

6 June 2014

Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements  
Productivity Commission  
LB2 Collins Street East  
Melbourne Vic 8003  
Via Email: [disaster.funding@pc.gov.au](mailto:disaster.funding@pc.gov.au)

Dear Commissioner

## SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to make submission to the Productivity Inquiry into Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements. The following comments are provided for consideration by the Commission.

The discussion paper clearly articulates the desire for reforms to the Natural Disaster Relief arrangements. These reforms clearly intend to shift the burden of recovery from natural disasters from the Federal Government to State and Local Governments, businesses, and individuals. Should this be the outcome of the review, the economic impact on the Cairns community in the event of major natural disaster could be catastrophic.

The geographic location of Cairns Regional Council (CRC) in the tropics of Far North Queensland means that the region is susceptible to natural disasters typically flooding or cyclonic events on a frequent basis.

NDRRA funding assistance received by Council for recovery from natural disaster over the last 3 years is approx. \$40 million. Shifting this cost burden directly to local community will cause considerable financial stress and hardship to businesses, individuals and the Council.

Council and the Cairns community have taken a very proactive approach to preparedness for natural disasters and we have won multiple awards for our actions including being selected by the United Nations as a First Role Model City from the Pacific Region for 'Flood Protection and Disaster Management Coordination'.

Specific actions undertaken include:

- Having appropriate planning controls in place under our planning scheme. Cairns Regional Council completed a Natural Hazards Study last year to inform the preparation of its new planning scheme and address the Queensland Government's State Planning Policy requirements to build a greater level of resilience.
- Running significant education and media campaigns
- Operating and maintaining appropriate evacuation centres
- Cooperatively working with all relevant agencies in the development of disaster response procedures.

The Cairns community has developed a very resilient attitude to recovery where following natural disasters, individuals actively clean-up and repair their own properties and willingly assist other community members in need.

During the recovery phase following events, Council works collaboratively with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to identify assets that require repair and those that should not. Council also contributes financially to the betterment of assets where appropriate. In doing so, Council adheres to Authority's guidelines and policies.

I consider that the current financial assistance arrangements are appropriate for the Cairns community. However, there are numerous administrative and guideline clarification matters that could be addressed to improve matters. These items are well articulated in the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils' submission.

Council also supports the submission presented by the Local Government Association of Qld which outlines the case on behalf of all Qld Councils and I highlight a number of items from that submission for consideration.

- Support exists for the current trigger point for Councils under NDRRA
- There is strong support for the concept of betterment when it comes to repair/replacement of damaged assets.
- That the insurance coverage of local government roads is not a viable cost effective option
- That the value for money trial, for the use of day labour, should be adopted permanently
- Enhanced and ongoing funding programs are necessary for councils to undertake mitigation programs

Yours sincerely

Peter Tabulo  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER