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Media Release

Burke Shire Council Calls for Strengthened Regional Meteorological Capability in North West Queensland

As North West Queensland continues to experience severe and unfolding weather events, Burke Shire Council formally acknowledges and thanks the hydrologists, meteorologists and people who have worked tirelessly through the festive season, weekends and public holidays to support the Council's disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Throughout this event, despite, in some instances, antiquated and nonfunctioning infrastructure these professionals ensured all councils, disaster management personnel and governments had access to the best available real-time data, analysis and forward projections critical to informed decision-making. The weather did not pause, and neither did their commitment to public safety.

However, Burke Shire Council notes that on-ground meteorological staffing in regional and remote Queensland has been significantly reduced in recent years. The current weather events have highlighted the importance of revisiting this decision and returning these hardworking professionals back to the regions.

Local, in-region meteorological and hydrological expertise enables direct observation, in-situ validation and the application of local knowledge. These factors improve the accuracy, relevance and timeliness of data and warnings, particularly during rapidly evolving and high-impact weather events where reliance on remote, desktop-based assessments can introduce risk.

Technology has also advanced significantly in recent years. Modern integrated systems could provide more reliable, real-time observation and communication without the need for complex, costly or fragmented infrastructure. The region currently lacks appropriate radar coverage and some river gauges are not working. When paired with regionally based professionals, these systems can deliver high-quality, localised warnings that better support communities, businesses and governments to make timely decisions.

Strengthening the Bureau of Meteorology's service provision is critical to both public safety and asset protection. It is essential that staff are returned to the region in a timely manner and modern systems are embedded to maximise the return on investment for both Government and Public.

Burke Shire Council is calling on the Federal Government to reinstate and strengthen regional Bureau of Meteorology staffing across North West Queensland, supported by contemporary monitoring and communication systems that include improved radar coverage and repairs to the region's river gauges. This investment is critical to improving disaster preparedness, safeguarding communities and protecting public and private assets.

Councillor Ernest Camp, Mayor of Burke Shire, has today written to the Honourable Ann Leahy MP, Queensland's Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, and the Honourable Kristy McBain MP, Commonwealth Minister for Emergency Management, to offer his thanks and appreciation for the tireless efforts of the people behind the scenes who continue to support the region during these weather events, as well as offering to work collaboratively with governments and meteorological professionals to strengthen service provision across the region to ensure North West Queensland communities are better supported before, during and after severe weather events.

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