

Questions on Notice

Mr Scot MacDonald: I am just thinking of taking back recommendations or thinking about recommendations and what the State Government can and cannot support there. Can I go to your comment about pledges of financial assistance – I am assuming from State government agencies – and you say, 'Many hours have been spent battling with Treasury, Public Works and other agencies that are involved in the assessment process to try and recover outstanding funds'. What are the blockages there?

Mr Loane: They do not. Thank you for raising it. In the heat of the moment we have Prime Ministers, Premiers, Ministers come and have a look at the fire ground and make fairly magnanimous statements; 'Get that fixed; we will pay for that', 'Put that up; we will pay for that', 'Make sure you do not miss out'.. But when you bump Treasury and try to claim those things that have been pledged and promised to you, not only to people like the mayor and me personally in the motor car when we are taking them around but at public meetings – and people have an expectation that infrastructure will be rebuilt – and then we start to try and make the recover, because we do not expend the money, out of that \$2.86 million of the cost I mentioned earlier, \$528,000 was unrecoverable for us.

Mr Scot MacDonald: Could I ask you to take this on notice? Is it possible to have a little spread sheet; pledge, realisation, gap?

Mr Loane: Absolutely.

George Souris - Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing and Minister for the Arts gave \$50,000 from tourism NSW to assist in rebuilding the tourist trade.

Barry O'Farrell - Premier, Minister for Western Sydney gave \$70,000 from Re start NSW to assist with projects to get the community back on its feet.

Andrew Stoner - Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services gave \$177,000 from Public Recreation Reserve Funding Programme (PRRFP) to improve the showground electrics. The BlazeAid camp was growing and needed technical support by way of power supply upgrades to be compliant with work cover standards.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard - offered that Council should go ahead and get the drains and all other damage fixed. Council sought the estimated cost of \$221,506 for cleaning of drains blocked due to black litter silt from fire and for damage to traffic facilities. Council only received \$184,287 for these works. Council's town water supply infrastructure suffered damage of greater than \$1million. Some of this infrastructure has been repaired under insurance arrangements.

Michael Gallacher - Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter and Vice-President of the Executive Council approved \$161,037.50 roadside clean up from the Natural Disaster Relief Assistance Programme (NDRAP). At the 'thank you to volunteers' Minister Gallacher waived the 21 days deadline for assistance application and pledged the clean up bill would be paid. Council are dealing with three people in the Public Works.

Robyn Parker - Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, authorised the EPA to license the Coonabarabran land fill to receive asbestos, the community is very grateful for this authorisation. The cost of disposal was dramatically reduced from taking the rubble to Dubbo. 47 neighbours to the National Park lost approximately 200km of boundary fence. Minister Parker also arranged for the National Parks fencing 50/50 programme to replace 200km of fencing.

Rachel Nibbs Director at MPES arranged the asbestos clean up through Public Works department. Of the 53 houses destroyed by the fire, 31 were listed as containing asbestos.

Of the 31 homes, 14 were cleared by insurance and 17 either uninsured or under insured were cleared by Public Works

22 houses were clear of asbestos but to date only 14 insured houses had been cleared, 8 remaining uninsured houses are still down not cleared or rebuilt. No assistance for those folk.

Public Works also arranged the clearing of Strathmore House, the NPWS base, in the National Park (not counted in our tallies)

There was no management plan in existence to deal with the massive bulk of friable asbestos that was left behind in the wake of the fire. Council is most grateful to the following agencies for their assistance in the creation of the asbestos management plan;

- **Ministry of Police and Emergency Services (MPES)**
- **NSW Public Works**
- **Environment Protection Authority NSW**
- **WorkCover NSW**
- **Department of Health**
- **Warrumbungle Shire Council staff**

Council's water supply infrastructure, at Timor Dam, was severely impacted by the fire. The dead water pump and pipeline, pump house, 4km of man proof perimeter fence and other fixtures were destroyed. At this stage Council's insurance has not covered all the loss. The shortfall for this replacement is \$700,000. Council is still negotiating with our insurer.

Mr Loane: One of the other things I would like to say, and forgive me if I am using this as a platform, last night comments were made by one of the affected folk about the fact that it rained very heavily on the first Friday night after the fire. It did not just put the fire out but it drenched the place and there were 50 millimetres of rain. What that did was it blocked up most of the council's drains and when we had the chap come up from Public Works to assess that, he laughed at my engineer and said, 'You blokes are gouging. This is a joke'. I was incensed by that because it was real, it was caused by the fire, and the fact is that our infrastructure then was further eroded by the floodwaters that were caused by the back-up of drains.

Mr Scott MacDonald: If you answer that question on notice it is a public document and it will be part of the committee's report.

Mr Loane: I will come back for you especially with that information.

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Mr Scot MacDonald: Just a clarification: Mr Loane, when you do that breakdown could you be very clear about who pledged what and when.

Mr Loane: Certainly.

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