Asset Vision

WHITE PAPER

DRFA Claims Made Easy -

How Councils Can Streamline Disaster Recovery Funding Applications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local councils are at the frontlines of disaster response — responsible for restoring essential infrastructure after floods, fires, and storms. But accessing funding under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) is not a simple task. It demands detailed asset inspections, extensive documentation, geo-tagged evidence, and strict compliance with state and federal protocols.

This paper explores the growing complexity of DRFA claims, how it intersects with insurance obligations, and why digital asset management platforms — like Asset Vision's EAM Platform and Autopilot tool — are fast becoming critical tools for local governments. It includes a practical case study from Moyne Shire Council, demonstrating measurable gains in speed, accuracy, compliance, and approvals.

WHAT ARE DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS (DRFA)?

The DRFA is a joint initiative between the Commonwealth and state/territory governments. Its purpose is to support communities following eligible declared natural disaster events. DRFA funding helps repair essential public assets (roads, bridges, stormwater infrastructure, etc.) that have been damaged or destroyed.

Eligible DRFA Categories for Councils Include:

- Emergency works (e.g., debris clearance)
- Immediate reconstruction of essential public assets
- Restoration to pre-disaster function
- Betterment (sometimes approved for resilient reconstruction)

Each claim must comply with guidelines administered by:

- The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) at the federal level
- Relevant state emergency recovery agencies (e.g., Emergency Recovery Victoria)

THE COMPLIANCE BURDEN ON LOCAL COUNCILS

To access DRFA funds, councils must:

- Conduct initial damage assessments (IDAs) immediately after the event
- Submit detailed restoration assessments with photographic, spatial, and temporal evidence
- Justify costs and eligibility in line with DRFA Category B or C criteria
- Provide audit-ready documentation to withstand post-claim scrutiny (sometimes years later)
- Avoid duplication of claims where insurance applies

KEY REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE:

- Before-and-after imagery
- Precise GPS tagging of damage
- Asset classification and pre-disaster condition
- Repair cost breakdowns
- Adherence to funding deadlines (typically within 3–6 months post-event)

Failure to meet any of these can lead to funding rejection, clawbacks, or compliance penalties.

THE INSURANCE LINK: COORDINATION, NOT DUPLICATION

One critical issue for councils is ensuring DRFA claims do not overlap with insurance recoveries. The DRFA guidelines are clear: if an asset is insured, DRFA will not cover the same repair.

This makes it vital that councils:

- Clearly separate insured and uninsured assets
- Maintain up-to-date asset registers with accurate replacement values
- Integrate asset data with finance systems to ensure tracking of actual recovery/repair costs

The insurance industry is also becoming more data-driven and expects clients (including councils) to provide fast, accurate damage data during claims. Without a centralised asset management system, councils risk claiming against the wrong assets or submitting insufficient evidence for insurance and DRFA purposes — creating delays or legal exposure.

THE DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY: ENTER ASSET VISION AUTOPILOT

Asset Vision AutoPilot is a next-gen, AI-driven inspection tool that automates road data capture, intelligently detects defects, and transforms how infrastructure inspections are conducted.

By replacing manual or video-based processes with lightweight, image-based digital twins, it enhances safety, boosts productivity, saves money, and strengthens evidence trails.

Completely woven into Asset Vision's EAM ecosystem, it's steadily being adopted by councils and contractors globally.

Mounted on a vehicle windshield, the system captures still images (rather than video) every 10m as the vehicle drives predefined inspection routes. These images are geotagged and timestamped, then uploaded to the cloud and linked to route maps for organized playback playback within the Asset Vision web portal.

Users can review inspection images at any time, before or after an event – and the solution supports users viewing historical images at a single location, via drawing a search area within an existing image.

Asset Vision Autopilot is built to solve the specific pain points of disaster response:

FEATURE	DRFA/INSURANCE BENEFIT
Automated inspections	Standardises field assessments, even under pressure
Geo-tagged imagery	Proves damage location and timing
Offline functionality	Works in storm-damaged zones with no signal
Rapid reporting templates	Enables compliance with state/federal formats
Integrated asset history	Confirms pre-disaster condition for claims/insurance
Centralised system	Avoids data fragmentation across teams

CASE STUDY: MOYNE SHIRE COUNCIL

In 2024, Moyne Shire Council faced a series of severe weather events causing widespread road and culvert damage. With an urgent need to claim DRFA funding — and tight reporting deadlines — the council deployed Autopilot across its inspection teams.

Outcomes:

- Inspections completed 60% faster than previous storm events
- Data synced automatically, even from remote areas with no connectivity
- DRFA reports submitted within 2 weeks, previously a 4–6 week process
- 100% of claims approved on first submission

"AutoPilot is crucial for our DRFA claim process and our claims get consistently approved because we have the visual evidence that's required."

— Liam Arnott, Manager Construction, Maintenance & Emergencies, Moyne Shire Council

THE BROADER STRATEGIC IMPACT FOR COUNCILS

Implementing a DRFA-compliant digital system offers more than operational efficiency. It supports:

- Audit resilience: No lost paper forms, missed assets or guesswork
- Community trust: Faster asset restoration = safer, functioning communities
- Financial sustainability: No clawbacks, faster reimbursements, less insurance leakage
- Staff wellbeing: Structured workflows reduce burnout and confusion during disasters

CONCLUSION: REBUILDING WITH CONFIDENCE

DRFA funding is essential to recovery — but only if councils can meet the rising bar for compliance and documentation. With climate-driven disasters increasing in both frequency and severity, councils must future-proof their disaster response capabilities.

Asset Vision's Autopilot offers a field-proven, government-aligned solution that reduces the burden on local governments while improving their ability to recover and rebuild with confidence.

It's not just about claiming funds — it's about protecting infrastructure, staff capacity, and public trust when it matters most.

NEXT STEPS

To learn how your council can modernise its disaster recovery workflows and improve DRFA claim outcomes:

- Contact our Local Government Team at info@assetvision.com.au
- Or visit www.assetvision.com.au/autopilot

ABOUT ASSET VISION

Asset Vision is a modern, mobile-first asset and maintenance management platform used by local governments across Australia. Built for the realities of public infrastructure, it enables smarter inspections, faster work orders, and data-driven asset strategies that deliver long-term value.