

**SUPPORT FOR DROUGHT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Organisation: Northern Beaches Council

Date Received: 27 November 2019



Michael Regan
Mayor

Mr Justin Clancy MP
The Chair, Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment
Industry and Regional Development
Email: investmentindustry@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Our Ref: 2019/666168

Dear Mr Clancy

Submission - Inquiry into support for drought affected communities in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important issue. The ability of a local, urban council, such as Northern Beaches Council, to have significant impact on such a severe drought is limited, as this requires National and State-wide responses. However, we believe that a simple and effective way of mutually improving all communities, in some small way, is to look into building relationships, which provide support, understanding, resources, respect, experiences and skill sharing for everyone involved.

Northern Beaches Council has long standing Sister City or Friendship relationships with two small country towns managed by Brewarrina and Gunnedah Shire Councils. This relationship has had amazing mutual benefits, more so during this time of severe drought and hardship, where we are in a position to assist our rural friends.

These relationships have seen a shared benefit for all parties involved. An annual Youth Exchange takes place with Brewarrina, allowing country and indigenous young people to experience the city and beaches for a week, and our urban, coastal young people to have a remarkable experience of the bush, indigenous and rural life. Staff exchanges, staffing assistance during flood, sports exchanges and donations of sporting goods and library books have also taken place over the years.

It has been a revelation for our Northern Beaches young people to go out to the bush and experience the ravages of the ongoing drought and both the beauty and hardships of country life – even for a short period. This has led to greater understanding, respect and admiration for their rural cousins, and their toughness and tenacity in such hardship. Following the exchanges, many of the young people have maintained long-term friendships with their country friends, and encouraged their families to take holidays out in the bush.

Northern Beaches Council supports the long running, annual Bush to Beach Program organised by South Narrabeen Surf Club. This sees up to 40 indigenous children from the Brewarrina region visit the Northern Beaches, at a time when summer temperatures in Brewarrina can be in the 40's.

Additional support has been provided with Councillor initiatives which saw funds allocated to Gunnedah and Brewarrina for a Community Scholarship Fund and Youth Centre programs. Council was involved in gathering party clothing for rural High School

formals, a drought relief fundraising skate day and a Council sponsored 'Bush to Beach Drought Relief Rugby Gala Day'. Northern Beaches Council is currently considering how to further support suicide prevention strategies in Brewarrina, following our own local initiatives.

Northern Beaches Council has acted on several Councillor Notices of Motion dealing with the ongoing drought and rural issues over the past year. These include;

September 2018 - Assistance for Youth Programs in Drought Affected Communities

That Council allocate \$2,000 to each of Gunnedah and Brewarrina Councils to aid in their scholarship and youth programs in recognition of the severe hardship being caused by the intense and extended drought affecting the State.

September 2018 - Drought Assistance to a regional NSW Council

That staff prepares a brief report to the November Council meeting examining opportunities how Northern Beaches Council or the local community can provide assistance in kind to an appropriate regional NSW Council which currently has its Local Government Area / community impacted by the devastating drought which is gripping the nation.

March 2019 - Supporting Rural Communities in Drought

That Council:

- A. Continue to work with our existing rural Sister City councils Brewarrina and Gunnedah, to identify projects that will have benefits for all councils and communities involved, within current resources.***
- B. Identify grant opportunities that might assist in activating proposals which require additional resources.***

August 2019 - Suicide Prevention Initiatives

That Council:

- A. Sadly notes, suicide rates continue to rise on the Northern Beaches and in our sister city of Brewarrina.***
- B. In an effort to provide meaningful assistance to our sister city, Brewarrina, requests Council staff furnish a report within the next three months:***
 - a. Investigating Northern Beaches Council funding up to two Indigenous Leaders from Brewarrina and surrounds to attend next year's National Suicide Prevention Conference.***
 - b. Investigating providing funding to enable the ASIST and safeTALK Program or an equivalent with an indigenous facilitator and trainer to be delivered in Brewarrina and surrounds.***
 - c. Investigate providing financial assistance to training up two Indigenous leaders in suicide prevention from Brewarrina or***

surrounds in delivering suicide prevention, intervention and postvention assistance.

- d. Investigate delivering per quarter the ASIST and safeTALK programs once per quarter on the Northern Beaches.***

Northern Beaches Council will continue to support our sister cities in drought affected areas in any way that we can. We would strongly encourage the State Government and other urban councils to consider a program of linking city and coastal councils with their rural counterparts, to experience the amazing mutual benefits we have discovered through our programs.

Should you require any further information or assistance in this matter please contact my office on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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Michael Regan
Mayor

27/11/19.