



Rural
Assistance
Authority

NSW Government's Special Disaster Grants - Southern NSW Storms & Floods (5 January 2022 onwards) *Case Study Grape Growers*

Mr and Mrs Williams are grape growers.

A severe hailstorm in January 2022 caused considerable damage to their property.

Following the storm, Mr and Mrs Williams found that many of their vines had sustained damage and some could not be salvaged. They also discovered that grapes had been ruined or were dropping from the vines prematurely. Trellises had also been damaged by strong winds and substantial clean-up was required to get their vineyard back in working order.

Mr and Mrs Williams lodged an application for a \$50,000 Special Disaster Grant from the NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA).

Their application was approved as they met all eligibility criteria listed in the guidelines.

Although their 2021 income tax returns showed their combined off-farm income was higher than their on-farm income due to some health issues, they visited their local Rural Financial Counsellor, who, working with the RAA assessors, went back to their previous tax returns to demonstrate they met this criteria in normal seasonal conditions.

Mr and Mrs Williams were paid the initial \$10,000 immediately, without the need to provide quotes, invoices or proof of purchase.

The couple were hard at work shortly after the hailstorm cleaning up some of the damage. They also reassigned a couple of their employees to this clean-up work.

Under the current guidelines, these labour costs aren't eligible. This is because there are other employee assistance schemes for natural disasters – for example the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment and the Disaster Recovery Allowance.

The couple also spent the \$10,000 engaging casual employees to help clean up fruit that had dropped, pruning and removing trellises and vines that were damaged beyond repair.

They also began repairing damage to trellises and purchased new vines to replace those that could not be salvaged. They were able to claim all the materials as well as some diesel costs to run machinery to undertake the repair work.

Due to the impacts of the hailstorm they also needed to complete additional fungicide spraying to help restore vines to their pre-disaster condition.

As Mr and Mrs Williams had spent more than the initial \$10,000, they could lodge additional claims to cover eligible expenses, up to the maximum \$50,000.

They provided invoices and proof of purchase for:

- Casual employee wages above their normal wage expenditure;
- Contractors;
- Materials required to restore and repair trellises;
- Replacement vines; and
- Fungicide spray or other inputs required to restore vines to their pre-disaster condition.
- Diesel for machinery

The documentation they provided was validated by the RAA and came to a total of \$53,500.

Mr and Mrs Williams were reimbursed for the remaining \$40,000 of their eligible expenses.

View the list of eligibility criteria at www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance.