

## **NEMA OPENING STATEMENT**

- Thank you Chair.
- At the outset I'd like to thank the NEMA staff for their hard work in responding to very challenging disasters.
- I'd also like to thank our Special Envoy for Disaster Recovery, Tony Sheldon for advocating for communities.
- For years, the nation's ability to respond to natural disasters was hamstrung by a Prime Minister and Cabinet that refused to take responsibility.
- The previous government ignored warnings, failed to prepare, pitted states and communities against each other and delayed and politicised recovery assistance.
- That left Australians out in the cold, left to fend for themselves before, during and after extreme weather events like floods, cyclones and bushfires.
- In contrast the Albanese Government - ably supported by its officials, different levels of governments and local communities – has spent its first 12 months building disaster resilience through better preparedness, response and recovery.
- Our second Budget continues to deliver strong investments in emergency management that will ensure a cohesive approach to natural hazard preparedness, emergency response and recovery.
- I think everyone here would be aware of the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters in every state and territory Around the country.

- In fact, close to 70 per cent of Australians were impacted by storms, floods, cyclones and bushfires in 2022 alone, signalling the urgent need to take decisive action.
- We have taken major steps to significantly enhance the country's disaster preparedness, response and resilience capability.
- In September 2022 we established the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and this year we'll start investing in projects from the Disaster Ready Fund which is worth up to \$1 billion over five years, to be matched by state, territory and local governments.
- The 2023-24 Federal Budget, builds on that important work.
- Critical, urgent upgrades to infrastructure like the Flood Warning Infrastructure Network and Public Safety Mobile Broadband have been funded in this Budget, programs the former Coalition Government left to rust.
- More than \$236 million over the next 10 years will address critical, long-standing risks in Australia's flood gauge network that the Coalition was warned of, but failed to fix.
- An investment of \$8.6 million has been made to generate a National Emergency Management Stockpile of life-saving resources.
- And two new projects to strengthen communication before and during a disaster, a National Messaging System and the Public Safety Mobile Broadband project will be delivered.
- We have also secured the future of the NEMA, providing ongoing resourcing to overcome the former Government's funding cliffs, which would have stripped NEMA's ability to protect disaster-prone communities.
- But we're not just looking to improve disaster resilience into the future.

- We are also supporting people who are hurting right now.
- In the 12 months since coming into office, this Government has paid out more than **\$2.6 billion** in programs and payments to support individuals and communities impacted by natural disasters.
- For individuals, the Government has paid around **\$1.5 billion** in Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance.
- This is money paid directly into the pockets of people doing it tough as a result of a disaster.
- We've also paid out more than **\$590 million** for projects that build community resilience through Commonwealth programs.
- By way of comparison, in the same time period following the establishment of the Emergency Response Fund, the previous Government had not spent a single cent from that Fund.
- Our signature Disaster Ready Fund will guarantee that upto \$200 million per year will go to where it is needed.
- Funding for Round 1 is on track to go out the door in early 2023-24 as planned.
- On top of this, the Australian, state and territory governments have jointly committed over **\$3.3 billion** for affected individuals and communities.
- This includes;
  - **\$667 million** in support for **primary producers**;
  - **\$684 million** for **small businesses** and **non-profit organisations**;

- In NSW, **251 offers** have been made to homeowners to purchase their homes damaged by the devastating flooding in the Northern Rivers in early 2022.
- In Queensland, **458 offers** have been made, and **362 homeowners** have accepted.
- Disaster Relief Australia – which received \$38 million in the October budget – has conducted flood recovery operations in north west Queensland.
- They have been focussing on restoring economic activity in the community, as well as debris clearance, fencing, clearing mud and stripping gyprock from houses and other infrastructure across impacted communities.
- In WA, we're working with the WA Government to facilitate access back into the Kimberley, with **interim roads almost completed**; and just last week the demolition of the Fitzroy River Bridge underway– a critical step in the rebuild of this important access route.
- In Victoria, \$1.17 billion in recovery assistance has been committed to communities impacted by the floods.
- This includes 15 key programs with over 60 recovery assistance measures, including:
  - An extraordinary clean-up package, \$30 million in personal hardship grants, temporary accommodation for people displaced, as well as personal and financial counselling for those impacted.
  - Before the last election we promised that No matter where you live, the Albanese Government will stand with you before, during and after a natural disaster.
- A year later we are delivering on that promise.

