

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Program: 1.8 Australian Government Disaster Financial Support Payments

Question No. AE17/051

Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 28 February 2017:

1. What is the assessment process for the disaster relief funding package announced by the Federal and Western Australian state governments in relation to flooding on the south coast of WA?
2. How long until flood-affected farmers will be able to access the relief funding?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. Responding to natural disasters, including providing recovery assistance, is primarily a matter for states and territories, and in this case, the Western Australian Government.

The Australian Government provides support to the states through the jointly-funded *Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements* (NDRRA) to assist with the costs of providing relief and recovery assistance to disaster affected communities.

The NDRRA makes provision for state governments to activate immediate recovery assistance to help local governments and communities recover from disasters. No specific disaster declaration or approval by the Australian Government is required to activate standard NDRRA assistance. However, for an event to be considered eligible under the NDRRA, state expenditure must exceed, or be expected to exceed, \$240,000.

Under the NDRRA, the states determine the type and level of assistance, and where to make it available, following a disaster. For the flooding that occurred during January and February 2017, the Western Australian Government made the following NDRRA assistance measures available in 91 local government areas:

- personal hardship and distress assistance;
- personal and financial counselling;
- counter disaster operations;
- restoration of essential public assets;
- interest rate subsidies for small businesses and primary producers, and
- freight subsidies for primary producers.

The Western Australian Government is responsible for assessing individual claims for the above assistance.

The states are not bound by the NDRRA and can make available whatever assistance they deem necessary regardless of whether it is eligible for cost sharing with the Australian Government. This recognises that the states are best placed to identify the type and level of assistance to make available following a disaster, in accordance with their responsibility for disaster management.

2. All eligible individuals, including farmers, are already able to access the available NDRRA assistance.