



NQ Growers' plea for government to release recovery cash

Description

‘People are still suffering’ is the message from KAP Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto to Brisbane-based bureaucrats who are yet to sign off on much-needed recovery grants promised to the North Queensland growers smashed by Cyclone Niran.

The Federal Government has provided \$5 million in Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Grants, which are worth up to \$75,000 per impacted growers in the Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook, Mareeba, Tablelands and Cairns regions.

But so far producers, some of whom have had to borrow from the banks or use their cash reserves to meet the clean-up costs on their farms, have only been able to access \$25,000.

Mr Dametto called the situation a cruel governmental bungle that highlighted how far removed State and Federal bureaucrats were from those who were hurting most.

“Many of our banana and cane farmers in the North and Far North were wiped out by Cyclone Niran back in February,” he said.

“First of all, they had to fight to get fair assistance – initially they were only offered \$25,000 which barely scraped the surface with regards to clean-up and re-planting costs.

“Now four months later the additional \$50,000 they were promised is being withheld with no ability to access it.

“When it comes to disaster assistance, the State and Federal Governments like to play hand-ball and shift the blame – it’s a very disappointing state of affairs.”

Mr Dametto said dozens of North Queensland farmers were desperately waiting for the funding to become available so they could get on with their lives.

He said he would write to Queensland Deputy Premier Steven Miles and the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development Mark Furner seeking answers.

“If this is simply waiting for a tick of approval from Brisbane, then I would suggest that the State Government starts getting busy,” Mr Dametto said.

“This further highlights the bureaucratic indifference to between people based in Brisbane and those in the North.”

The Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Grants are jointly-managed by the State and Federal Governments and administered through the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority.

It’s understood Deputy Premier Steven Miles was required to initiate the additional support from the Commonwealth, who has since funded the grants.

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