

Mayoral Media Post – 16 January 2019

Natural Disaster Declaration

Now the Walcha LGA has been declared a Natural Disaster Area we can look at what this means to those effected. Currently we carry a Category B declaration. This means that Council can apply for funding to help in their cleanup and primary producers can access concessional interest loans and transport subsidies for removal of stock off affected land (basically the same as a drought). We are currently seeking advice on whether this can be escalated to a Category C or Category D disaster. The terms "catastrophic and widespread" are used to describe these events. This means that the Federal Government, and specifically the Prime Minister must ok it as these are the categories that trigger grants for primary producers for cleanup. It must be noted that these grants, when available, apply to situations where production is severely effected and does not cover loss of production. The Lismore floods of 2017 and the Sir Ivan Bushfires near Coolah were the last disasters to fit this category. Currently we are in contact with Barnaby Joyce's Office to clarify if we are eligible for this escalation. This whole process is complex, and we need constant clarification on the application of it. The important point now is for those landholders who are affected should document and photograph before, during and after any work undertaken to remediate land. If we do get escalated the applications will be by individual landholders through the Rural Assistance Authority. I know this process does not happen quickly, but there are a lot of boxes to tick as we go. We will keep you updated as we move along this path.

Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha