



## **Submission to the Productivity Commission Enquiry into Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements**

The Southern Councils Group (SCG) is the peak organisation representing Local Government in the Illawarra and South Coast regions. Member Councils include Bega Valley Shire, Kiama Municipal, Shellharbour City, Shoalhaven City, Wingecarribee Shire and Wollongong City Councils.

SCG welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the above enquiry. At its meeting held 18 July 2014, SCG held a Forum where the Productivity Commission Enquiry was discussed in the context of local government's role in coastal management, mitigation of the impacts of climate change and increasing hazard events, and rapidly increasing population and infrastructure development along the coast.

Delegates from the coastal Councils of SCG expressed significant concern that there should be any suggestion of a reduction in assistance to Local Government, through whatever measures are implemented in the review of the current funding arrangements.

The importance to Local Government of the funding for cannot be understated. Local Government is the level of government responsible for the vast majority of public assets, in particular roads, and has the least available resources to be able to accommodate the impacts of natural disaster and the implementation of mitigation measures.

SCG expressed tacit support for the approach proposed to the Enquiry by the Sea Change Taskforce.

In addition, member Councils have in some instances made individual responses based on their own considerable experience and SCG would lend its support to these submissions. For the most part, these argue that the increasing complexity for local government associated with the NDRAA and NPANDR is working against the outcomes sought, adding unnecessary bureaucratic costs, delaying response times and imposing further hardship and expense on local communities, and preventing betterment which is in itself a form of mitigation.

SCG would like to see recognition of the intrinsic role local government plays in disaster management through a direct funding model, careful phasing of any changes to the mitigation versus relief model, and equitable definitions and thresholds for assessment of disaster relief needs.

Southern Councils Group

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