

Question on Notice
No. 1857
Asked on 26 November 2008

Mr Copeland asked the Premier (MS BLIGH) -

QUESTION:

What assistance is available to landholders or councils who have sustained damage such as burst dams as a result of recent heavy rains on the Darling Downs and other areas of Queensland?

ANSWER:

As the Honourable Member will recall, I provided advice to him about these matters on 27 November 2008.

In response to the storms and associated flooding of 16-22 November 2008, my Government distributed a comprehensive financial assistance package to support affected individuals and families with the recovery process.

An emergency assistance grant was available to individuals and families who needed financial assistance to meet their basic needs – such as food, clothing, accommodation and medical supplies – in the first few days after the disaster. This grant consisted of a once-off, non-means tested payment of \$165 per adult and up to \$765 for a family of five or more. Applicants were required to provide suitable personal identification and complete an Emergent Assistance Grant Application Form.

An Essential Household Contents Grant was available to individuals and families to contribute to the replacement or repair of essential household contents such as mattresses, linen and white goods that had been damaged or destroyed by the storms and who had not been insured for this type of disaster. This grant was means tested and had set limits for particular items up to a maximum of \$1,635 for individuals and \$4,910 for couples and families.

Financial assistance by way of a Structural Assistance Grant was also available to assist with the repair of uninsured owner/occupied residences to bring them to a secure and habitable standard. The premises were required to be the owner's sole place of residence and the grant was asset and income tested to ensure the support was targeted at those who needed it most. The grant provided assistance of up to \$10,100 for individuals and \$13,600 for families.

In addition to these packages available through the Department of Communities, an Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment was available. Those eligible were able to receive a one off payment of \$1,000 for adults and \$400 for each child to help relieve hardship.

Local Government areas that were formally defined by the Minister for Emergency Services for receipt of Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements relief measures were Brisbane City Council, Somerset Regional Council, Moreton Bay

Regional Council, Logan City Council, Scenic Rim Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Ipswich City Council, Toowoomba Regional Council, Gold Coast City Council, Southern Downs Regional Council, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Dalby Regional Council and Central Highlands Regional Council.

Under the Restoration of Essential Public Assets provisions local governments are able to obtain financial assistance for the restoration of essential public assets such as repair of dams for the supply of potable water to the community.

Eligible primary producers may still apply for Individual Disaster Stricken Property Status through the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. If successful, this would allow them access to concessional loans of up to \$250,000 and freight subsidies of up to \$5,000. Depending on the circumstances of the disaster event freight subsidies could apply to the movement of items such as building materials, water, fuel, fodder, machinery and equipment.

A \$1M funding package to sport and recreation clubs to assist with recovery from damage to playing fields, clubhouses or other property has also been made available by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation. Funding guidelines for applicants can be obtained by telephoning 1300 656 191.

In addition to these assistance packages, on 18 November 2008 I launched the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal. The general public and business community have responded generously to the appeal and as at 16 December 2008 the balance is over \$1.64M. The Australian Red Cross Queensland has kindly agreed to disburse the donated funds on behalf of the Government with applications to access this funding closing on 9 January 2009.

While these financial assistance packages are not designed to replace insurance, and I remind anybody affected by the storms and flooding to make contact with their insurer, they acknowledge that many people require emergent assistance aimed at helping with the immediate and short term costs of purchasing food, clothing, accommodation and medical supplies.

In the wake of the storms and associated flooding of 16-22 November 2008, people seeking assistance were also able to visit one of our Community Recovery Centres. The last of these centres closed on 17 December 2008, but during their operation they provided a one stop shop approach where disaster affected people were able to gather information on insurance and rebuilding, practical and material goods assistance, as well as emotional support and financial assistance. Organisations at the centres included local governments, Department of Communities, Building Services Authority, Lifeline, Centrelink, Red Cross and insurance companies.

Smart Services Queensland also provided a range of services to support affected community members both during and after the severe storms through their 24 hour SES hotline 132 500.

Any persons affected by the storms and associated flooding and still requiring information can continue to contact the Department of Communities on 1800 173 349.