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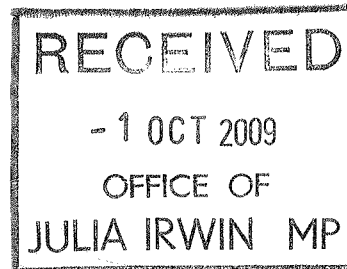
The Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
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MC09-016412

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Member for Fowler
Shop 1A, Cecil Hills Shopping Centre
Lancaster Avenue
CECIL HILLS NSW 2171



21 SEP 2009

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 25 June 2009 about the Petition tabled on 23 June 2009 regarding the availability of the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment to those people affected by the flooding in Northern New South Wales in March this year. I welcome this opportunity to respond to the Member for Cowper's Petition.

The Commonwealth Government acknowledges the distress and hardship arising from the flooding in Coffs Harbour and surrounding regions in March and April 2009.

On the part of the Commonwealth Government, the primary mechanism for responding to natural disasters is through the joint Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

The financial measures made available for this event through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements included funding for immediate hardship payments, reimbursement of essential household items and grants for repairs to homes. Concessional loans for small businesses, primary producers, and for voluntary non profit organisations, as well as road and rail freight subsidies and clean-up and recovery grants were also available to those affected by the event. Whilst the Petition does not note these Commonwealth contributions, you may be interested to know that approximately \$2.4 million has already been provided to individuals, small businesses and primary producers affected by the March floods. The Commonwealth Government provides partial reimbursement (50 or 75 cents per dollar) to the New South Wales Government for this assistance.

At a meeting between Mayor Rhoades, Mayor Troy, the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP, and myself on 19 August 2009, the Attorney-General agreed to write to the Mayors of Bellingen Shire and Coffs Harbour City. The Attorney-General sent Mayor Rhoades and Mayor Troy a letter inviting them to provide further detailed information on the people who have been adversely affected by the March floods and to identify any significant gaps in assistance or insurance coverage for consideration by the Commonwealth. To gather this information, Coffs Harbour and Bellingen Councils are undertaking a survey inviting residents of the area to provide information on how they have been impacted by the floods along with assistance they have received to date through insurance and the NDRRA.

The Attorney-General intends to have this information provided by the end of October, for the Commonwealth to then consider.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

JENNY MACKLIN MP