MEDIA RELEASE

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JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Unions call for fair disaster funding that protects Queensland communities and workers

The Services Union and The Australian Workers' Union of Employees, Queensland have welcomed elements of the Federal Government's proposed new Disaster Recovery Funding Framework but warn that any changes must not come at the expense of Queensland communities, local councils, and workers.

The proposed framework would replace the current Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) with a new 50:50 funding partnership between the Commonwealth and states and territories.

As Australia's most disaster-prone state, Queensland has historically received higher Commonwealth support through the DRFA, recognising the enormous cost of recovering across a vast, decentralised state repeatedly hit by natural disasters.

Executive President of The Services Union, Jennifer Thomas, said now was not the time to reduce Queensland's disaster recovery capacity by shifting costs onto councils already on the frontline of increasingly frequent and severe disasters.

"While we welcome measures to get funding to communities faster and cut red tape, those benefits will be undermined if the changes shift more of the recovery burden onto local councils, risking delays to rebuilding efforts and placing even greater pressure on frontline workers," Ms Thomas said.

"These are the workers rebuilding roads, restoring vital infrastructure, repairing public assets and helping communities recover after floods, cyclones and other natural disasters."

"When disaster strikes, Queenslanders expect governments to work together to get communities back on their feet as quickly as possible—not introduce funding changes that risk delaying recovery and reconstruction."

Secretary of The Australian Workers' Union of Employees, Queensland Stacey Schinnerl said as consultation with states, territories and local government continues, unions representing local government workers must have a seat at the table.

"The workers who assess damage, coordinate recovery efforts and rebuild essential public infrastructure after floods, cyclones and other disasters understand better than anyone what communities need to recover, and their expertise and voices must help shape any changes to disaster funding," Ms Schinnerl said.

"The proposed cost shifting will also translate into heightened workload pressures, resource constraints, and reduced capacity to deliver essential recovery programs, ultimately impacting workforce wellbeing and service delivery outcomes."

"The results could be slower rebuilding, delays to restoring essential infrastructure and community services, and greater pressure on local ratepayers to pick up the bill," Ms Schinnerl said.

Both unions argue that with natural disasters becoming more frequent, severe, and costly, the Commonwealth must strengthen its commitment to disaster recovery—not shift more of the burden onto local councils, workers, and communities.

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