

## Response ID ANON-DUXZ-42M9-Q

Submitted to Northern Australia Insurance Inquiry  
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## About you

What is your name?

Name:  
Bryan Cifuentes

What is your email address?

Email:  
[REDACTED]

What is your suburb/town and postcode? (Only one is required.)

Suburb/town::  
[REDACTED]

Postcode::  
[REDACTED]

If you live in northern Australia, please tick all descriptions that apply to you.

What type of residence do you live in?

What insurance do you currently have? Please tick all descriptions that apply to you.

What is important in your decisions about insurance?

1. How important is the price ('premium') in your decision?

You could also tell us: Did you know about the price of insurance in your town before you moved there? Has price changed a lot? Have you tried to get a lower price? :

Yes we have lived in this house for fifteen years approximately and prior to this at the northern beaches in Cairns.

The insurance prices have increased dramatically and every year we question the insurer and get reduction of some sort.

2. How much choice of insurers do you have?

You could also tell us: Where you live, how much choice is there between insurers? Do you think different insurers offer different policies (i.e. is coverage different)? :

We have shopped around to explore costs and coverage and always go back to Suncorp, our first home we insured through Metway Building society later Bank and then amalgamated with Suncorp.

They have been very prompt in their service and having been through cyclone Winifred (1986) being the first for 30 years. We do believe insurance companies have developed a beat up concept that cyclones cause yearly damage more so then other disasters. We do not endure devastating bushfires that southern states do because of the tropical humidity and vegetation differences. We in the north also do not receive hail and thunderstorm severity that the southern areas receive. Yet premiums are much higher, why?

3. What are you covered for?

You could also tell us: Can you get the sort of insurance you want? Do you want flood insurance? How confident are you that you know what you are covered for and what limits you have? If you have made a claim, were you covered for what you thought you were?:

Again we insure for what disaster may affect us, we live high in the hills out of flood prone areas, we live in a gully or valley not on top of the hill therefore are protected from the main winds. Experience with "Larry, Winifred, Joy, Yasi" saw gully areas, particularly south of the cyclone eye, were somewhat sheltered compared to other locations. Prime example from "Debbie" is Cannonvale compared to Shute Harbour.

We are confident we are covered appropriately. Our biggest concern is if we had a house fire.

We saw whirly bird vents being a problem for the start of many houses losing rooves and the solar panels on houses will do the same, if we ever invested in that we would place them stand alone and not on the roof.

#### 4. How important is customer service and claims handling reputation?

**You could also tell us: How much does an insurer's reputation matter? How much does customer service matter? Have you seen an insurer behaving in a way that you think is unfair or confusing?:**

We have had excellent response from Suncorp and no complaints.

I believe it is the unrealistic expectation that living in the far north you are prone to cyclone therefore you are a bigger risk. Codswallop!

#### 5. Have you seen an insurer behaving in way that you think is unfair or confusing?

**5. Have you seen an insurer behaving in way that you think is unfair or confusing? :**

No.

**6. Has an insurer told you that they won't insure you or renew your insurance policy? If they have, what were the reasons they gave you?**

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No

#### How you get information about insurance and how easy it is to understand?

**7. What information does your insurer give you and how useful is it?**

**You could also tell us: Does your renewal notice say if price has changed and the reason? Does it say how premiums are calculated? What could insurers do to make it easier to understand their products? :**

Customer service telephone people are very helpful.

**8. Where else do you see or look for information?**

**You could also tell us: How much effort is it to look for better or cheaper policies? What sort of advertising do you see? Have you used websites, tools or calculators? If you live in Queensland, have you heard about or used the North Queensland Home Insurance website? What did you think about it?:**

Websites and most importantly word of mouth from others in the same geographical disaster zone.

**9. Have you used, or thought about using, a broker? Why or why not?**

**You could also tell us: Did it make it easier for you to get a policy that you were more confident suited your needs?:**

No that in the long run creates another unnecessary cost of a middle man!! Red tape should be cut not added.

**10. Is there information to meet the needs of all consumers?**

**You could also tell us: Who can you ask if you need help understanding insurance? Is there information for people who are unable to read or write or use a language other than English? Do insurers have an office in your area or do they visit? Is mail, phone or internet access an issue in remote areas?:**

Yes

**11. What special information do owners or managers of strata units need?**

**You could also tell us: How difficult is it to get clear and useful information about strata insurance? How transparent is the information provided to strata unit owners?:**

Never been in that situation so cannot comment.

**12. Have you seen examples of tools, technology or information in other industries that should be used to make insurance easier to understand?**

**Have you seen examples of tools, technology or information in other industries that should be used to make insurance easier to understand?:**

Yes I have a background in emergency services. I also see how things get beat up by emergency services looking to increase their budgets and politicians wishing to improve their status with voters.

#### Have you switched insurers?

**13. Have you considered switching insurance in recent years? Did you go ahead and switch? Why or why not? Please tell us about your experience.**

**You could also tell us: Did you consider switching policies with the same insurer, to a different insurer, or both? How did you find and compare policies? How many quotes did you compare? Was it a lot of effort? How does the use of standard definitions, such as for 'flood', make it easier to compare? Was your focus on price or coverage or both? Did you use a broker to help you? :**

Yes but after research elected to stay with Suncorp

#### What can households and insurers do to make insurance more affordable?

**14. Have you considered renovating or altering your home, or building a new home to, to reduce the risk of storm or cyclone damage? Did you go ahead?**

**You could also tell us: How did you find out about building for your local conditions? How did you decide that it was a 'worthwhile' investment? If you made any alterations, did this have any impact on your insurance premium? Has it already, or will it, save you money in the long run?:**

Yes we have done this.

I note though that history tends to be forgotten with past category standards for buildings are now overlooked or forgotten. I also note that some older buildings stood up better than modern builds during cyclones.

**15. What are insurers doing to make it easier and could they do more?**

**You could also tell us: Would your premium be lower if you made your house or belongings safer? Can you pay fortnightly or monthly and how much extra does it cost to do so? Does your insurer offer Centrepay to eligible customers? Have you seen new or different policies to target particular consumers, such as tenants, households on a low income, or people with only a small amount to insure? :**

Yes if people did the right thing through mitigation they would have much better chances of reducing damage, however geographical situation at a local level is vitally important and not assessed from afar judged on the postcode. Look at the Brisbane River Flood zone outlined on Google Globe some areas flood some areas don't, do those flood zones pay higher premiums?

The answer for pricing lies with a proactive approach compared to reactive, I would strongly recommend the assessors are local and they have input.

Tenants should only need to insure their own belongings the owner insures the building and charges the tenant for any damages incurred.

**16. What are you doing to manage the cost of insurance?**

**You could also tell us: Have rising premiums motivated you to spend more effort looking for better policy options? Have you, or would you, reduce your level of coverage to save? Who else can you get help from?:**

Yes we have reduced our contents to what they are worth, each year the insurance company increases value beyond what we the customer want and know is incorrect. We never decrease the building value as we trust they are up to date with CPI in building replacement value.

**Other issues**

**17. If you have a view or experience to share that you haven't already covered in another question, please tell us about it. (Optional)**

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We were around in the days of the S.G.I.O. (State Government Insurance Office) and believe this should be revisited or perhaps through Local Government given they have a better understanding of local geographical circumstances.