



CENTRAL DARLING SHIRE COUNCIL

5 August 2024

Welcoming approval of Natural Disaster Declaration Assistance

In a very welcome result, a storm event in the Shire which caused \$1.3 million in damages, earlier this year, has been declared eligible for support under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The storm was originally deemed not eligible for Natural Disaster Declaration assistance. However, after Council lobbied for a review, the good news has been received.

Council has received formal notification that the Natural Disaster Declaration for the Central Darling storm event on 5-6 February has been approved.

The storm impacted roads and community infrastructure. Council to date, has spent \$861,113 on remedial works, exceeding the \$250k Natural Disaster Assessment threshold. The storm event impacted the northern areas of the shire, including the town of White Cliffs. While most of the damage was to unsealed roads, White Cliffs Golf Course incurred significant soil erosion becoming unusable. The loss of this social amenity to the White Cliffs community has been devastating, as this community is already impacted by trauma from other events well beyond their control.

After the initial application for assistance was rejected, in May the Council Administrator, Bob Stewart, wrote to the National Emergency Management Agency Coordinator-General asking for an urgent review of the Natural Disaster Declaration guidelines. Mr Stewart said it was vital that the criteria requiring rural remote councils to demonstrate a coordinated multi-agency response be removed to allow for Natural Disaster Assistance to be fairly available to all councils.

It would have been a major blow to Council's budget if the original rejection of the application had not been reversed. The Natural Disaster Declaration means Council will be able to recover the cost in repairing affected roads in the northern area of the shire and undertake repairs to the White Cliffs golf course. The recovery of the costs to repair Council roads through the Natural Disaster Declaration will greatly benefit Council's financial position. It means Council will not have to shift limited funds from non-storm affected road maintenance activities to storm damage repairs, which was something that was a very real fear before the assistance was approved.

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements is a jointly funded program between the Australian Government and state and territory (state) governments.

The Council Administrator has written to National Emergency Management Agency and NSW Reconstruction Authority personally thanking them for the assistance in obtaining approval for Central Darling Shire Council's application. The outcome will make an enormous difference for residents in the Shire.

Ends

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