



BREWARRINA AND NARRABRI DECLARED NATURAL DISASTER AREAS

Thursday, 31 December 2009

Premier Kristina Keneally today said the State Government has declared the areas of Brewarrina and Narrabri natural disaster areas allowing financial assistance to get to flood affected communities.

Yesterday, Ms Keneally visited flood-affected areas in western and north western NSW with Emergency Services Minister Steve Whan and SES Commissioner Murray Kear.

This first natural disaster declaration will cover the Brewarrina and Narrabri local government areas and enables people who suffered property damage - including residents, primary producers, business owners and councils - to seek financial assistance from the NSW Government.

"These regions have borne the brunt of heavy rain, with widespread falls of more than 150 mm since Christmas Eve," Ms Keneally said.

"There is a range of assistance available, including loans for primary producers of up to \$130,000 with a two-year interest and repayment free period. Stock transport freight subsidies will also be available.

"These natural disaster declarations may be extended to other areas affected by flooding once more detailed assessments are submitted by local councils.

"The Government will to work closely with councils to ensure this happens as quickly as possible.

"Today's declarations will assist the Brewarrina and Narrabri Shire Councils with the cost of repairing serious damage caused by floodwaters, with preliminary estimates for damage to road infrastructure in excess of \$4.5 million."

Minister Whan congratulated the SES for their work in responding to the floods that have affected many parts of the state over the past week.

"The State Emergency Service and all other agencies working throughout the flood effort have done a fantastic job," Mr Whan said.

"The SES has been proactive in this flood event, warning communities early to prepare and ensuring that additional SES volunteers and vital resources such as floodboats, helicopters and other equipment were on standby from as early as Christmas Day."

Mr Whan appealed to people to be vigilant, with further moderate to heavy rain expected in coming days.

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 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.