

Question on Notice

No. 824

Asked on 19 November 2013

MR KATTER asked the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience (MR CRISAFULLI) –

QUESTION:

As the current policy for local government authorities cannot currently use local staff as day labour for emergent works, is it possible to either change this policy, or to enable local government to set up a commercial arm so that they can use local staff?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Mount Isa for his question.

The current policy the Honourable Member refers to is the Commonwealth Government's *Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements Determination*. Under the Determination, local government authorities are able to use their own day labour for emergent works, but the costs are not eligible for reimbursement from the State and Commonwealth Governments under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

Emergent works are basically clean-up and recovery works that occur in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. It is understood that the Commonwealth Government reasons it is standard business of local government authorities to conduct these activities. Under the Determination, additional costs aside from standard staff hours, such as overtime or contractor costs, are eligible for reimbursement.

It was to our Deputy Premier's credit that one of his first acts as minister responsible for reconstruction in 2012 was to petition the Commonwealth Government for a better deal for councils to allow them to use day labour for reconstruction works.

In June 2012, the Commonwealth Government approved the Day Labour Trial for 2010 and 2011 works only. The Queensland Government knew that just wasn't good enough and we successfully negotiated with the Commonwealth Government this year to extend the Day Labour Trial to include reconstruction work from the 2013 events.

This not only makes sense for councils delivering on the ground, it makes sense for taxpayers because it is estimated that the use of day labour for council reconstruction will save the State and Commonwealth Governments more than \$120 million.

It's inconsistent and nonsensical that the Day Labour Trial does not cover reconstruction works from the 2012 disaster events. I've written to the Commonwealth Government asking that they include 2012 reconstruction works under the Day Labour Trial. It is practical and cost effective, and allows councils to get on with the job.