

INQUIRY INTO RESPONSE TO MAJOR FLOODING ACROSS NEW SOUTH WALES IN 2022

Organisation: Currie Country Social Change (CCSC), Jali Local Aboriginal
Lands Council (LALC), Bogal Local Aboriginal Lands Council
Coraki, Native Title Group Bandjalang PBC Coraki

Date Received: 15 May 2022

Response to the select committee established to inquire into and report on the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022, and in particular:

- (a) the preparation, coordination and response to the Western Sydney and North Coast floods by the Government,
- (b) the role, composition and resource allocations of Resilience NSW, the NSW State Emergency Service and other relevant Government agencies,
- (c) coordination between the New South Wales Government, New South Wales Government departments and agencies, the Federal Government, Federal Government departments and agencies, local governments, private sector operators and the community, including requests or offers of assistance,
- d) public communication, systems and strategies,
- (e) the implementation of recommendations from inquiries into previous natural disasters,
- (f) the overall effectiveness of the flood response, and
- (g) any other related matter.

This is a joint submission from:

- Currie Country Social Change (CCSC) which is situated in Tweed Shire Council (TSC) LGA
- Jali Local Aboriginal Lands Council (LALC) which is situated in Ballina (BSC) LGA
- Bogal Local Aboriginal Lands Council Coraki which is situated in Richmond Valley Local Council (RVC) LGA
- Native Title Group Bandjalang PBC Coraki situated in Richmond Valley Council (RVC) LGA

We are part of the greater Bundjalung Nation affected by the Northern Rivers Floods.

Together we represent over 2400 Aboriginal people in the Ballina, Richmond, and Tweed areas, of Cabbage Tree, Coraki and Tweed – many of whom were evacuated, displaced and are yet to be settled in temporary accommodation.

We are some of the leaders of the Bundjalung Nation, with a proud history of self-determination, connection to country, and forging a self-determined and prosperous future for our people and our region.

We are creating a future where our cultural knowledge delivers more economic, social, and environmental opportunity for the whole community.

We have a track record of delivering when and where it counts.

The recent floods have shown the enduring resilience of our people and the community – and now we have an unrivalled opportunity to work together to build a better future for us all.

But the promise of this bright future can't be realised unless Indigenous knowledge, history and determination is at the heart preventing future flood events, adapting to our changing climate, and a new shared vision for a resilient and prosperous community.

Having a seat at the table of recovery efforts allows us to work collaboratively with all levels of Government, the community, and local organisations to forge this exciting new path together.

Ensuing no one is left behind, no one is forgotten, and the whole of community has a voice is creating our shared future guides and sustains our efforts and determination to get the job done.

The urgency of the immediate response to the floods, the ongoing uncertainty and homelessness of our members, and the very short timeframe to respond to this inquiry, mean we have not been afforded the opportunity to prepare a submission that does the experience, tenacity, determination of our members justice.

We will be meeting with Professor Mary O’Kane AC, Mr Michael Fuller APM and the NSW Government’s Flood Inquiry and will provide a submission regarding the adequacy of the immediate response and the ongoing economic, social, environmental, emotional, and spiritual cost for our members.

While we note it is impossible to homogenise all Indigenous cultural water values into one perspective, this submission will give voice to Indigenous values that are regionally diverse and complex within the Bundjalung Nation populations, clans, and communities.

Indigenous relationships with water are holistic, combining land, water, culture, society, and economy.

Consequently, water and land rights and the management of resources and native title rights are inseparable, and therefore require careful and deliberate focus to ensure the Aboriginal nation and communities affected are heard.

We formally request that this inquiry have regard to our submission to the NSW Government Inquiry and have regard to evidence, both oral and written, which will be given to protect the rights and aspirations of the Indigenous communities in the Bundjalung Nation.