

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS flood recovery coordination

NEWSLETTER

Issue #9, April 15th 2011



Donation arrives from Japan

A very special donation of \$1500 arrived into the Central Highlands Flood Recovery Fund this week. Sent from Fujisawa, Japan, Council's sister city in Japan, it highlights the enduring international relationship that has been forged.

"We continue to have a very strong bond with the council in Fujisawa, but even so I was just blown away when I heard about the donation arriving. The idea that amongst all the chaos in Japan they thought of us is very touching", Mayor Peter Maguire said.

Many residents across the region have expressed concern for the residents of our Japanese sister city. Contact from the Fujisawa Sister City coordinator Shin, who has visited the Central Highlands many times, brought news that the town and its people were not directly affected by the natural disaster they are still suffering. Although Fujisawa was not directly affected by the tsunami, they were cut off from power for several days. However, they do have access to clean water, and as a farming community, they will have ready access to rice.

The donation was collected after the March 11 2011 earthquake and tsunami that has devastated the island country, killing over 12 000 people with over 15 000 people still unaccounted for. The ongoing threat of a nuclear disaster, after the Fukushima power plant was damaged, has left the country on standby for nearly a month due the risk of nuclear contamination of food and water.

"I would encourage people to send anything they can spare over to Japan through the Red Cross, as even through there was so much loss here we were lucky that everyone survived. Japan is

going to need a lot of help to recover. I think that is something that everyone in our region can identify with on some level", Mr Maguire said.

Through an ongoing exchange program students and other members of the Central Highlands community have been visiting Fujisawa and vice versa, with the Mayor visiting the town in 2008. Blackwater students selected for this year's exchange program are still planning to visit Japan later this year.

To make a donation to the Australian Red Cross Japanese and Pacific Disaster Appeal go to www.redcross.org.au/donate or call 1800 811 700.



ROUND 3 OF PREMIERS FUND OPEN FOR APPLICATION

Grants of up to \$80 000 are being offered to residents who experienced flood damage to their homes.

The grants are aimed at people whose homes were not destroyed but sustained significant structural damage, for example those who have been living without a kitchen or bathroom.

The grant is available for owner occupied households with a combined income of \$150 000. Eligible applicants will receive up to \$5000 for every \$10 000 of damage up to a maximum \$80 000.

Insurance payments, ex-gratia payments and any assistance provided under the NDRRA Community Recovery Structural Assistance Grants will be taken into consideration in terms of the level of assistance provided.

Applicants will need to provide two quotes for BSA licensed builders.

Application close on 30 June 2011. For forms go to www.qld.gov.au/floods.

Mental 'first aid' important for community recovery

A seminar run by the Central Queensland Mental Health Service has highlighted the importance of psychological wellbeing after a disaster.

The session was facilitated by Paul Tyler at the Town Hall last Wednesday and attracted 12 people from various agencies and organisations within the region. "It went well but we would like to get more of the general public attending, as mental health is everybody's business", Mr Tyler said.

It is important for the community to be aware of their psychological wellbeing in the wake of a disaster Mr Tyler said. "What we know is that

after a flood most people will be fine. But there will be a small percentage of people who are going to be or already are struggling. That might include someone in your family, a work colleague or friend."

He points out that recognition of early warning signs is the key. "What we want to do is to educate people to pick up on those signs in themselves and others, and that early intervention is vital. If we can support people before things get too out of hand it can be much easier."

Mr Tyler said that mental health

issues will continue to arise for a long time after the event. "What everyone needs to understand is that the emotional impact that can be felt after a disaster like this can be serious, and it is important to recognise symptoms early so that help can be provided."

With the community moving forward after the event some people will struggle to keep up. "Now that the immediate physical 'crisis' is over most people will be getting back to their lives, but some people in our community will have real difficulty returning to normal. Things like financial pressure can really weigh heavily on people's minds and make it hard to

recover," Mr Tyler said.

"It is imperative that people keep an eye out for symptoms such as loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, heightened emotions as well as heavier drinking or smoking. If you are someone you know is displaying worrying symptoms you should seek assistance before the situation gets out of hand," "Your local GP or mental health service can provide advice" Mr Tyler explained. To get advice, ask a question or register interest in a session in your region contact Central Queensland Mental Health Service on 4983 9750 or for after hours or immediate assistance call the Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Other News...

Assistance Application forms due soon

Applications for the first round of the Premiers Fund have closed. Flood affected residents are reminded that applications for various types of financial assistance are also closing soon.

Premiers Fund Round 2

Closing Date: April 15 2011

This payment is for residents whose primary residence must be demolished due to flood damage and applies to caravans, house boats, etc.

For more information call Queensland Department of Communities on 07 4982 1520. Forms can be downloaded from www.qld.gov.au

Premiers Fund Round 3

Applications close 30 June 2011

More information on front of newsletter

Applications for the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

Closing Date: 4 July 2011.

For application forms go to www.centrelink.gov.au or call 180 22 66.

Local Central Highlands Flood Appeal

These forms can be collected from the Neighbourhood Centre at 17 Yamala Street, Emerald. For more information call 4982 1696

QRAA Funding for Small/Large Businesses and NPF Organisations

Financial assistance is available through QRAA for primary producers, businesses and non-profit organisations that have suffered direct damage and are located in an eligible local government area.

Primary producers, small and large businesses and not-for-profit organisations can all apply for grants and loans. Loan recently were increased to \$650 000 under the Exceptional Disaster Assistance Scheme.

To apply look online at www.qraa.qld.gov.au or call 1800 623 946.

Housing Assistance

Flood affected residents who are looking for affordable accommodation whilst their home is being repaired are encouraged to contact Anglicare on 4982 4062, or any of the real estate agents in Emerald. Short, medium and long-term accommodation is available and there is no income or asset test to be involved in the initiative.

The Department of Communities' Housing branch is also offering assistance with bond loans and rental grants to assist those moving into new rental properties for an interim period while their home is being repaired. To discuss this assistance contact Department of Communities Housing office on 07 4987 4871.

Important Contacts:

Central Highlands Flood Recovery Coordination

26 Opal Street
07 4987 7267

recovery@chrc.qld.gov.au

Central Highlands Regional Council

1300 242 686

www.centralhighlands.qld.gov.au

Lifeline 24 Hour Crisis Counselling

13 11 14

Anglicare Central Queensland

07 4982 4062

Lifeline Emerald

07 4982 3730

Emerald Neighbourhood Centre

07 4982 1696

Salvation Army Disaster Relief Care Line

1300 66 22 17

Legal Aid

1300 65 11 88

Building Services Authority (BSA)

1300 272 272

Tips for maintaining good mental health

Having a healthy lifestyle involves many facets of health. An important one is maintaining a healthy mind, because it is our brain that controls everything our body does. One old saying that is still relevant today is "A healthy mind is a healthy body" and vice versa.

Just as physical exercise helps our bodies to stay strong, mental fitness helps us to achieve and maintain good mental health.

When we are mentally healthy, we enjoy our life and environment, and the people in it. We can be creative, learn, try new things, and take risks. We are better able to cope with difficult times in our personal and professional lives. We feel the sadness and anger that can come with the death of a loved one, a job loss, financial pressure, relationship problems and other difficult events such as the recent flood, but in time, we are able to get on with and enjoy our lives once again.

Over the next few editions we will provide readers some short self help tips on managing and improving ways that we can all use to maintain a healthy mind.

"Mental Health is everybody's business"

Paul Tyler – Central Queensland Mental Health Service

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