

Ensure Victoria's flood recovery leaves no one behind

Significant initiatives

- **Victoria's Flood Recovery**
\$159.1m in 2023-24 (\$173.8m/4 yrs) to meet the relief and recovery needs of flood-affected communities.
- **Additional Flood Recovery support**
\$381.7m in 2023-24 (\$581.7m/2 yrs) for additional flood recovery support programs pending agreements with the Commonwealth Government on cost sharing arrangements.
- **Floods and disaster mental health response**
\$0.5m in 2023-24 for mental health support for communities impacted by the floods.

What's good

Details about which flood relief and recovery programs received further funding are scarce because the Victorian Government is yet to reach an agreement with the Commonwealth on cost sharing.

But VCOSS understands current programs will likely be extended an extra 12 months, which is a welcome relief for the countless community service organisations that have been helping flood-affected communities navigate their long recovery journey.

Programs up and running include case management, community legal assistance, financial counselling, family violence services, emergency housing support, mental health counselling, and more.

The community sector is relied on when disasters strike and the need for their services skyrockets.

This additional funding will help organisations meet that demand and provide flood-affected communities with another year of support.

What's missing

Extending the community sector's flood recovery programs for another 12 months is a welcome start but we know communities take years to fully recover from disasters.

For example, VCOSS held a Listening Tour event in Bairnsdale in 2023 where we heard that the community is understandably still coming to terms with the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20.

The short-term nature of disaster recovery funding also makes it difficult for organisations to retain staff members because 6- and 12-month contracts are not attractive to potential employees.

Future budgets should ensure that disaster recovery is guaranteed stable funding for multiple years at a time.

This will help the community sector recruit and retain staff members, deliver long-term recovery programs and provide local communities with certainty. Wherever possible, government should invest in local service system capability, leveraging off existing place-specific knowledge, experience, relationships of trust and collaborative networks. There is a crucial role for locally-embedded community health organisations, disability advocacy organisations and multicultural groups.