

PRESS RELEASE



Country Mayors Association of NEW SOUTH WALES Inc.

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Country Mayors' calls for help to recover from disastrous year

The Country Mayors' Association of NSW has welcomed a Statewide Roads Emergency declaration by Local Government NSW and called on the State and Federal governments to take immediate action.

NSW Country Mayors' Association of NSW chair Ken Keith said nearly every member Council of the association had experienced floods and had a disaster declaration over the past 12 months.

"The situation is unprecedented in New South Wales," Cr Keith said.

"Across the state, all of our members have suffered floods – in some cases, over and over again. Our hearts go out to Wagga Wagga and Forbes, to Wee Waa and Gunnedah, to Moama and Bourke – to all the places that are currently battling flood events. There have been more than 220 natural disaster areas declared across NSW this year.

"We are pleading with the NSW Premier and the Prime Minister, with all of our State and Federal representatives, to recognise that New South Wales needs help. The very heart of our food and fibre country, the home of so many of our goods and services, is battling.

"Our country areas have come through the trials of drought and pandemic, only to be faced with another natural disaster. Our primary producers, our communities, our businesses, our families – all of them across so many impacted areas are unable to do this on their own.

"We need help. We do appreciate the Hon Sam Farraway, Minister for Regional Transport's \$50 million "Pothole package" to local Councils, however we need help to restore roads and infrastructure that has been damaged by floodwater again and again. We need help for our farmers who have managed to salvage crops and livestock to get their goods and their products to market. We need help to restore our communities to a level of confidence in our economic and social wellbeing."

As part of the Statewide Roads Emergency, LGNSW is calling for:

- An acceleration and significant increase in funding for the \$1.1 billion Fixing Local Roads and Fixing Country Bridges program
- A boost to Road Block Grant funding to compensate for the damage to the regional road network
- New funding to provide councils with plant machinery and skilled workers to expedite road repairs.

Cr Keith said the Shires that had faced natural disasters owed a vote of thanks to the many volunteers and community members in the SES and other groups who had stepped up to defend their communities.

“So many good people across New South Wales have ensured the safety of their communities,” he said. “They have come to the rescue of people in emergency situations, they have provided accommodation, food, clothing and, sometimes, a cup of tea or a shoulder to cry on. Thank you.”

Cr Keith said it was now time for our leaders, both Federal and State to lead New South Wales through this difficult year, and to offer bipartisan support to help not only disaster-impacted communities, but all Australians who depend on these areas in so many ways.

End

For further information please contact Cr Ken Keith OAM 0428 669 482