



Minister Steve Whan
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Rural Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 7 January 2010

Gilgandra and Walgett flooding declared natural disasters

Minister for Emergency Services Steve Whan has declared flooding in Gilgandra and Walgett Local Government areas as a natural disaster following broader flooding in parts of the north west of New South Wales over the past fortnight.

“The declaration means that a range of people in the Gilgandra and Walgett local government areas who suffered property damage, including residents, primary producers, business owners and councils will be able to seek assistance,” Mr Whan said.

“The natural disaster declaration already covers the Bourke, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Narrabri, Tamworth, Warrumbungle and Warren local government areas.

“In particular the Natural Disaster Declaration will assist the Gilgandra and Walgett Shire Councils with the cost of repairing serious damage caused by floodwaters and heavy rain with preliminary estimates for damage to infrastructure in the Shires exceeding \$1 million.”

These regions have borne the brunt of heavy rain, with widespread falls over the Christmas and New Year period.

“The Keneally Government stands ready to provide these communities with the assistance they need and I am aware that local recovery processes are already well underway.”

Mr Whan congratulated the SES for their work in responding to the floods that have affected many parts of the State over the past fortnight and said it was now time for communities to get through the mop up and get back on their feet.

“The State Emergency Service alongside all agencies working throughout the flood effort have done a fantastic job,

“Local emergency management committees are now meeting to look at appropriate emergency recovery arrangements,” Mr Whan said.

“The State Emergency Operations Controller – Deputy Police Commissioner Dave Owens - and State Emergency Recovery Controller – Mr Stacey Tannos are overseeing the process to help us understand the true extent of damage.”

“Once assessments are complete and locals have met to discuss their own recovery needs the State Government will be able to determine any overall coordination required.”

“These new emergency recovery arrangements introduced by this Government have streamlined our existing mechanisms for providing support to communities battered by disaster, and have already been well practised following natural disasters last year.”

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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 678 593. 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.rta.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.