

Disaster Relief Fund – Recovery Round One

Background

During the response period of the weather events in January and February 2023 a Disaster Relief Fund (Mayoral Fund) was setup to provide immediate financial support to whānau who were impacted. An amount of just over \$2Million was raised and the majority has now been donated for a variety of needs including food, household items, school uniforms and cars. The average amount paid to applicants was \$1,600.

Applicants had to complete an online SmartyGrants application form that was assessed before a decision to fund or not was made. If it was approved the applicant would then need to be setup in Council's procurement system as a Vendor before the payment could be released.

There is a remaining amount in the region of \$65,000 that, in the first instance, is being proposed to be put into a non-contestable fund along with approximately \$2Million from the Red Cross Disaster Fund (to be approved by its Board).

Proposed Recovery Fund

The response phase of the emergency has now moved to recovery, however, there remains a lot of uncertainty for many whānau across Tāmaki Makaurau. We are aware that many weren't insured at all or under insured meaning that they are having to find ways to purchase damaged household items including furniture and cars. This on top of the cost-of-living increase is providing significant distress for some whānau.

It is proposed that the Recovery Fund would provide assistance on a one-off basis in extraordinary circumstances, where real need can be shown. This would be a non-contestable fund and referrals would only come through the recently established Auckland Council Housing Support Service (Housing Support Service) and other community organisations working with distressed community members.

The fund is a last resort measure when people have exhausted other appropriate sources such as Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), the Rural Support Trust, EQC, and other government agencies.

Priority will be given to provision of:

- Essential items/essentials of daily life (e.g. food, accommodation, utilities) not covered by insurance or other funds (such as WINZ, EQC and recently advised rental relief package);
- Extra financial burden (including significant loss of income), costs due to the weather events not covered by insurance or other funds; and
- Family or personal crises, support for which is not covered by insurance, another agency or fund (such as MSD).

The aim is that these grants go some way towards helping alleviate the emotional and financial stress experienced by individuals, couples and families due to the weather events.

Funds being allocated will need to align with the NZRC Disaster Fund criteria (if the \$2Million is donated), specifically:

- Costs being incurred by those supporting the basic needs of people impacted by the recent severe weather events and Cyclone Gabrielle. For example, providing people with temporary accommodation, food or water, or supporting community clean-up efforts.
- Support for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene restoration but not building repairs.
- Hardship Grants determined by Community Organisations to support personal expenses and clean up.

Note - Applicants who meet the criteria and vulnerability guidelines for Red Cross Home Bundles can be referred to NZRC. If an applicant has received or will receive a Red Cross Home Bundle, it does not preclude them from being considered for this hardship grant.

Community Partners

- Referrals would come through interactions from the Housing Support Service or from partner Community Organisations e.g. [REDACTED] s7(2)(c)(ii) obligation of confidence [REDACTED] based on their assessment that the applicant is suffering significant financial hardship. Partner organisations will be confirmed once the fund is approved by the Red Cross and Council.

Criteria:

To be eligible, a few basic criteria will need to be met:

1. Non or under insured whānau
2. Not received funding for this request previously
3. Exhausted all other funding avenues
4. Resident of Tāmaki Makaurau at the time of the flood
5. Able to prove need through relationship and conversation with the Housing Support Service representative.

The below are to be taken into consideration but are not mandatory:

6. Placard on the house
7. Health
8. Age
9. Disability
10. Infant Children
11. Low income

Funds will not be used for: rent arrears (landlord), non-water or sanitation repairs or property upgrades

Equity

To create equity for a non-contestable fund set amounts will be paid:

- \$500 towards utilities and everyday needs (Doctor fees, food, etc)

Payments towards goods and services (including rent, appliances, carpets, etc)

- \$1000
- \$2000
- In exceptional circumstances amounts of more than \$2000 may be considered. These would need to be approved by the Manager of the Housing Support Service and supporting evidence required such as quotes, invoices, letters of support from referring agencies.