can transfer your information to other agencies.

31. How can I ensure that funds will be available for me to claim when I finish works?

The funding provided under this State-Commonwealth agreement should be sufficient to meet all anticipated needs, and has the potential to access a contingency fund. The DPLH will, however, track applications to identify any potential for an excess demand and respond accordingly.

The program has a defined time limit and is established to fund works that take place before 30 June 2023. Claims must be submitted before 1 August 2023.