

**Submission
No 54**

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

Organisation: Coffs Harbour City Council

Date Received: 29 November 2019

COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL



Mr Justin Clancy MP
Chair
Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

29th November 2019

Dear Mr Clancy,

Coffs Harbour City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Committee on the impacts of drought on Regional NSW and identify potential government actions with a particular reference to regional businesses, economies and communities.

Council would like to take this opportunity to comment particularly on the secondary impacts of drought being felt within our regional community. Coffs Harbour is a region which is partly considered in drought by NSW Department of Primary Industries Combined Drought Indicator, with the remaining part of the LGA considered drought affected. Neighbouring areas are experiencing drought or intense drought conditions.

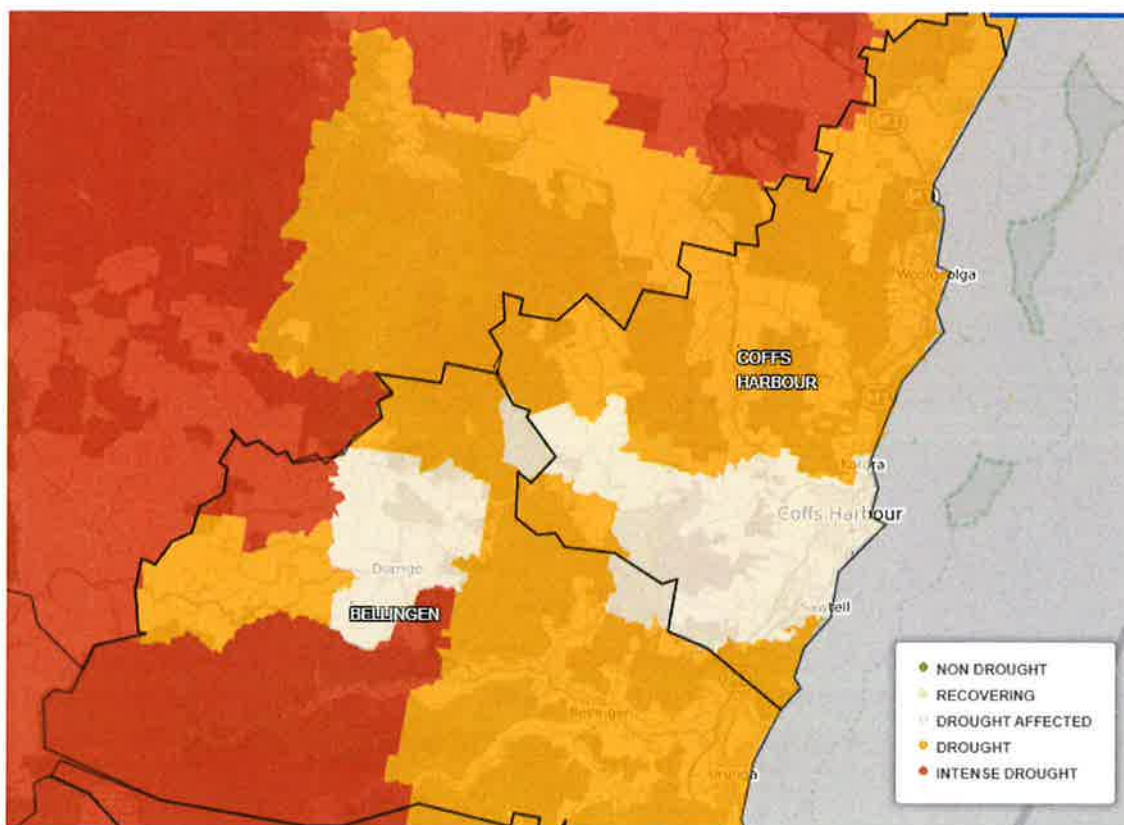


Figure 1: NSW Department of Primary Industries Drought Map

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Coffs Harbour is a region that has large dependence on tourism, retail, service provision and agriculture for its economic vitality, along with employment opportunities. The primary impacts of drought are felt across the region particularly by our agricultural producers, who for a large majority farm in the drought portion of the region. Impacts of drought for agricultural production are readily known and while not the focus of this submission, we do acknowledge the impacts that are felt by business operators in coastal destination such as ours. Primary impacts are also felt by tourism operators, particularly those who operate river activities, many of whom in our region have reduced opportunity to operate or have had to cease operation completely.

The main focus of our submission however is on the secondary impact of drought. As stated, our region is surrounded by drought and intense drought areas, many of who previously have visited the region for holidays, retail experiences and medical services. The dire impact of drought on farming communities means that these opportunities are no longer taken up, and certainly not as regularly. One of our retail shops states that 60% of her business previously has come from "across the mountain (Armidale)" and they are no longer coming.

A large portion of our tourism visitation is seen from rural areas due to the appeal of coastal, event and sporting experiences. Without adequate personal income or revenue, holidays are one of the first cuts in a household budget. This has an impact on the earning ability of industries in ours and other coastal destinations.

While we sympathise with our rural colleagues and the serious conditions they are facing, we urge you to recognise and consider the roll on impact that drought imposes on businesses, many of them small businesses, in regional areas. We would recommend that any assistance or programs offered to business owners primarily impacted by drought, be offered on a pro-rata opportunity to business that are secondarily impacted by drought.

Once again we thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic and look forward to understanding solutions that are outlined by the committee.

Regards

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area of the letter. A small, faint circular mark is visible above the top edge of the redaction.

Fiona Barden

Section Leader, Industry and Destination Development

Coffs Harbour City Council