



bega valley
shire council

21 October 2014

PO Box 492, Bega NSW 2550
P. (02) 6499 2222
F. (02) 6499 2200
E. council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au

ABN. 26 987 935 332
DX. 4904 Bega

Natural Disaster Funding Inquiry
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2
Collins St East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Dear Commissioners

Re: Draft report of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Natural Disaster Funding

Bega Valley Shire Council on the far south coast of NSW is a large coastal council that has experienced impacts from floods, storms, cyclones and bush fires over the past four decades. These have impacted the community, business, the environment and infrastructure. Most recently we experienced significant flood damage in three consecutive years which isolated community members, and required considerable immediate response, and recovery and dedicated infrastructure program to rebuild roads and bridges. The Shire is also 75% national parks and state forests and we have been lucky to suffer only one significant bushfire in the last five years. Storm surge damage linked to rain events is a continual issue for local infrastructure, community and particularly aquaculture businesses.

Whilst Council has undertaken flood planning and extensive asset management planning and developed lake opening protocols for our intermittently closing and opening lakes (ICOLs) to minimise property and business impacts we do not have the financial capacity with a small rate base to address the damage caused by such events without support from the State. Without this support the response works would have been carried out at the cost of critical other planned works. Doing critical disaster caused works without outside funding would potentially push planned works out years.

We do not have the capacity or resources to contribute further than we already do to pre planning and mitigation works without funding to assist with this work. The current focus of our long term asset and financial planning has been aimed at addressing backlogs and we support the allocation of additional funding for pre disaster mitigation and planning.

As a planning authority we have been developing sea level rise data to inform planning decisions and work closely with research bodies, government agencies and others to ensure this is as accurate as possible. However a challenge for us has been resourcing and funding this work even with grants and looking to the future funding for local research and potential impact assessment will be critical. Obviously a case by case assessment will be necessary to ensure planning is well informed.

As an active member of National Sea Change Taskforce we support the focus of that organisations submission to this inquiry. Specifically the recommendations contained in their submission:

- providing a focus on resilience
- institutional arrangements
- developing a resilience plan
- consistent land use planning policies; and
- more stringent building codes

Clearly to achieve this there will need to be intergovernmental agreements defining the roles and responsibilities of each tier of government in natural disaster policy development, planning and fusing and a disaster resilience plan guiding asset planning for local government, specific land use planning policies and building codes.

We would support the recommendation that annual mitigation expenditure be increased in line with the above planning focus but only after this is established and implemented should there be any move to reduce funding for relief and recovery.

Yours sincerely

Cr Michael Britten
Mayor