

**Submission
No 28**

REVIEW OF THE NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY ACT 2022

Organisation: Coolamon Shire Council

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Please contact

Council Ref. Mr Tony Donoghue
Your Ref. TD:ACC:E.03-01,SC163



T: 02 6930 1800

F: 02 6927 3168

PO Box 101, Coolamon NSW 2701

E: council@coolamon.nsw.gov.au

W: www.coolamon.nsw.gov.au

ABN: 32 573 173 265

16 May 2024

The Chair

Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority
Parliament House
Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

RE: JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE - NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY

Coolamon Shire Council appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

The last five years have seen our communities face numerous and widespread disasters. These disasters have taken their toll on communities and their infrastructure.

Currently the NSW Reconstruction Authority is tasked with preparing for and recovering from Natural Disasters. The role that the Reconstruction Authority does is extremely important, but there tends to be confusion and overlapping as to roles and responsibilities when other emergency services undertake similar roles.

This Council has made numerous submissions and representations to various bodies and enquiries into the Emergency Management structure as it applies in NSW. Our concern is that the structure of funding our Emergency Services is unsustainable. The combat agencies operate independently and are funded differently and are answerable to different areas of Government. This creates duplication of services and different models of response and delivery. As an example the RFS have just been provided with flood rescue gear and a short video to train people, whilst in the building next door (in Coolamon) the SES are also provided and trained in the same emergency response requirements.

We believe there should be an overarching department of emergency services that undertake the role of co-ordinating preparedness and recovery and that within this department sits RFS, SES, VRA, FRNSW etc. that operate as combat agencies. Each of the Emergency Response Lead Agencies would then be responsible for their role in combatting the disaster. This would allow for a more streamlined budget and resourcing of this vitally important service.

The second issue is the process of, and financial recovery from disasters, with the acquittal of funding subject to haphazard, onerous and overly bureaucratic reporting requirements. We understand that the current situation means the Reconstruction Authority is responsible to Transport for NSW (TFNSW) on behalf of the State

Government in auditing this funding roll out - who are then responsible to the Federal Government through a secondary audit. This bureaucracy has built a complete lack of trust for the repair to community infrastructure when damaged as a result of disasters. This needs to be looked at as a matter of priority and realise that there must be a level of trust associated between the three tiers of Government in delivering repairs to important infrastructure.

The focus should be on repairing and paying for the damaged community assets as quickly as possible – not a debate on the minutia of the location and direction of a photograph. We have reached the point where we have willingly decided to hand back the money we were approved for repairs work, due to complexities and resource requirements to undertake the acquittal. Somehow the Queensland Government seem to be able to manages the process and simplify the repair roll out, but NSW seem to blame the Federal Government for their convoluted process.

Whilst we acknowledge that our response may wander slightly away from focusing on the Act, we believe it highlights areas of concern about Disaster Management that the NSW Reconstruction Authority should ensure the Act allow for the proper and efficient operation of both its duties and the protection of our Communities.

Thank you for your consideration and should it be considered appropriate we are willing to reinforce these issues and examples should it be needed.

Regards,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Tony Donoghue.

Tony Donoghue
General Manager