



COONAMBLE AND BOURKE FLOODS DECLARED NATURAL DISASTERS

Monday 4 January, 2010

Premier Kristina Keneally today announced that a natural disaster declaration has been made for the Bourke and Coonamble local government areas.

Rain falls of up to 100mm were recorded in some areas, as at 9am Saturday.

“Last week I visited flood-affected areas in western and north western NSW with Minister for Emergency Services, Steve Whan,” Ms Keneally said.

“Since Christmas, State Emergency Services and other agencies have been on the ground assisting with fixing roofs, transportation, food drops, and animal relocation.

“The flooding situation has now progressively worsened in some areas.

“The State Emergency Service yesterday issued an evacuation order for 400 residents living in low-lying areas of Coonamble.

“Last night, that flood evacuation order was upgraded to nearly 1000 residents being told to evacuate by 10.30pm.

“Emergency services personnel assisted residents with their evacuation.”

Several actions took place as a result of the Coonamble and Bourke evacuation order:

- The Department of Human Services has established an Evacuation Centre at Coonamble Bowling Club in Aberford St, to assist evacuated people to find temporary accommodation and other assistance.
- Police have started patrols of vacant properties in the affected areas.
- The Livestock Health and Pest Authority have been made available to assist people concerned about their pets. Pets can be delivered to the Showground.

“The Natural disaster assistance measures have now been extended to people who have suffered property damage in Coonamble and Bourke,” Ms Keneally said.

“That will provide much needed longer-term help to residents, primary producers, business owners and councils. It will help them to rebuild.

“The measures make available loans for primary producers of up to \$130,000 with a two-year interest and repayment free period and stock transport freight cash subsidies.”

Minister for Primary Industries and Emergency Services, Steve Whan, again congratulated the State Emergency Service (SES) for their work over the past week.

“The State Emergency Service and other agencies working throughout the flood effort continue to do an outstanding job,” Mr Whan said.

“The SES has been working with staff from Infrastructure and Investment New South Wales to provide assistance to rural property owners concerned for the welfare of stock, with a fleet helicopters now in continuous use responding to requests for assistance.”

If you need emergency assistance, contact your local SES on 132 500. For life-threatening emergencies call Triple Zero.

NSW NATURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

The following Schemes are available under the NSW Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements:

* **Personal Hardship and Distress Assistance**

Community Services (formerly DoCS) can provide disaster relief grants to eligible individuals and families whose homes and essential household items have been destroyed or damaged by a natural disaster. People with limited financial resources and no insurance may be eligible for assistance for essential household items and structural repairs to the home.

Inquiries about the disaster relief grants and the eligibility criteria may be made by contacting Community Services' Disaster Recovery Centre on 1800 018 444. Website: www.community.nsw.gov.au

* **Primary Producers**

Loans of up to \$130,000 are available (subject to certain eligibility criteria), at a concessional interest rate of 2.56 per cent, for those in urgent need. These loans may be used to meet carry-on requirements and the replacement and repair of damage not covered by insurance. The NSW Rural Assistance Authority (now part of Industry & Investment NSW) administer this scheme. Inquiries should be directed to the Authority on 1800 814 647. Website: www.raa.nsw.gov.au

Transport freight subsidies of up to 50 per cent on the carriage of livestock and fodder are available to help primary producers. The maximum subsidy available is \$15,000 per annum. Inquiries should be made to the nearest Industry & Investment NSW- Primary Industries office (formerly Department of Primary Industries). The public inquiry number is 1800 814 593. Website: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

* **Small Businesses**

Loans of up to \$130,000 are available at a concessional rate of 2.56 per cent to small businesses affected by disasters and which meet certain eligibility criteria. This finance is available to those unable to obtain assistance through normal channels.

The NSW Rural Assistance Authority (now part of Industry & Investment NSW) administer this scheme. Inquiries should be directed to the Authority on 1800 678 593. Website: www.raa.nsw.gov.au

* **Assistance for Councils**

Grants are available to meet the additional costs of emergency work to restore essential services, including the provision of emergency levee banks, which are in excess of normal operations.

Grants are available to meet 100 per cent of eligible emergency works and 75 per cent of eligible restorations works up to \$116,000 with 100 per cent cost recovery beyond that level. The Department of Services, Technology and Administration (formerly Department of Commerce) administers this assistance. The contact person is Neil Birks (02) 9372 8871.

Grants are available to help Councils to permanently restore roads and bridges to pre-disaster standards. These grants meet 75 per cent of the first \$116,000 expenditure and 100 per cent beyond that level. This assistance is administered by the Roads and Traffic Authority. The contact person is Richard Woodburn on (02) 8588 5660. Website: www.raa.nsw.gov.au

* **Trustees of Parks and Reserves**

Provided the facilities concerned constitute "public assets", grants may be made available to those parties (e.g. trustees) responsible for managing Crown Land, parks and reserves, who do not have the financial capacity to meet restoration costs from their own resources. Land and Property Information Authority administers this scheme. The contact person is John Burton on (02) 8236 7082. Website: www.lands.nsw.gov.au

* **Sporting Clubs**

A special scheme is available to assist sporting clubs in meeting the costs of restoration of essential club facilities that have been damaged or destroyed. The assistance is made available to those clubs which do not have the financial capacity to meet restoration costs from their own resources, but which have the capacity to repay any loan that may be granted.

Under these arrangements the maximum assistance available is \$12,000, including a grant of up to \$2,000 and the balance by way of repayable advance with interest at the rate of 2.56 per cent per annum. Treasury administers this scheme. The contact person is Brian Lin on (02) 9228 5198.

This finance is available to those unable to obtain assistance through normal channels.

* **Churches and Voluntary Non-profit Organisations**

Loan assistance is available to churches and voluntary non-profit organisations for the restoration of essential facilities that have been damaged or destroyed. Eligible groups will usually perform a service for the community or environment and are funded by grants or donations.

Non-profit organisations that perform a commercial function, charge a fee for a service or represent commercial or industrial groups, e.g. industry bodies are not eligible for assistance. These organisations can recover costs from their members or through fees.

As with other schemes, assistance is only available to those organisations which do not have the financial capacity to meet restoration costs from their own resources, insurance and are unable to obtain assistance through normal channels.

Advances are subject to a maximum of \$25,000 at 2.56 per cent interest per annum. Treasury administers this scheme. The contact person is Brian Lin on (02) 9228 5198.

* **Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Arrangements**

The above Schemes are eligible for Australian Government financial assistance, usually by way of partial reimbursement of actual expenditure, under Australian Government Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. Under the cost sharing formula, NSW pays for the first \$111.1 million of natural disaster costs each year, and can claim from the Australian Government half of all eligible Personal Hardship and Distress costs within this first threshold. The Australian Government then matches NSW expenditure for costs between \$111.1 million, and \$194.4 million and beyond that covers three quarters of all costs.