

Thursday, 10 March 2022

NEWCASTLE PERMANENT & GREATER BANK FUND VITAL LIFELINE SUPPORT FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED NORTHERN RIVERS COMMUNITIES

Greater Bank and Newcastle Permanent today announced joint funding to enable Lifeline North Coast to deliver critical face-to-face counselling support to communities in the flood-affected Northern Rivers region.

The \$40,000 donation will fund three Lifeline North Coast mobile vans and staff to travel to the Lismore region and provide vital support services to the many members of the community who are struggling with mental health issues in the wake of the natural disaster.

Lifeline North Coast CEO, Miko Smith, said demand for Lifeline services in the Lismore area following the flooding has been extraordinary.

“The impact on the community has been devastating with approximately 3,000 families displaced, 1,000 homes destroyed and an estimated 1,000 people living in tents or short-term accommodation,” Mr Smith said.

“All of the Lifeline on-the-ground services in Lismore, including call centre, three shops and the warehouse were destroyed in the floods, which is affecting a local response, and the national 13 11 14 phone line.

“This joint funding from Newcastle Permanent and Greater Bank will enable Lifeline North Coast to provide the Lismore community with practical support over the next month, aimed at reducing the initial distress of the event and embedding long-term coping mechanisms in the community to minimise the risk of further harm as a result of this event.

“We are incredibly grateful for this financial support, which means that we can be on the ground offering face-to-face client contact over what will be a critical four-week period for the community.”

Lifeline North Coast is currently working with authorities to source a suitable site and is aiming to have their services available to members of the community in the coming week.

Newcastle Permanent CEO, Bernadette Inglis, said that teams in both organisations were devastated by the impacts of the floods and were eager to assist their local communities.

“Newcastle Permanent and Greater Bank have both served the Northern Rivers region for many years, and as customer-owned financial institutions it’s our purpose to support the communities that support us,” Ms Ingles said.

“The catastrophic flooding has impacted so many communities across that region, affecting our people, their families and our customers. It was for this reason that we had no hesitation in partnering with Greater Bank to support Lifeline North Coast, who will in turn provide practical, much needed mental health and financial counselling support to those who need it most.”

The Newcastle Permanent and Greater Bank branches in Lismore were both damaged beyond repair from the flood and are not expected to reopen for some months.

From early next week, both organisations will again offer over-the-counter banking services via temporary customer service kiosks as part of the Community Banking Hub established at Southern Cross University, in association with other mutuals from the Northern Rivers region.

“As we saw during the height of the pandemic, banking is an essential service and, like then it’s important that we remain open and available to our customer in this capacity during these most challenging of circumstances,” Greater Bank CEO, Scott Morgan, said.

“From next week, Greater Bank and Newcastle Permanent customers can visit the Community Banking Hub to conduct their banking, and if required, speak with our customer service teams about financial relief solutions that are available to our respective customers who have been impacted by the flooding.”

The Community Banking Hub is located at Goodman Plaza, Southern Cross University, Military Road, East Lismore, and open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

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