

Submission  
No 50

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

**Organisation:** Public Service Association of New South Wales

**Date Received:** 23 May 2022

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# SUBMISSION



## Parliamentary Inquiry into the response to major flooding across New South Wales In 2022



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Authorised by Stewart Little, General Secretary, Public Service Association of NSW and Community and Public Sector Union (SPSF Group) NSW Branch, 160 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000



**Table of Contents**

Contents

**Introduction .....3**

**NSW SES – OUR MISSION OUR VISION:.....3**

**RESILIENCE NSW: - MISSION .....4**

**PSA Representation.....4**

**PSA Submission .....6**

**Inquiry into the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022.....6**

**Staffing Resources.....7**

**NSW SES.....7**

**Resilience NSW.....8**

**Budget Comparison .....9**

**NSW SES.....9**

**Resilience NSW.....9**

**Composition and resource allocation.....9**

**PSA MEMBER SURVEY .....10**

**CONCLUSION..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Recommendations.....14**

**ATTACHMENTS.....15**

## Introduction

The NSW State Emergency Service (SES) undertakes flood, storm and tsunami planning as a legislative responsibility to determine how to best respond in times of emergency.

Never before has its role been so important for the people of NSW. Natural disaster declarations have become a continued threat to local communities and individuals across NSW. In 2022 about 142 communities have so far been impacted by floods – many of these several times over in the space of just the first few months of this year. The NSW SES, Resilience NSW and other emergency services during February and March 2022 provided direct assistance to these communities.

To compare the role and functions of the two agencies charged with a preparatory/prevention and response role (NSW SES and Resilience NSW) this inquiry needs to take into consideration their respective mission statements.

### NSW SES – OUR MISSION OUR VISION:

➤ **Saving Lives**

There is nothing more important than the lives around us and saving those who require our assistance.

➤ **Creating Safer**

Supporting communities in preparation for and during floods, storms, tsunamis will increase their safety and reduce negative impact of events both mentally and physically.

➤ **Communities**

The community is at the heart of everything we do. We want to work with communities so they can recognise their risk and build resilience.

## RESILIENCE NSW:

Our work spans disaster prevention through to recovery, and will give confidence to our communities to live, work and invest in NSW.

Our work has several aims:

- People are confident and prepared. They are empowered to manage risk and supported to recover; they have clear, consistent information, and they know what to do and how to get help.
- Local communities are provided appropriate support within a meaningful local context that enables them to build resilience and preparedness to face the challenges of the future.
- Critical infrastructure providers and industry are engaged in collaborating to minimise the risk of disruption and have the capacity to quickly resume social and economic activity.

### **The NSW Government acts in a joined-up way to build resilience, flex to crises and minimise risk for the people of NSW**

The Public Service Association of NSW (PSA) is a state-registered employee organisation. Its submission is on behalf of the members employed with NSW SES, representing some 330 employees.

The PSA representation of NSW SES includes the following roles:

- Commissioner
- Deputy Commissioner Operations
- Deputy Commissioner Corporate Services
- Assistant Commissioner Director Regional Operations
- Assistant Commissioner Director Metro Operations
- Assistant Commissioner Director Operational & Capability Training
- Director Information & Communications Technology
- Director People & Development
- Director Finance Asset & Business Services



- Senior Manager Enterprise PMO
- Senior Manager Media & Communications
- Senior Manager Governance & Policy
- Chief of Staff
- Manager Government Relations & Legal
- Manager Planning & Engagement
- Senior Manager State Operations
- Senior Manager Capability
- Senior Manager Business Systems
- Senior Manager HR Services
- Senior Manager Finance
- Zone Commander x 4
- Manager Geospatial Intelligence
- Senior Manager Operational Leadership & Development
- Senior Manager Operational Support
- Senior Manager Probity & Standards
- Senior Manger Facilities & Fleet
- Manager Planning and Engagement
- Senior Manager Training Exercise Planning & Delivery
- Senior Manager Operational Systems
- Senior Manager Work Health and Safety
- Senior Manager Procurement & Logistics
- Zone Commander Metro
- Manager Training Systems & Quality Assurance
- Program Manager SSKO
- Senior Manager Wellbeing Service & Support
- Project Manager Training System and Quality Assurance
- Manager Contracts and Procurement SSKO
- Senior Manager HR Advisory
- Manager Capability SSKO
- Manager Volunteer Strategy

The PSA also covers other Emergency Service workers across Resilience NSW, Rural Fire Service and selected Fire and Rescue officers. However, we also need to acknowledge members in Service NSW, Local Land Services and Regional NSW who also provided aid to these communities during the recent floods as part of their emergency response and recovery policies.

# PSA Submission

The Association submission is in support of the NSW SES in its composition and the allocation of resources required to respond to major flooding across the state.

The focus of our submission is in reply to the devastating floods and using the date as recorded by the NSW Government Natural disaster declarations:

- Disaster type 1012 - Severe weather and floods, NSW Severe Weather and Flooding from 22 February 2022 were declared in some 63 local government areas (*insert NSW GOVERNMENT Natural disaster declarations*).

## Inquiry into the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022

### *TERMS OF REFERENCE*

- 1. That a select committee be 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.

2. That the committee begin its inquiry after 10 April 2022 and report by 9 August 2022.

## Staffing Resources NSW SES

NSW SES has a workforce of some 330 full-time equivalent employees and some 10,214 volunteers.

Categories of the 330 full-time staff are outlined below. Among those staff within the classification of above A&C, nine are Senior Executives.

NSW SES staff profiles as of June 2021

Salary Bands as of 30 June 2020	2020/2021			2019/2020			2018/2019		
	Total Staff	Women	Racial Ethno Religious Minority	Total Staff	Women	Racial Ethno Religious Minority	Total Staff	Women	Racial Ethno Religious Minority
\$64,973 - \$70,636 Grade 1/2	37	27	2	37	26	2	54	34	2
\$72,635 - \$79,535 Grade 3/4	79	60	2	72	58	0	78	63	0
\$85,744 - \$94,610 Grade 5/6	101	57	3	85	48	3	108	56	2

\$97,443 - \$107,864 Grade 7/8	77	37	4	74	35	4	88	43	4
\$111,077 - \$122,404 Grade 9/10	42	13	1	33	9	1	40	12	1
\$128,473 - \$148,578 Grade 11/12	22	10	0	18	9	0	27	11	0
Above A & C Grade 12	7	2	0	9	3	1	10	5	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>10</b>

Representation of employees by level compared with the two previous years.

**Note: Total staff for 2020-21 is inclusive of an FTE of 333. This is inclusive of ongoing, temporary and casual staff.**

With the average remuneration as classified as Senior Executives for NSW SES commencing at Band 1 \$192, 600 to Band 3 \$388,700.

The total staff for the financial year:

- 2019/20 full-time equivalent workforce 365.
- 2018/19 full-time equivalent workforce 405.

## Resilience NSW

Resilience NSW, as referenced within its Annual Report 2020-2021, has a headcount of 105 highly skilled and dedicated staff, compared to 103 last year.

Within the 105 staff employed with Resilience NSW, again using the Annual Report 2020-2021, there is a total of 15 Senior Executives.

Over the period 2020-2021, Resilience NSW increased the number of its Senior Executives and equivalent positions by approximately 67 per cent with an average remuneration of PSSE Band 1 \$192,600 to Band 3 \$475,000.

# Budget Comparison

## NSW SES

The budget (figures in '000s) for NSW SES for the financial year **2020-21**:

➤ **\$158,836**

and previous financial year of **2019-20**

➤ **\$122,317.**

## Resilience NSW

Resilience NSW established as an executive agency in the Premier and Cabinet cluster on 1 May 2020 and the budget allocated for Resilience NSW.

➤ **\$996,588.**

## Composition and resource allocation

Using the terms of reference 1(b) it would seem in terms of both human resources and budget composition as allocated to Resilience NSW and NSW SES there is significant variance between the two emergency services.

And it is our opinion that the variance of resources as allocated can be simply evaluated using the human and budget resources of both.

NSW SES budget for 2020-21 is \$158,836,000 and Resilience NSW \$996,588,000.

Staffing for NSW SES is 330 with the Senior Executive composition totaling some 2.72 per cent with Resilience NSW staffing cohort 105 and the Senior Executive staffing composition 14.28 per cent.

It is reported that NSW SES had resourcing issues and that these issues known prior to the 2022 declared natural disasters.

It is the position of the Association that the depletion of resources can be aligned to the 2017 Organisational Transformation of NSW SES. This is a significant change to the current structure saw 17 Regions cut to five Zones.

And in 2019 a further restructure was undertaken within NSW SES and whilst there was no reduction in roles what was lost was skills, history and knowledge and more importantly the ability to actively respond to incidents.

**The responsibility of these restructures loss of roles, merge and deletion of regions have to be laid at the hands of the NSW Government as each of these restructures were simply a cost-cutting measure.**

Employees of NSW SES and the Association stated there would be a negative impact on the ability to deliver training, support and provide services to the communities across NSW when they are at their most vulnerable. However, the Government allowed these restructures to occur.

## **PSA MEMBER SURVEY**

The PSA undertook a recent survey across the NSW SES membership in relation to the Inquiry and the following questions and results support the position that NSW SES is under resourced:

**Q2**

*With regards to the role, composition and resource allocation to the NSW State Emergency Services and the agency's ability to respond to the recent major flood events, do you have any comments that you think should be raised at the inquiry?*

“Planning and preparedness has been significantly impacted by restructures over the last few years.”

“The role allocations are inconsistent right across the State. The highest disparity exists in both the Northern and Metro Zones who action approximately 70% of the requests for assistance annually and carry a disproportionately high level of Risk. The Northern Zone is split across four Offices – none of which are

independently capable of managing an emergency the size of recent flooding. At one stage during the recent flooding, Northern Zone was running three fully resourced Incident Management Centres. The NSW SES does not have the staff resources to do this as an agency.”

“The 2018 Organisational transformation in my opinion has weakened the agency's ability to respond to significant events by reducing the number of operational staff in the regions/zones to support volunteers and operational responses.”

“Resourcing was inadequate for the scale of the event. Some key IMT roles were filled with personnel from external agencies with little to no guidance including procedures relating to the functional roles under AIMS. Fatigue was an issue.”

**Q4**

*Do you believe that the 2017/2018 reform of the NSW SES that saw a reduction of regions to zones was a success?*

82.61% of members disagreed that this was a success.

**Q5**

*Can you name some examples of how you have been affected?*

“Regions were stripped to prop up SHQ and the driver for the reform was to weaken Regions and therefore remove the power base of Regions and the small cadre of Region Controllers who had this power. Unfortunately, these people were also the horse power and brains trust who kept the organisation afloat during periods of operations. 21 Region Learning and Development Officers down to six with promises of reduced workload which would be covered by other staff. The reality was 21 down to six with the same workload and expectation of involvement during periods of Operations.”

“The level of support provided by paid staff to volunteers has been reduced significantly. Particularly in the Operations and Unit management support areas.

Significant increases to staff positions in management positions largely centralised in the Wollongong Headquarters has failed to improve with the volunteer experience and lead to significant loss in volunteer good will. The most pertinent example is the level of staff in the North Zone supporting volunteers in operations, planning and unit administration. With the largest geographic footprint, highest likelihood, highest risk and greatest consequences the North Zone has failed. Limited if any planning functions, limited Unit administration support, limited operations support have resulted in an inability of the Zone to support volunteers in meeting their legislative responsibilities.”

“I have seen the organisation go backwards in terms of its engagement and support to communities, it’s local members and its capability. There were inconsistencies in strategic design and deliver of policy and procedures but people were skilled in the area they worked and knew the impact and what their role delivered. We have less clarity in parts of the organisation now due to ‘new’ people and lack of coordination and understanding of what happens at the unit and region level for the community. There is far less engagement by staff with volunteers due to the model and the dependency on volunteers undertaking what use to be done by staff has significantly increased not for the better.”

Q7

*Does the NSW SES have sufficient personnel to administer the large number of volunteers?*

82.61% responded no.

Q8

*Are there sufficient resources available to train and equip these NSW SES volunteer units?*

90.91% responded no.

## **Q9**

*Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide in relation to the inquiry?*

“The restructures over 2018 to 2019 seriously impacted our planning and preparedness capability by shuffling staff into other roles based on generalised capability approach that ignored their experience, training and motivation. These restructures also seriously affected the working relationships between staff and volunteer by centralising functions and greatly reducing interactions with volunteers. Now we have a volunteer organisation that is much more remote from staff. The aggregation of 17 Regions into five Zones, centralising functions and creating vertical silos based on Directorates significantly contributed to this disconnection.”

## **Conclusion**

This submission demonstrates that the major flooding that occurred across New South Wales in 2022 required Resilience NSW, NSW SES and many of the other emergency services to take immediate action in support of the communities declared as natural disasters.

Whilst no emergency response is perfect, every crisis presents new challenges and as a consequence there are new lessons to learn. However, it is the position of the Association that the NSW Government made critical mistakes in failing to prepare.

Blame on loss of properties and loss of life cannot be laid against any Emergency Service. However, the Terms of Reference include a need to inquire



on the preparation, coordination, response, role, composition and resources of these specific emergency services and we simply believe this is inequitable.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. It is imperative that the NSW Government learn from their mistakes of deleting positions, reducing staff, and not providing adequate and equitable resources to each of the emergency services.**
- 2. It is imperative that the regions impacted by the NSW SES 2018 Organisational Transformation are reviewed as a matter of urgency with resources returned in both staff and budget capacity as these zones were the primary areas declared natural disasters during the February and March 2022 floods.**
- 3. It is imperative that NSW Government re-evaluates the budget and staffing resources across all areas of the NSW SES particularly areas affected by the Organisational Transformation.**
- 4. It is imperative that NSW Government adequately equip NSW SES and more importantly the zones that were declared natural disasters to ensure that there are enough resources to assess, prepare and aid in the future.**





LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RESPONSE TO MAJOR FLOODING ACROSS  
NSW SOUTH WALES IN 2022

## Inquiry into the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

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  - (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.
2. That the committee begin its inquiry after 10 April 2022 and report by 9 August 2022.

The terms of reference were referred to the committee by the Legislative Council on 23 March 2022.

#### Committee membership

<b>Hon Walt Secord MLC</b>	Australian Labor Party	<i>Chair</i>
<b>Hon Mark Banasiak MLC</b>	Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
<b>Hon Scott Barrett MLC*</b>	The Nationals	
<b>Hon Catherine Cusack MLC**</b>	Liberal Party	

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<b>Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC</b>	The Greens
<b>Hon Rod Roberts MLC</b>	Pauline Hanson's One Nation
<b>Hon Penny Sharpe MLC</b>	Australian Labor Party

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\* The Hon Scott Barrett MLC became a substantive member of the committee on 29 March 2022.

\*\* The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC became a substantive member of the committee on 29 March 2022.

## Senior Executives

Numbers of Senior Executive roles at 30 June 2021

Band	2020-2021 Gender Break		2020-2021 Total	2019-2020 Gender Break		2019-2020 Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Band 4 (Secretary)	-	-	0	-	-	0
Band 3 (Deputy Secretary)	0	1	1	0	1	1
Band 2 (Executive Director)	2	0	2	1	1	2
Band 1 (Director)	4	2	6	5	1	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>

Remuneration of Senior Executive roles at 30 June 2021

Brand	Range 2021	Average Remuneration 2020-2021	Range 2020	Average Remuneration 2019-2020
Band 4 (Secretary)	-	-	-	-
Band 3 (Deputy Secretary)	\$345,551 - \$487,050	\$388,700	\$345,551 - \$487,050	\$388,700
Band 2 (Executive Director)	\$274,701 - \$345,550	\$308,664	\$274,701 - \$345,550	\$299,984
Band 1 (Director)	\$192,600 - \$274,700	\$218,903	\$192,600 - \$274,700	\$225,553

Senior Executive total employee - related expenditure

	2020-21	2019-20
Total Employee Related Expenses (ERE) (\$)	\$43.12m	\$41.44m
Senior Executive ERE (\$)	\$2.57m	\$2.69m
Senior Executive ERE (%)	5.96%	6.49%

## Awards

NSW SES had the privilege of awarding 1,251 awards to Members of the Service.

Awards presented included 46 Commissioner's Awards, 929 Long Service Awards, and 276 National Medals.

Four (4) Emergency Service Medals (ESM) were awarded to the following members:

- Mr Matthew Chifley, ESM – NSW SES Queanbeyan Unit
- Mr Christopher Warren, ESM – NSW SES Kiama Unit
- Mr Peter Kaye, AM ESM – NSW SES Ashfield-Leichhardt Unit
- Ms Heather Stuart, ESM – NSW SES State Headquarters

## About us

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Resilience NSW was established as an executive agency in the Premier and Cabinet cluster on 1 May 2020. The agency was created to drive world-leading disaster preparedness and assure the NSW Government that our communities are well supported to recover from disasters and emergencies quickly.

Resilience NSW keeps people and communities at the heart of everything we do. By leading a whole-of-government approach to disaster recovery and resilience, we ensure people are cared for, acknowledged and empowered - so that all NSW communities are better prepared for and supported on their journey of recovery from any crisis or disaster event.

**We keep people at the heart of all the work we do and put the community first.**

Our work spans disaster prevention through to recovery, and will give confidence to our communities to live, work and invest in NSW.

Our work has several aims:

- People are confident and prepared. They are empowered to manage risk and supported to recover; they have clear, consistent information, and they know what to do and how to get help.
- Local communities are provided appropriate support within a meaningful local context that enables them to build resilience and preparedness to face the challenges of the future.
- Critical infrastructure providers and industry are engaged in collaborating to minimise the risk of disruption and have the capacity to quickly resume social and economic activity.
- The NSW Government acts in a joined-up way to build resilience, flex to crises and minimise risk for the people of NSW.

**Flood assistance is available.**

**[See the latest information \(https://www.nsw.gov.au/floods\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/floods)**



# Natural disaster declarations

A Disaster Declaration is a frequently updated list of Local Government Areas (LGA) that have been impacted by a natural disaster. With a disaster declaration for their area, affected communities and individuals can access a range of special assistance measures.

Disaster declarations are issued by the NSW Government and incorporate an Australian Government reference number (AGRN).

Last updated: 27 April 2022

## On this page

[Financial year 2021-22](#)

[Previous financial years](#)

## Financial year 2021-22

AGRN	Disaster types	Name of disaster	Local Government Area	Assistance available
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AGRN	Disaster types	Name of disaster	Local Government Area	Assistance available
			Cessnock Clarence Valley Coffs Harbour Cumberland Dungog Eurobodalla Fairfield Georges River Glen Innes Severn Goulburn Mulwaree Hawkesbury Hornsby Inner West Kempsey Kiama Ku-Ring-Gai Kyogle Lake Macquarie Lismore Lithgow Liverpool Maitland MidCoast Mid-Western Muswellbrook Nambucca Newcastle Northern Beaches Parramatta Penrith Port Macquarie/Hastings Port Stephens Queanbeyan Palerang Richmond Valley Ryde	to \$25,000  Sporting clubs: Concessional loans up to \$10,000  Sporting clubs: \$2,000 grant  Small business: Grants up to \$50,000  Primary producer: Grants up to \$75,000