



Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Submission to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding

Response ID: IRCDF_1359_108

Consent option: Publish with name

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Q1. What experience have you had with Commonwealth disaster funding support?

CDRC manages approximately 1700km and these are often the last link of the transport network. Taking a lessons learnt perspective or observation from the recent weather event and current roads funding, Council would like to highlight the following:

The following main access/connector roads for our communities which are occasionally cut off after rain events are:

- Nyirripi Road
- Nturiya road (next to Ti Tree community does not have access to essential services such as schools, Police or clinics and Ti Tree community is the closest centre to access these services)
- Engawala main access road
- Yuelamu main access road
- Willowra road (to the community and the Conniston area is set for Heritage listing if successful this will be a significant milestone for sharing aboriginal history for the area and the likelihood of increased tourism to visit the massacre site in the near future)

Other minor roads of significance are airstrip access roads (less than 2km) which get cut-off due to floods and the following are key for Council:

- Nyirripi airstrip access road
- Yuelamu airstrip access road and
- Engawala airstrip access road.

Airstrip roads are critical as these roads are usually the only remaining link to emergency services when our community main access roads become impassable. In some instances our airstrips were still accessible but the airstrip road was not and this meant that the community became an isolated community due to that issue. Separate funding needs to be explored specific to airstrip road access so that they are formed, resheeted or improved to reduce the instances of community isolation and these roads are usually 1-2km in length.





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Q2. How could Commonwealth funding support communities to reduce their disaster risk?

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The biggest challenge faced by Council is the length of time it takes to process disaster recovery funding and there are contributory factors from all sides of the fence which include lack of adequate evidence to support the claim, complexity of claim, staffing and availability of contractors to support DIPL in the process. Another key aspect that would benefit Councils in the event of disaster particularly floods is:

- Review of the DRFA funding guidelines to allow for the greater modification/improvement of roads as there are roads such as the Nyirripi and Willowra road that have been claimed each 2nd year when a major weather event has occurred and millions have been spent time and time again only to conduct restorative work.
- Streamlining of the application process wrt evidence. An understanding needs to be reached that reduces the burden of evidence on Councils particularly when roads continue to deteriorate whilst approval is being sought
- Access to a pool of funds in DRFA for immediate remedial work not linked to a claim (current arrangements allow for grading and other immediate restorative work to be included in a claim. This puts Councils at risk of spending what they do not have if the claim is rejected). A consensus needs to be arrived noting that majority of NT remote unsealed, unformed roads are below an acceptable criteria and will be affected when an adverse weather event such as floods hit and a pool of funds made available to re-establish access for communities

Q3. Please describe your understanding of Commonwealth disaster funding processes.

The disaster funding process is a resilience initiative with the intent of reducing the impact of disasters on communities. It is a risk reduction approach however the biggest concern is that the programs are reactive and not proactive meaning that the funding is usually made available after an event has occurred - focus is given to incidents that have a greater population or economic impact vs those may have a greater social impact on remote community residents and our Council was unsuccessful in its recent application for the Disaster Ready Fund.

Q4. Are the funding roles of the Commonwealth, states and territories, and local government, during disaster events clear?

As mentioned above, regional and remote roads are the last link of the road network for some communities and the current formula is used to calculate the amount of grant funding disadvantages rural and remote councils with:

- * Small and declining populations
- * Limited capacity to raise revenue



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* Relative isolation

Looking at the LRCI program funding for example since Phase 1 through to the current Phase 4 it has favoured councils with highly developed road networks and discriminated against those, which are not able to develop their roads adequately. Adjustments need to be made to the formula to recognise the increased costs that arise from the type of road (generally unsealed), terrain, traffic, life cycle of roads and geographical isolation. Such costs include attracting staff/contractors to remote areas, travel and the supply of necessary construction and maintenance materials. With the frequency of severe weather, events in the Northern Territory adjustments need made for rainfall incidence on a council's road network.

Population is also a key driver of the LRCI funding distribution formula however, a remote/regional council's ability to fund the delivery of services to their community based solely on population has changed drastically. Recent trends indicate that regional/remote councils' population are generally declining and despite the reducing population, these councils are becoming the provider of last resort for a range of services, particularly roads, airstrips and waste management. Regional and remote communities have limited access to road infrastructure. This not only impedes the mobility of residents, but also limits their access to health, education and economic opportunities. Improved regional/remote infrastructure specifically roads, is key to community development. It is a crucial pathway to closing the gap and poverty alleviation as it provides access to safe mobility and connectivity.

Regional/remote councils have significant financial responsibility for the sizeable networks of local roads/infrastructure and diminishing own source revenue resources to fund projects.

CDP is an opportunity to create a rural workforce that can work on roads however there needs to be an investment to support regional councils to establish road civil crews particularly with respect to equipment acquisition, training and access to competitive work to generate own source revenue e.g. road grading work from DIPL. For consideration as well is for DIPL to consider working on a program to handover some roads (at an agreed standard) to Councils which will increase Councils FAGs and capacity of work for their road crews.

Q5. Is there any further information you would like to provide?

Nil

