

Drought Assistance for Schools

2010 Funding Round

Guidelines for Government and Non-Government Schools

Introduction

These Guidelines are for the use of government and non-government schools eligible for funding under the Drought Assistance for Schools Program in 2010.

Background

On 25 September 2007, the Australian Government announced a package of Drought Assistance measures totalling \$714 million to support farmers, small businesses and communities in rural and remote Australia.

The package includes social and emotional support measures for farming families, communities and schools.

Among these is the provision of up to \$10,000 per school per year for rural and remote, government and non-government schools located in Exceptional Circumstances declared areas.

This is known as the Drought Assistance for Schools program.

In the 2009-10 federal budget, various drought assistance measures were extended to 30 June 2010. This included the Drought Assistance for Schools program.

Duration of the Program

The Drought Assistance for Schools program is a three year program consisting of three funding rounds, with the funds available through Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2009-2010. The first round was paid in 2008 and the second in 2009. These guidelines are for the 2010 Funding Round.

Aim of the Program

The aim of the program is to make it easier for rural families to meet ongoing education expenses and the cost of educational activities such as student excursions which may be cost prohibitive for families experiencing financial hardship as a result of the drought.

Which schools are eligible for Drought Assistance for Schools funding?

All rural and remote, government and non-government schools located in areas declared as being in 'Exceptional Circumstances' (EC) due to the effects of drought as at 1 January 2010 are eligible for Drought Assistance for Schools funding in 2010.

Rural and Remote Schools

Rural and remote schools are those which are located in towns which have populations less than 100,000. This excludes schools in mainland state capital city regions and major urban districts.

Government School

For the purposes of the program, a government school is defined as one which:

- is conducted by or on behalf of the Government of the State or Territory and is recognised by the State or Territory Education Minister as a separate school;
- is a school at which students are receiving primary education or secondary education; and
- has a permanent full-time student population **NOT** including students receiving primary or secondary distance education.

Non-Government School

For the purposes of the program, a non-government school is defined as one which:

- is defined in section 4 of the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* as:
A school in a state:
 - (a) that is not conducted by or on behalf of the Government of a State; and
 - (b) that is not conducted for profit.
- is a school at which students are receiving primary education or secondary education; and
- has a permanent full-time student population **NOT** including students receiving primary or secondary distance education.

Meaning of primary education, secondary education and distance education

- **Primary education** - at a school in a State, means education at the school at the level of primary education determined for the State under section 7 of the Schools Assistance Act 2008.
- **Secondary education** – at a school in a State, means education (whether junior secondary education or senior secondary education) at the school at the level of secondary education determined for the State under section 7 of the Schools Assistance Act 2008.
- **Distance education** – methods of tuition that do not use face-to-face interactions between students and teachers (e.g. tuition by correspondence, web-based delivery or ‘schools of the air’).

Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional Circumstances (EC) are rare and severe events outside those a farmer could normally be expected to manage using responsible farm management strategies. Events triggering an EC declaration have an impact so severe and prolonged that they are likely to occur only once in every 20-25 years. An area or region becomes declared as experiencing an EC event by the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Further information on EC areas can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website at www.daff.gov.au.

Multi-Campus Schools

Some schools have multiple campuses. Some campuses may be located in rural and remote areas and others may be located in cities and metropolitan areas.

Any multi-campus schools that have rural and remote campuses in EC areas will be eligible for Drought Assistance for Schools funding for their campuses in those areas. Regardless of the number of eligible campuses, no school will receive more than the limit of \$10,000. All funding must be used for the benefit of students at eligible campuses **only**.

Schools which close

Government School

Funding may not be paid for a government school which the State or Territory education authority closes within three months of the execution of the agreement for Drought Assistance for Schools funding between the Commonwealth of Australia, as represented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and that State or Territory.

If any funded schools close within three months of the execution of the Drought Assistance for Schools agreement, funding in respect of that school must be repaid to DEEWR.

Non-Government School

Funding may not be paid for a non-government school which closes within three months of the execution of the agreement for Drought Assistance for Schools funding between the Commonwealth of Australia, as represented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and either the relevant non-government education authority (if the school is systemic) or the individual school (if the school is non-systemic).

If any funded schools close within three months of the execution of the Drought Assistance for Schools agreement, funding in respect of that school must be repaid to DEEWR.

Do schools need to apply?

Government School

Schools do not need to apply for funding under the program. Eligible government schools will be included in a funding agreement between the State/Territory education authority and the Commonwealth. The State/Territory education authority will then disburse funding to eligible schools.

Non-Government School

Schools do not need to apply for funding under the program. Eligible non-government systemic schools will be included in a funding agreement between the relevant non-government education authority and the Commonwealth. The non-government education authority will then disburse funding to eligible schools.

Eligible non-government non-systemic schools will receive a funding agreement from the Commonwealth which the schools must enter into before funding can be provided.

How is the funding calculated?

Funding will consist of a base entitlement of \$1,000 per eligible school plus a per capita allowance of \$100 for every enrolled Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student up to a limit of \$10,000. FTE includes the full time equivalent of part time students, but does not include students receiving primary or secondary distance education. Drought Assistance payments do **NOT** include a GST component.

The number of enrolled FTE students per school is determined using the most recently available funded student enrolment data provided annually by schools as part of the annual schools census. Funding for the 2010 round is based on 2009 government schools data provided by State and Territory governments.

Funding for non-government schools for the 2010 round is based on schools census data for 2009.

What can the funds be used for?

Drought Assistance for Schools funding is provided to schools to make it easier for rural families to meet ongoing education expenses and the cost of educational activities such as student excursions which may be cost prohibitive for families experiencing financial hardship as a result of the drought. Drought Assistance may be used to assist with the cost of items such as:

- Text Books;
- Uniforms;
- Subject levies;
- Excursions;
- Student attendance at extra curricular activities; and
- Other support which offers relief to drought affected families and is related to their children's schooling **other than** capital expenditure, staff salaries, utilities costs, purchase of equipment, library books, stationery and other day-to-day consumables and school maintenance costs.

How will the funds be paid?

Government School

DEEWR will provide funding to State and Territory education authorities for government schools.

In recognition of the level of hardship faced, the full amount of Drought Assistance for Schools funding should be passed on to the schools concerned.

Payments to government schools are distributed to a school by the relevant State or Territory education authority. Drought Assistance will be provided as a single payment to each school.

Schools must use the payment in the 2010 school year for the purposes listed above.

Non-Government School

DEEWR will provide funding to non-government education authorities for non-government systemic schools.

In recognition of the level of hardship faced, the full amount of Drought Assistance for Schools funding should be passed on to the schools concerned.

Payments to non-government systemic schools are distributed to a school by the relevant non-government education authority. Drought Assistance will be provided as a single payment to each school.

For non-government non-systemic schools, DEEWR will provide funding direct to individual schools.

Schools must use the payment in the 2010 school year for the purposes listed above.

How are payments acquitted?

Government School

For government schools, payment acquittal is handled by the relevant State or Territory education authority. The Commonwealth requires no action from individual government schools.

Non-Government School

For non-government systemic schools, payment acquittal is handled by the relevant non-government education authority. The Commonwealth requires no action from individual non-government systemic schools.

For non-government non-systemic schools, acquittal is performed via a Statutory Declaration provided to recipient schools by DEEWR.

How will we deal with your Personal Information?

The Privacy Act 1988

The Department is bound, in administering the Drought Assistance for Schools program, by the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988. Section 14 of the Privacy Act contains the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) which prescribe the rules for handling personal information.

Persons, bodies and organisations who contract with DEEWR under the Drought Assistance program must abide by the IPPs and the Privacy Act when handling personal information collected for the purposes of that scheme/program. In brief, these persons, bodies and organisations must ensure that:

- personal information is collected in accordance with IPPs 1-3;
- suitable storage arrangements, including appropriate filing procedures are in place;
- suitable security arrangements exist for all records containing personal information;
- access to a person's own personal information held by the organisation is made available to the person at no charge;
- records are accurate, up-to-date, complete and not misleading;
- where a record is found to be inaccurate, the correction is made;
- where a person requests that a record be amended because it is inaccurate but the record is found to be accurate, the details of the request for amendment are noted on the record;
- the personal information is only to be used for the purposes for which it was collected, or for other purposes where expressly allowed by IPP 10; and
- personal information is only disclosed in accordance with IPP 11.

Privacy Notice

Any information collected from you in connection with the Drought Assistance for Schools program will be used in order to administer the program.

The information collected may be passed to officers of DEEWR. In other instances, information collected in connection with the program can be disclosed without your consent where authorised or required by law.

Privacy Complaints and Advice

Complaints about breaches of privacy should be referred to the Privacy Contact Officer in the Legal, Investigations and Procurement (LIP) Group in the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Privacy complaints can be made directly to the Federal Privacy Commissioner, however the Federal Privacy Commissioner prefers that the Department be given an opportunity to deal with the complaint in the first instance.

How may your information held by us be affected by Freedom of Information requirements?

All documents created or held by the Department with regard to the Drought Assistance for Schools program are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 ("FOI Act"). The FOI Act provides a general right of access to documents in the possession of the Department, subject to certain exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of the essential public interests and the private and business affairs of those of whom the information is collected.

All FOI requests must be immediately referred to:
The FOI Coordinator
Administrative Law Branch
Legal, Investigations and Procurement Group
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9879
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FOI requests must be forwarded as soon as they are received, as there are strict statutory timelines that apply to processing FOI requests. Decisions regarding requests for access will be made by the authorised FOI decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

Further Information

Further information about Drought Assistance for Schools can be obtained from the DEEWR Contact Centre on telephone number 1300 363 079.