

Submission  
No 57

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

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OFFICIAL

# NSW Government submission

## Select Committee's Inquiry into the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022

JUNE 2022

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# Executive Summary

The NSW Government welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Select Committee's Inquiry into the response to major flooding across NSW in 2022.

Since 22 February 2022, NSW has experienced widespread, heavy to intense rainfall. This has resulted in an unprecedented natural disaster event, with major flooding, flash flooding and storm damage impacting the Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast, Central Coast and Sydney regions. Individuals, homes and businesses across these communities have experienced extensive damage and destruction.

While NSW continues to experience inclement weather, this submission focuses predominately on the NSW Government's responses to the major flooding that occurred between 22 February and 4 May 2022 in the Northern Rivers and Western Sydney regions.

Consistent with NSW's broader approach to emergency management, the response to these major flooding events was underpinned by a comprehensive 'PPRR' approach of prevention, preparation, response and recovery. The *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (NSW) (SERM Act) provides the foundation for this approach. Together with the NSW State Emergency Plan (EMPLAN) and its supporting plans - most relevantly the NSW State Flood Plan and the State Storm Plan – it provided the framework which guided NSW's response to the recent major flooding.

The *State Emergency Services Act 1989* (NSW) (SES Act) and EMPLAN identify the NSW State Emergency Services (NSW SES) as the lead agency responsible for responding to flood events and coordinating the evacuation and welfare of affected communities. Accordingly, NSW SES led the response to recent floods, and in particular the operations to protect lives and property. Resilience NSW has primary responsibility for leading the coordination of recovery efforts, which are still underway. A challenge for understanding the timeline of events for the response to the 2022 major flooding is that, due to its unprecedented nature and size, response and recovery efforts were occurring concurrently in different areas.

As the EMPLAN and its supporting plans demonstrate, responding to a natural disaster on the scale of the recent floods requires a whole-of-government approach. This submission therefore focuses not only on the response of the NSW SES and Resilience NSW, but all NSW Government agencies with a role in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from flood events.

The NSW Government is committed to improving its management of natural disasters, and to learning from the experience of the recent major flooding events. This is why, prior to the Select Committee's establishment on 23 March 2022, an Independent Flood Inquiry was announced on the 21 March 2022. This Independent Inquiry is being led by Professor Mary O'Kane AC and Mr Michael Fuller APM, and is examining and reporting on the causes of, preparedness for, response to, and recovery from, the 2022 catastrophic flood events.

The NSW Government looks forward to receiving the findings and recommendations of both the Parliamentary Inquiry and the Independent Inquiry, and to considering how these might inform the response to future flooding events.

# 1. Prevention and Preparation

## 1.1 The Legislative Framework

In NSW, the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (NSW) (SERM Act), which is jointly administered by the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience and the Minister for Regional New South Wales, governs emergency management arrangements.

The SERM Act provides for the preparation of the State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN), a comprehensive document which establishes NSW's 'PPRR' approach to emergency management:

- Prevention: to eliminate or reduce the level of the risk or severity of emergencies
- Preparation: to enhance capacity of agencies and communities to cope with the consequences of emergencies
- Response: to ensure the immediate consequences of emergencies to communities are minimised
- Recovery: measures which support individuals and communities affected by emergencies in the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and restoration of physical, emotional, environmental and economic well-being.

The EMPLAN sets out an 'all-agencies approach' which recognises that while no single agency can address all the impacts of a particular hazard, either in a proactive or reactive sense, it is necessary for a lead agency to coordinate the activities of the considerable number of organisations and agencies that are involved in responding to a particular event. These resources can be drawn from across all levels of government, and the non-government and private sectors.

The EMPLAN also outlines the governance and coordination arrangements which apply in relation to emergency management, and the roles and responsibilities of agencies. This includes the establishment of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and the positions of State Emergency Operations Controller (SEOCN) and State Emergency Recovery Controller (SERCON).

Under the EMPLAN, sub plans such as the [NSW State Flood Plan](#), the [NSW State Storm Plan](#) and the [Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Emergency Plan](#), are maintained for specific hazards and support the requirements related to them.

The NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) is the combat agency for floods in NSW. As the combat agency, NSW SES is the agency primarily responsible for controlling the response to floods. Established under the *State Emergency Service Act 1989* (NSW) (SES Act), the NSW SES is responsible for protecting persons from dangers to their safety and health, and for protecting property from destruction or damage, arising from floods, storms and tsunamis, across the State.

The NSW SES is also responsible for assisting the SEOCN to carry out emergency management functions in accordance with the SERM Act. In a crisis, the NSW SES works closely with its emergency services partners, including Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW Police Force to provide frontline support.

The EMPLAN is supported by the [NSW Recovery Plan](#), which provides a more detailed framework for recovery operations that can be tailored to support affected communities. Once a crisis has passed, Resilience NSW is the lead agency coordinating the formal recovery processes. Recovery committees at State, regional and local levels are responsible for recovery planning.

### 1.1.1 Subs Plans, Strategies and Supporting Systems

As noted above, the EMPLAN is supported by hazard specific sub plans and supporting plans, including the NSW State Flood Plan and State Storm Plan. Reviewed in 2021 and endorsed by the SEMC on 2 December 2021, the NSW State Flood Plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of agencies in response to floods across NSW. Similarly, the NSW State Storm Plan, endorsed by the SEMC in June 2018, outlines the roles and responsibilities of agencies in response to storms across NSW.

These plans outline the state-level multi-agency arrangements for prevention, preparation, response and initial recovery arrangements for flooding and storms in NSW at the strategic level. Flood rescue is conducted in accordance with the [State Rescue Policy](#).

Acknowledging the high flood hazard of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Emergency Plan was endorsed by SEMC on 4 June 2020. It, together with the 2017 [Resilient Valley, Resilient Communities-Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy](#), sets out arrangements to a flood emergency plan specific for the region.

As a key flood prevention and mitigation measure, emergency management sub plans and strategies are regularly reviewed.

The [NSW Planning System](#) also plays an important role in limiting exposure of development to natural hazards and climate change by adopting a risk-management approach to strategic planning and development assessment.

Under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act), the responsibility for land use planning and development control for flood management is shared between the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and local councils. These responsibilities include:

- DPE provides the strategic approach to natural hazards (through the Natural Hazards Package), as well as specific controls such as the flood clauses in the Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan. This clause enables local councils to grant development consent to rebuild or repair a dwelling that was destroyed or damaged in floods or other natural disasters in nominated zones, even if existing standards in the Local Environmental Plan otherwise prohibit it (for example, height restrictions or minimum lot size requirements).
- Local councils are responsible for understanding and managing flood risk in their local government area. DPE supports councils with this by providing technical support to councils under the Floodplain Management Program, and financial assistance to councils for studies and works to manage their flood risk through the Floodplain Management Grants Program.
- DPE's Water Group is responsible for administering the *Water Management Act 2000* (NSW), including the management of the State's groundwater and surface water resources and level gauges.
- Dams Safety NSW (DSNSW) is responsible for the regulation of around 400 dams across NSW. DSNSW undertakes risk-based compliance audits of the dam owners' safety management systems, including the adherence to state emergency management plans. Since July 2020, DSNSW has completed 85 audits of dam owners' safety management systems.

## 1.2 NSW Governance Framework

In addition to outlining the NSW approach to emergency management, the SERM Act establishes the governance and coordination arrangements, and role and responsibilities of agencies to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the effects of natural disasters and other hazards. This includes the establishment of the SEMC, the creation of various roles and the formation of functional areas.

Established under the SERM Act, the SEMC is the peak committee of officials which develops emergency management policy and oversees emergency management in NSW. The Committee is chaired by the head of Resilience NSW, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AO AFSM. Key roles of the Committee are to provide strategic policy advice to the relevant Minister and review, monitor and develop emergency policy. Specifically, the Committee is responsible for the key prevention measure of reviewing the EMPLAN and endorsing any sub plans or functional area supporting plans.

The roles and functions of the SEMC are translated as appropriate at a regional level through Regional Emergency Management Committees and at a local level through Local Emergency Management Committees.

The SERM Act also establishes the position, authority, and function of the SEOCON, the Deputy SEOCON, the Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON) and the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON), all of whom are senior Police officers.

During this emergency, the SEOCON established the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) on 28 February 2022 and supported the NSW SES in the response to this event. The SEOC is the central hub for that brings officers from all NSW Government response agencies under one roof to ensure a coordinated emergency response to the extreme wet weather that was impacting many parts of the state.

Until 8 March 2022, the SEOCON position was held by Deputy Commissioner Mal Lanyon APM, when it was transferred to Acting Deputy Commissioner Joe Cassar APM. On this date, Deputy Commissioner Lanyon was appointed to the role of Northern NSW Flood Recovery Coordinator.

Functional Areas are business units within NSW Government agencies that, consistent with the scope of their portfolio, perform specific emergency management functions. This may be to support emergency services organisations<sup>1</sup> to resolve the consequence of an emergency, or they may provide emergency risk management leadership within a sector. The Functional Area Coordinator, who leads each area, has the authority to commit the resources of participating organisations and to lead their functional area in support of the combat agency.

The NSW Government's commitment to supporting communities through the ongoing flood crisis was reflected with the appointment of Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience Steph Cooke as the new Minister for Flood Recovery. The expanded portfolio responsibility will empower the Minister to ensure the recovery process is coordinated, well-funded and enacted swiftly.

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<sup>1</sup> Emergency services organisations include the Ambulance Service of NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, a fire brigade within the meaning of the *Fire and Rescue Act 1989*, NSW Police Force, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW State Emergency Service, Surf Life Saving NSW, NSW Volunteer Rescue Association Inc, Volunteer Marine Rescue NSW, an agency that manages or controls an accredited rescue unit, a non-governmental agency that is prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this definition.

### 1.3 2021-2022 Storm Season Seasonal outlook and briefing

Seasonal outlooks and briefings are a common feature of NSW's emergency management approach that focus primarily on building awareness and understanding of the forecasted conditions at the beginning of each disaster season. As part of the preparation phase, the NSW SES provide annual briefings prior to each storm season to all emergency services organisations and functional areas. This is supplemented by weather and operational briefings at the commencement of each week to prepare teams and the community for any impending storm and/or flood risk.

The NSW SES also works closely with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM). The BoM has a dedicated meteorologist embedded within the NSW SES' State Headquarters (SHQ) and is in the process of embedding a hydrologist in the SHQ.

In October 2021, the NSW SES provided a seasonal briefing to all emergency services organisations and other government partners on the potential for flooding during the 2021-22 Storm Season (1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022). During this briefing, agencies were notified that the BoM had declared a La Niña watch on 14 September 2021, outlining that there was a potential for a La Niña. The seasonal briefing also outlined the preparations the NSW SES was undertaking, including a focus on the following:

- Emergency response with COVID-19
- Resourcing and asset management
- Evacuation management
- Incident management
- Warnings
- Rapid damage assessment
- Flood awareness campaigns.

### 1.4 Applying lessons identified from previous seasons

Floods can occur at any time of the year. An important phase when preparing for an upcoming storm season is ensuring consideration and implementation of lessons identified from previous seasons. Capturing the lessons identified is critical to ensuring continuous improvement, information sharing, planning, emergency risk management and improving response and recovery.

For example, following the unprecedented flooding in Dungog in 2015, a Coronial Inquest recommended the NSW SES embed a meteorologist from the BoM within its State Headquarters. The NSW SES has actioned this recommendation.

The NSW Government is also continuing its work implementing initiatives that have been undertaken in response to the findings and recommendations of past natural disaster-related Inquiries and Royal Commissions. Following the catastrophic 2019-2020 bush fire season, the NSW Government is working closely with the Commonwealth Government to respond to the recommendations from the [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements](#). This is complemented by the progress already underway following the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, with [quarterly progress reports](#) to provide regular updates on the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations.

In NSW, there is an overarching framework for emergency management agencies to capture the learnings from previous seasons and make recommendations for future seasons. The Lessons Management Framework and the State Lessons Analysis Process and accompanying Reports aim to build a safer, stronger, more disaster resilient NSW.



### 1.4.1 Lessons Management Framework

The Lessons Management Framework for the NSW Emergency Management Sector provides a framework that captures and analyses information to develop lessons that can be applied to strengthen emergency management capability across the sector. The Framework was endorsed by the SEMC in March 2019.

The Lessons Management Framework identifies five essential elements to support the implementation of a Lessons Management lifecycle:

- Governance
- Leadership and culture
- Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Standard language
- A clearly defined Lessons Management process for identifying, sharing and learning lessons.

Applied together, the elements support and sustain a consistent approach to Lessons Management. The Framework acknowledges the progress already completed by many emergency services organisations and relevant government agencies and provides a way for agencies to develop and build on existing levels of maturity in Lessons Management.

### 1.4.2 State Lessons Analysis Process

Following the endorsement of the Lessons Management Framework in 2019, SEMC embarked on a project to implement state level lessons management capability. In 2019, the first State Lessons Analysis Report was produced under the Framework and endorsed by the SEMC in June 2020. This report highlighted the opportunities to improve the effectiveness of exercise planning and design, and interagency communications and interoperability with energy providers.

The 2020 State Lessons Analysis Report focused on the lessons identified from the 2019-2020 bushfires, the February 2020 storms and floods as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Another State Lessons Analysis Process was undertaken in August 2021 to identify state level learning opportunities for the preceding 12 months. The final report was endorsed in February 2022 and identified additional learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and other large-scale disasters that have been shared with stakeholders to consider and apply within their own context where applicable.

## 1.5 Composition and resourcing of relevant emergency management agencies

In recognition of the important role the emergency services organisations play, the NSW Government allocates substantial recurrent and capital funding in its Budget to support these activities. Cumulatively, the NSW community is supported by over 99,000 emergency services staff and volunteers, with funding and resourcing for key agencies identified below:

Agency	Staff / Volunteers	2021-22 Budget
Resilience NSW	245 / N/A	Recurrent Expenses: \$1,290.3 million Capital Expenditure: \$11.7 million
NSW SES	333 / 10,214	Recurrent Expenses: \$193.1 million Capital Expenditure: \$47.3 million
Fire and Rescue NSW	7,407 / 5,075	Recurrent Expenses: \$847.1 million Capital Expenditure: \$82.6 million
NSW Rural Fire Service	1,079 / 75,354	Recurrent Expenses: \$656.4 million Capital Expenditure: \$29.7 million
NSW Ambulance	6,710 / 342	Recurrent Expenses: \$1,101.4 million Capital Expenditure: \$125.2 million

\* Please note, a majority of the Resilience NSW budget is allocated to the Disaster Relief Account

## 1.6 Community engagement

A key aspect of pre-disaster preparation is ensuring communities understand the risks they face and how they will be impacted. Being prepared at the individual, household and local community level is essential in building resilience to floods. The NSW SES continually supports the preparation, coordination and delivery of community engagement and capability building programs to assist communities in building resilience to floods.

Ahead of, and during, the 2021-22 storm season, NSW SES undertook community awareness and engagement campaigns in areas identified with the greatest risk. This included the Northern Rivers, Hawkesbury-Nepean and Central Coast. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, between June and December 2021, community engagement activities were largely digital and print consisting of a range of tailored social media, print, presentations, displays and in-place media advertising. This included creating separate website pages for the Georges River and Northern Rivers catchments which contained localised information about flood risk, preparedness activities and links to other relevant information such as their local council emergency dashboards and the BoM, as well as in-language resources for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, community meetings were held in the Northern Rivers communities in the leadup to February 2022 to discuss flood risk and flood preparedness with locals. Three community meetings were held in Northern Rivers, two in the Lismore area with one being livestreamed on Facebook to assist with accessibility.

Infrastructure NSW, Resilience NSW and NSW SES jointly delivered a preparedness campaign targeted at residents of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. The campaign, which ran from October to December 2021, encouraged community members to recognise the early signs of potential flooding

and have a plan in place to respond. The campaign was delivered through social media and in print advertising, and recently won the national Emergency Media and Public Affairs award for 'Excellence in Readiness & Resilience' with the measurement outcomes of the campaign informing further campaigns in the Northern Rivers and Central Coast. Additionally, there are also numerous programs focusing on communities of concern to assist in building flood resilience across the valley.

Resilience NSW also provided emergency management training at an organisational level. Throughout 2021, Resilience NSW provided both online and face-to-face emergency management training to various entities, including Local and State Government and non-government organisations. Training included key skills such as Emergency Operations Centre concepts and evacuation management. Since 1 January 2021, over 6,500 people received online training and, despite operating under COVID-19 restrictions, 750 people received face-to-face training.

The Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) delivers assistance to landholders to help them get ready for adverse events. For example, financial assistance programs build or rebuild on-farm infrastructure including flood gates and livestock flood refuge mounds and provide flood safety information for rural properties. Assistance has also included Department of Primary Industries (DPI) led flood-ready dairying and flood-ready cane farming projects on the north coast of NSW.

## 2. Prevention and Preparation

### 2.1 Incident Management Arrangements

Based on the nationally recognised system for incident management, the 2022 flood event was considered a Level 3 incident<sup>2</sup>. Accordingly, on 23 February 2022, the NSW SES State Command Centre (SCC) was activated.

The SCC facilitated resourcing, planning, intelligence, and public information activities to support the operations of zone-based Incident Management Teams. The SCC is based at the NSW SES State Headquarters in Wollongong. The State Duty Commander oversees the SCC and is the delegate of the State Controller. The State Controller is the NSW SES Commissioner, and they are responsible for exercising the functions under the SES Act.

The NSW SES Incident Control Centres were established in areas of risk and operated in the Northern, Metro and Southern Eastern Zones. Incident Controllers were appointed, and multi-agency Incident Management Teams stood up to support the Incident Controller. A fully expanded incident management structure was adopted, and a significant number of people were involved in the respective Incident Management Teams, which were operating 24/7.

The NSW SES maintained control and coordinated the emergency response across all emergency services and supporting agencies. The SEOC and SEOC supported the NSW SES throughout the response.

Throughout the flood event, the NSW SES shared information and intelligence internally, to the SEOC and other state and federal government agencies through:

- Daily operational briefs
- Weather updates
- Situational awareness reports
- Operational update reports
- State overview reports
- Common operating picture

Throughout the preparation and response phases, NSW SES used flood intelligence, official forecasts, local knowledge and expertise, warnings, and flood scenario products to undertake an assessment of the predicted impact of a flood to inform operational decision-making.

#### 2.1.1 Evacuation Arrangements

Evacuation is NSW SES's primary response strategy for managing populations at risk from flooding. NSW SES coordinates and manages the evacuation of affected communities when there is a risk to public safety.

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<sup>2</sup> The Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) is the nationally recognised system of management for the fire and emergency service agencies in Australia. AIIMS identifies three levels of incident (Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3). Level 3 incidents are characterised by degrees of complexity and consequence that may require significant resources and structure for the effective management of the situation.

When an evacuation order is issued, individuals make a personal choice as to whether to evacuate based on their perception of risk and historical events. In consultation with the relevant Incident Controller, SERCON and supporting agencies, NSW SES will consider the ongoing risk to public safety when determining when it is safe for individuals to progressively return.

The Incident Controllers will issue an All Clear or a Flood Advice with the calls to action of “return safely” or “return with caution” message when the immediate danger to life and property has passed for the flood impacted areas. There may still be hazards within the area even though floodwaters have receded.

Since the start of the severe weather events on 22 February, a cumulative total of 156 evacuation warnings have been issued, impacting 635,752 people, and a cumulative total of 174 evacuation orders have been issued, impacting 169,679 people.

The NSW SES is the lead agency for flood rescue within NSW once an area of operation is declared. They coordinate and undertake flood rescues using trained personnel and specialist equipment. Flood rescue operations are conducted in accordance with the State Rescue Board Land Rescue Policy and the State Rescue Board Flood Rescue Policy. On 24 February 2022, NSW SES requested the assistance of supporting emergency services organisations to undertake flood rescues on its behalf due to the volume of requests, from agencies including Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW Police Force, NSW Maritime, NSW Ambulance, Marine Rescue NSW, Surf Lifesaving NSW and the Volunteer Rescue Association.

As at 12 May 2022, 2,229 flood rescues had been conducted, with 32,179 requests to NSW SES for assistance. Rescues were undertaken from land, air and water.

The NSW Rural Fire Service provided timely coordination of aviation resources as part of the State Air Desk arrangements in support of NSW SES and other agencies involved in the response operations. In addition, heavy plant machinery was deployed to assist with debris removal, clearing roadways and water egress. The NSW Rural Fire Service also established an operated a base camp for 41 days in Wollongbar to accommodate multi-agency personnel.

Fire and Rescue NSW provided aerial intelligence using its remote piloted aircraft to assist with rescues and the volumetric mapping of waste in several locations. Fire and Rescue NSW also assisted with the pumping out of large volumes of water using the Hytrans pumping system. The Hytrans was deployed to the Northern Rivers region from 24 February to 12 March to remove water from behind the Lismore levee.

## 2.2 Cross-jurisdictional emergency support

When additional resources are required from outside the State, access to these is managed through the National Resource Sharing Centre. NSW SES requested interstate assistance on 28 February 2022 and began receiving the support on 1 March 2022. In the period up to 12 April 2022, 785 interstate resources were provided.

The interstate resources for the 2022 flood event included storm crews, Incident Management Team personnel, peer support, community liaison officers and flood rescue personnel.

Assistance was provided from:

- South Australia (State Emergency Service and Metropolitan Fire Service)
- Victoria (State Emergency Service, Fire Rescue, Country Fire Authority, Forest Fire Management and Victoria Police)

- Western Australia (Department of Fire and Emergency Services)
- Tasmania (State Emergency Service, Fire Service, Health Department and Surf Life Saving)
- Queensland (Queensland Fire and Emergency Services)
- Northern Territory (State Emergency Service) and
- ACT (State Emergency Service and Emergency Services Agency).

## 2.3 Australian Defence Force Assistance

The Commonwealth Government has provided and continues to provide significant assistance to the NSW response efforts following the 2022 flood events. The NSW Government acknowledges the Commonwealth's role in supporting States' management of disasters and emergencies, with arrangements for non-financial support set out in the Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN), and for financial assistance set out under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), which is addressed under the Recovery section.

Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) provides for Defence assistance to States and Territories. On 27 February 2022, NSW SES made its first request for DACC assistance to help in the Lismore area. The local Australian Defence Force (ADF) supported the north coast Incident Management Team with door knocking, sandbagging and use of their vehicles.

On 28 February 2022, NSW SES submitted a second DACC request for further assistance including rotary wing support with 24-hour search and rescue capability with winch capability, high clearance vehicles and evacuation duties, including general duties support and sandbagging in Lismore.

On 4 March 2022, NSW SES submitted a third DACC request for assistance to support a range of response, relief, and clean-up activities. This included, but was not limited to, continued aviation support and support for search and rescue; evacuation operations; road clearance; removal of debris; clearing access to critical infrastructure; damage assessments and essential services.

At the height of ADF involvement, there were more than 4,000 ADF personnel across the state assisting with the response and recovery efforts.

## 2.4 Evacuation centres and emergency accommodation

### 2.4.1 Evacuation Centres

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) supports Resilience NSW to provide disaster welfare services including establishing and managing evacuation centres and coordinating the delivery of key welfare services. Evacuation centres provide immediate emergency support, such as food, clothing and shelter for affected families and individuals.

DCJ staffing for disaster welfare supports is drawn from its workforce of frontline staff in child protection and housing services who are trained in working with vulnerable people experiencing trauma. DCJ staff are based in approximately 100 offices across the State and able to be mobilised within hours in the event of a disaster or emergency in their local community.

DCJ appoints an Evacuation Centre Manager to:

- Lead and manage staff, government agency and community partner teams in the evacuation centre to ensure quality of service delivery and adherence to legislative guidelines and disaster welfare practices, policies and guidelines
- Escalate issues to the SEOC or the DCJ Welfare District as required

- Provide regular briefings to evacuation centre workers and debrief workers at the end of shift and operations.

DCJ also appoints Disaster Welfare Team Leaders and Welfare Officers at every evacuation centre. The Welfare Officers are responsible for:

- Registering the welfare services of disaster affected people
- Assessing immediate needs and where required, coordinating the provision of food, clothing, emergency accommodation and financial assistance
- Identifying clients requiring referrals to other agencies and following established referral guidelines
- Conducting outreach to assess longer term recovery needs, and to provide information and assistance to facilitate access to other relevant services.

DCJ calls upon its pool of over 1,100 frontline and head office staff, who nominate themselves to be deployed to assist in the coordination of the initial response to disaster events including providing support to operations, managing the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line, as well as supporting the work of evacuation centres.

In major evacuation centres, NSW Health also played an important role in providing health services including mental health support.

Across the State, 80 evacuation centres were established for the 2022 flood event and received 8,188 registrations.

#### **2.4.2 Emergency Accommodation**

Emergency accommodation is provided within the first three months following a disaster and is managed by DCJ in collaboration with other agencies. The suite of short-term housing assistance options to support those affected by the 2022 floods include:

- Initial 28 days emergency accommodation in hotels to any person displaced by the floods, with consideration for an additional 28 days dependent on the person's needs and circumstances
- Rentstart assistance – up to 4 weeks bond loan and 2 weeks advance rent into the private rental market
- Links to available Airbnb and Camplify accommodation that could be made available free of charge or at cost. Referrals are being managed through Red Cross to broker this option with participating hosts.
- Short term accommodation at Sport & Recreation camps in 3 locations - Camp Koinonia, Lake Ainsworth Sport & Recreation Centre and Camp Drew.
- Crown Land sites in Evans Head, Maclean, Lennox Head, Casino and Wardell were used as evacuation and emergency accommodation centres operated by NSW SES.
- Crown Land Managers across the region provided support with informal evacuation centres and community hubs used for flood impacted residents, and flood refuges for cattle and displaced animals.
- Mobile Motor Homes for people displaced by floods so that they can remain close to their homes whilst clean up and repair is being undertaken.
- Emergency Temporary Accommodation provides clients who are not eligible for social housing, but have been affected by a natural disaster, a two-year lease to a social housing property.

Clients do not need to provide documentation, other than normal ID, and are eligible by virtue of their home being uninhabitable because of a natural disaster.

As at 12 May 2022, 6,066 flood impacted people had been provided with emergency accommodation. Information on medium and longer-term accommodation solutions is detailed under the Recovery section.

## 2.6 Freight and logistics

Transport for NSW's (TfNSW) role in the preparation, coordination and response to natural disasters was multi-faceted. Activities centred around emergency transport planning, logistics procurement, operations, customer support and communications. The NSW SES managed resupply, with TfNSW ensuring roads were opened to allow for essential supplies to be delivered.

TfNSW was responsible for assessing the impact of the floods on the State Road and Rail networks, repairing damaged assets, providing emergency transport, and working with freight providers to ensure that communities continued to receive essential supplies.

Transport Maintenance and Delivery Teams provided on the ground resources to restore state-owned road assets within days of the event occurring. This included the allocation of 228 staff directed to support the worst affected Local Government Areas (LGA). TfNSW also worked closely with local councils to support the assessment of impact, provide technical support and expertise, access funding sources for recovery works, and reinstate key routes that provide connections to the State Road network.

TfNSW conducted daily briefings to industry to provide information on forecasted and real-time impacts to the transport network. TfNSW worked closely with freight providers to arrange escorted movements into isolated communities to deliver essential supplies and fuel.

TfNSW also liaised regularly with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads on cross-border issues and informed organisations, including the Australian Defence Force, on access into flood affected areas for critical services.

Specifically, the rail network in the Greater Sydney region was significantly impacted with 11 flooding locations, 47 landslip locations as well as damage to electrical high voltage power lines, rail tracks, rail access roads and signalling and communications equipment. Between 26 February to 11 March 2022, Sydney Trains responded to around 220 civil, 217 signal, 30 electrical and 227 operational technology incidents.

As part of the repair and replacement works, over 250 inspections were undertaken to enable the removal of blanket speed restrictions. As an example of the significant impact to the network, work undertaken to repair the Western Line included removing around 12,000 tonnes of spoil, installing 8,000 tonnes of rock backfill to stabilize embankments, cleaning one kilometre of drainage and installing 400 metres of new drainage as well as removing water, debris, silt and mud that had built up on the track.

## 2.7 Water Utilities

DPE is responsible for supporting local councils to repair and replace water and sewerage utilities following a natural disaster. Following the 2022 floods, DPE liaised directly with the affected councils' local water utilities to determine resourcing requirements and sourced offers and provision of support from unaffected councils such as Tamworth, Orange and Coffs Harbour as well as State Owned Corporations such as Hunter Water and Sydney Water.



DPE collected up-to-date water service status information from flood impacted local council-owned water utilities. This information was collated into routine reporting that was provided to key NSW Government stakeholders at the SEOC.

DPE also coordinated with Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program contractors and Local Aboriginal Land Councils to establish the status of water services in flood impacted Aboriginal communities, and to repair infrastructure to restore water services to these communities.

The DRNSW Public Works also has a role in responding to water and wastewater emergencies and worked closely with councils, DPE and Water Infrastructure NSW to undertake emergency repairs on assets such as the Nimbin raw water pipeline, East Lismore Sewerage Treatment Plant and multiple pump stations. The DRNSW Public Works is now leading the longer-term restoration program.

## 2.8 Animals and agriculture

DRNSW, through the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area (AASFA), is responsible for identifying at-risk animals and agriculture and for coordinating support to primary producers and animal holding establishments during an emergency. This includes the rescue, evacuation and emergency care of animals, as well as the assessment, humane destruction, and disposal of affected animals. Crown Lands Managers also supported this work providing refuges for cattle and displaced animals.

For the 2022 flood event, support up until 14 April 2022 has included:

- 3,403 calls to the Agriculture and Animal Services hotline
- 2,011 requests for assistance received (100% complete as of 14 April 2022)
- Distribution of 2,453 tonnes of fodder, in response to 885 landholder requests
- Direct rehoming of nearly 1,000 head of cattle displaced by floodwaters, and rehoming facilitated for another 5,000 head of cattle.

During the 2022 flood events, 395 personnel from DRNSW and supporting organisations were deployed to the AASFA State Coordination Centre in Orange and four supporting Local Control Centres in the North Coast, Hunter, Sydney and South-East regions to provide assistance and address risks to agriculture and animals.

## 2.9 Education

The impact of the floods on students, families, schools, early childhood services and training organisations has been significant. The Department of Education and TAFE NSW have worked collaboratively with other agencies to provide support during the crisis (for instance, numerous schools and TAFE NSW sites were evacuation sites) and during the recovery process to return sites to operational and support students, families, businesses and communities devastated by these events.

At the height of the crisis (9 March 2022), 331 schools had temporarily ceased operations. Educational provision has resumed for all students however, 21 schools remain closed due to flood impacts (as at 16 May 2022). Arrangements are in place or are being made for schools to operate from alternate locations where damage to school infrastructure or sites precludes the return to the school site.

Early childhood services were also impacted with more than 22 services currently closed due to flood impacts (as at 2 May 2022).

Provision of support continues to be provided to other training organisations including Adult and Community Education providers and Registered Training Organisations to limit the impact on students and employers.

More than 15 TAFE NSW campuses were also impacted by the floods. Alternative teaching methods were implemented when sites had to close and clean-up and rebuilds continue at some sites.

## 2.10 Telecommunications

Under the SERM Act, the NSW Telco Authority's Telecommunications Emergency Management Unit acts as a conduit between telecommunications carriers and emergency service organisations to manage critical communications in emergencies by facilitating:

- Protection of critical infrastructure
- Deployment of Public Safety Network augmentation
- Safe access to telecommunications infrastructure.

The Public Safety Network is a radio communications network used by emergency service agencies and government agencies to coordinate responses to disasters and emergencies. The Public Safety Network uses a combination of technologies to provide power in the event of an outage. Currently, on-site battery power for most sites will last for 15 hours. Several remote sites rely on solar power to provide both primary and secondary backup power.

From February to April 2022, the Public Safety Network maintained availability at 99.92%, managing around 4.3 million calls, demonstrating a high-level of reliability offered by P25 trunked radio communications.

Mobile assets such as generators and Cells on Wheels were deployed in the lead up to, and throughout the flooding, in anticipation that coverage would be interrupted.

A total of 802 commercial telecommunications carrier sites were impacted during flooding. Most site outages were restored within two weeks when it was safe to do so. During the peak of the floods, 18 communities across NSW had no telecommunications access. Telstra has advised they restored mobile communications to these communities within 13 days.

Carriers advise that the primary cause of outages was loss of power, flood damage or sites being inaccessible. The restoration process was based on safety considerations, the ability to access sites, the restoration of power, and the time to undertake assessments and commence repairs.

## 2.11 Infrastructure

The DRNSW Public Works provides engineering coordination, assistance and technical advice to emergency services organisations during emergencies in NSW, including natural disasters such as floods. Public Works has a role in prevention and in preparation of emergencies. This includes the construction of urban flood levies, contribution to bushfire building standards, local emergency risk assessments and emergency plans and emergency exercises.

Responsibilities include providing engineers in support of first response and coordinating and directing the provision of engineering resources in response and recovery from emergencies, including specialist advice for dams, levees, water and wastewater systems, emergency and make-safe repair work, infrastructure damage assessments and clean-up activities.

The DRNSW Public Works:

- Mobilised the statewide Engineering Emergency Management function

- Coordinated clean-up and make safe activities as requested by combat agencies
- Coordinated and directed the provision of engineering resources including specialist advice, emergency works, infrastructure damage assessments and reporting
- Procured the services of consultants and contractors as required to provide waste removal, structural and geotechnical assessments
- Collaborated with Local Government Areas, DPE and Water Infrastructure NSW to provide immediate response to impacted local water utilities.

## 2.12 Public Warnings and systems

### 2.12.1 Flood warnings

Flood warning products provide vital information to the communities of NSW on how to appropriately respond to flood threats. Warning systems are developed to inform communities of possible riverine or flash flooding and flooding downstream of dams. The supplementary document to the State Flood Plan titled "[Provision and Requirements for Flood Warning in NSW](#)" contains the relevant information on flood warning systems, products, warnings and advice.

The BoM issues public weather and flood warning products before and during a flood. These include:

- Severe thunderstorm warnings
- Severe weather warnings
- Flood watches
- Flood warnings
- Tide and surf information

NSW SES Incident Controllers issue the following NSW SES flood information products incorporating warnings from the BoM, expected consequences and safety messaging:

- Livestock and equipment warnings
- Local flood advice
- Flood bulletins
- Evacuation warnings
- Evacuation orders
- All Clear
- Flood Advice to Return safely or return with caution

NSW SES liaises with the BoM to discuss the development of flood warnings as required.

Prior to and during the 2022 flood events, NSW SES used a variety of methods to provide information to communities about the potential flooding. These methods include broadcast media (including ABC and other media outlets, both radio and TV), social media, door knocking, SMS, and the NSW SES and BoM websites and emergency alert.

The NSW SES website provides up to date community advice on evacuation orders, evacuation warnings, flood bulletins and evacuation centres. A flood bulletin is developed for each flood warning issued by the BoM outlining the impacts of the predicted flooding and providing safety messaging. It

is important to note that due to risk and speed of events it is not always possible to issue an evacuation warning before an evacuation order is issued.

NSW SES is currently reviewing its warning products to align with the Australian Warnings Framework.

### **2.12.2 Whole of Government communications**

Under the EMPLAN, the Public Information Functional Area Coordinator (PIFAC) is established to coordinate the public information being disseminated by government agencies during the response phase of the emergency. The role is currently held by a Sergeant of Police. The PIFAC liaises with the relevant departments to initiate or action a campaign or message in line with the government's position. The PIFAC needs to be across the messaging to ensure there is one source of truth, and to ensure that the timing of release of material is aligned with the government's position and strategy.

Following the recent floods, the Department of Customer Service led the coordination of whole-of-government communications on recovery. Key NSW Government channels used included electronic direct mail, social media, NSW Government branded advertising, print materials and stakeholder communications toolkits for local MPs, councils, and other key stakeholders. The NSW Government website – [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au) – is the single front door to flood information for the public to ensure consistency and accuracy in messaging.

Service NSW also provided communication across the state about flood recovery services using existing platforms including the Service NSW website, MyServiceNSW Account and related emails, social media and Service Centre networks.

The DRNSW is the dedicated central agency for regional NSW and provides a critical connecting role across government, particularly in disaster recovery. Following the 2022 floods, the DRNSW staff were on the ground within days to provide coordination and contact points for key stakeholders, liaising directly with Mayors and Local Government General Managers. Specifically, the DRNSW staff made phone 'care calls' to local government agencies and local businesses.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) Communications team has supported the flood recovery media and communications response, working to assist with whole-of-government clarity of and accessibility of information. The DPC Communications team also worked closely with Northern Rivers councils' communications teams to respond to their needs and any resourcing issues, provide assistance and share engagement materials about the flood response, particularly relating to temporary housing

## 3. Recovery

Recovery from the 2022 flood event is ongoing and Resilience NSW and other agencies continue to combine efforts to ensure those impacted by this devastating event get the help they need.

The approach to recovery is detailed in the [NSW Recovery Plan](#), a supporting plan of EMPLAN. The SERCON is responsible for overseeing the preparation and maintenance of the State's recovery policies. Commission Fitzsimmons, the head of Resilience NSW, is the SERCON for this flood event.

### 3.1 State Recovery Committee

Resilience NSW leads the State Recovery Committee (SRC), comprising of representatives from across the NSW Government. The role of this Committee is to ensure all the resources of the NSW Government are committed to delivering a coordinated approach with maximum resourcing to ensure communities are provided with the support they need to recover from an event. The SRC meets on an as needs basis. In the case of this flood event, it has been meeting multiple times per week since 3 March 2022.

Under the SRC, the following sub-committees address the specific issues faced by communities, including:

- Housing Recovery Taskforce
- Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee
- Waste and Environment Subcommittee
- Infrastructure Subcommittee
- Transport Taskforce
- Business, Industries and Tourism Subcommittee
- Agricultural and Animal Subcommittee
- Funding Subcommittee
- Donations and Corporate Assistance Subcommittee
- Communication and Engagement Subcommittee.

### 3.2 Funding

Resilience NSW is responsible for administering the Disaster Relief Account to facilitate the reimbursement of extraordinary costs incurred by NSW Government agencies to deliver disaster assistance. Resilience NSW is also responsible for brokering support from the Commonwealth government, private, volunteer and not-for-profit partners.

Service NSW is responsible for administering grants and financial payments to impacted customers and businesses, in partnership with Resilience NSW and NSW Treasury as policy owners for these grants. The latest figures for flood grant assessments and funds paid to flood impacted customers and businesses are available on the [Service NSW performance dashboard](#). Service NSW staff help customers understand the support options available to them and assist in the submissions for financial support in both individual and business. Staff support is provided face to face in Recovery Centers, Community and Business hubs and on the phone (inbound or outbound by appointment).

Service NSW for Business actively engages with councils, Business NSW, local business chambers, industry associations and peak bodies to provide specialty information and advice and respond to enquiries on the support available for flood affected businesses. For example, Service NSW for Business worked with the Business Council of Australia to support BizRebuild which provides financial support and in-kind assistance to flood affected businesses.

The Service NSW fraud team liaises with the NSW Police Force to refer suspected fraudulent applications for Police investigation and criminal action, as required. Liaison with other agencies including AUSTRAC, the Tax Practitioners Board, and others also occurs in relation to suspected fraudulent conduct in the grants programs.

### 3.2.1 Disaster Recovery Funding Assistance

The Disaster Recovery Funding Assistance (DRFA) is the key mechanism through which NSW can seek financial contributions from the Commonwealth. As at 28 April 2022, the NSW Government and Commonwealth Government have committed over \$3.5 billion to support the communities impacted by the floods. This funding is providing critical support for individuals, businesses and Councils. The key packages include:

- Flood Relief and Recovery package of \$434.7 million for flood clean up; grants for small business, not for profit organisations and, primary producers; and grants for local councils.
- Local Government support package of over \$60 million in funding for all disaster declared LGAs to assist with the immediate response and recovery, as well as \$20 million to support Lismore Council with rebuilding and recovery.
- Housing assistance and community wellbeing package of \$551 million which includes - up to 16 weeks rental support under the Flood Recovery Rental Support; motor homes; mental health grants; and additional funding for clean-up.
- Economic and Industry Package of \$742 million to provide grants to businesses, rural landholders, primary industry and to help assess the damage to properties.
- Infrastructure package of \$800 million to help rebuild roads; deliver social housing and Aboriginal housing; and repair and reconstruct community, arts and sports infrastructure.

The above list is not comprehensive as additional funding will be provided to help communities and councils recover and rebuild. Current flood disaster grants statistics are published on the NSW Government [website](#).

### 3.2.3 Donations and Corporate Assistance

Resilience NSW has managed 258 offers of donations and corporate assistance to support those impacted by the floods including more than \$4.4 million raised for exclusive use in NSW. More than \$2 million of donated funds has been spent to date including items provided to local communities such as grocery and fuel vouchers, furniture, white goods, computers, etc. These vital goods support impacted people to get back on their feet and begin their recovery journey.

## 3.3 Access to government services

### 3.3.1 Disaster Recovery Centres, including mobile services

Resilience NSW, in partnership with other NSW Government agencies, local councils and non-government providers, provides face-to-face support to communities in need through Disaster Recovery Centres. The Recovery Centres and assistance points are a one-stop-shop for families,

individuals and businesses to access disaster support services from a range of NSW Government agencies, community organisations and welfare bodies.

As of 12 May 2022, Resilience NSW had established 63 Recovery Centres and assistance points, which have provided vital services for over 35,000 people. Recovery Centres and assistance points were staffed by Service NSW to register customers and connect customers to NSW Government services or eligible grants with assistance from a Support Service Specialist (for individuals) or a Business Concierge (for Small Businesses). Customers with access issues are also able to call Service NSW on 13 77 88 for support.

Two Service NSW Mobile Service Centres have also assisted with current flood recovery including document replacement and grant assistance. A Mobile Service Centre was in Lismore offering temporary support for the Lismore Service Centre, which was closed due to flood damage. To further assist, a temporary replacement Service NSW was opened at Lismore Golf Club on 11 May. A second Mobile Service Centre supported Murwillumbah Service Centre when it was unable to open for one week due to the floods and left the area on 8 April 2022. Mobile Service Centre staff continue to assist in Woodburn, Broadwater, Kyogle and Coraki Recovery Assistance Points on a rotating basis. Both Mobile Service Centres were diverted away from their established routes to support the recovery efforts.

Mobile Service Centres have supported 5,745 interactions from 7 March 2022 to 28 April 2022.

The Lismore DRC also has a designated Business Hub. The Business Concierge are available to support businesses in the Business Hub to lodge applications for business grants and look at all options of assistance for businesses.

### 3.3.2 Replacement of licences and certificates

NSW Fair Trading and SafeWork NSW have been offering free replacement of certain licences, permits and certificates that have been destroyed or lost during the floods.

NSW Births Deaths & Marriages issues free replacement birth certificates to any victims of the floods, who were residents of any disaster-declared areas. Over 4,000 certificates have been issued from 4 March 2022 to 2 May 2022. NSW Births Deaths & Marriages has also coordinated birth certificates for affected residents who were born interstate with the respective state and territory registries.

## 3.4 Environmental Clean Up

Clean up activities undertaken by the Environment Protection Authority included:

- Removal of 23,492 truckloads of waste and 1,258 animal carcasses (as at 18 May 2022)
- Assessing and approving temporary emergency waste storage sites
- Securing a waste levy exemption from the Queensland Government to dispose of flood waste from the Northern Rivers in commercial facilities in South-East Queensland
- Approving waste levy exemptions for flood and severe weather waste from disaster declared local government areas including levy exemptions for waste disposal and road base aggregate and daily cover at landfills
- Undertaking aerial surveillance of the entire NSW coastline and major impacted waterways
- Leading shoreline and waterway clean-up of rivers, estuaries and beaches
- Engaging contractors to clean-up hydrocarbon pollution through 25 homes in Broadwater

- Monitoring water quality near damaged sewerage treatment plants
- Monitoring water quality and airborne asbestos at temporary emergency waste storage sites
- Coordinating process for notification, triage and assessment of landslips
- Coordinating support and advice for the clean-up of Cabbage Tree Island.

The emergency services organisations also made a significant contribution to the clean up of communities, including the washing out homes, clearing debris, and attending to vessels that had sunk, broken from moorings or were at risk of causing a marine incident.

### 3.5 Housing

The provision of housing to those impacted by a natural disaster can be separated into three categories: emergency accommodation; short to medium-term accommodation which covers the period up to two years; and long-term accommodation which covers the period beyond two years.

Following the 2022 floods, DCJ has established the Northern NSW Housing Flood Recovery Service (HFRS) with an on-the-ground presence in the region. This service aims to assist people to source both immediate and longer-term housing solutions in their local communities or areas where they have family and local networks and to assist people access financial, practical and social supports where needed. As of 25 April 2022, the onsite HFRS has interviewed 497 clients in emergency accommodation to discuss their ongoing housing needs and 16 clients having exited emergency accommodation.

The DRNSW Public Works is managing delivery of the Flood Property Assessment Program. This program is jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments and covers the condition assessment of flood affected insured and uninsured residential and eligible commercial properties (small businesses and primary production). Where the assessment finds the property to be unsafe or beyond economical repair, with the property owners' consent, the option of demolition is available and provided at no cost. The demolition option allows property owners and small business owners to focus on rebuilding their homes and businesses.

DPE established a cross-agency Housing Recovery Taskforce to address the short, medium and long-term housing issues arising out of the flood event. The focus of the Taskforce has been on securing safe temporary locations for displaced residents to live whilst a clear plan to build back is developed.

Public Works has been managing the procurement of temporary housing on behalf of Resilience NSW. There is very limited market capacity for immediately available temporary housing. To understand availability and lead times for temporary housing, Public Works established a Registration of Interest (RoI) on the NSW Government e-tenders site. Additionally, Public Works has reached out to known suppliers, including NSW Government prequalified contractors, contractors currently engaged for other works and contractors used by the Commonwealth Government for construction of quarantine facilities. From this process, it has been identified that there is typically a lead time of 8+ weeks from engagement of suppliers to arrival of the housing units on site. Suitable housing suppliers are being identified in consultation with Resilience NSW and the Government Architect prior to supplier engagement by Public Works.

The Housing Recovery Taskforce undertook analysis of over 300 sites to assess their suitability for temporary housing. As at 18 May 2022, 20 sites have been identified to place temporary accommodation across Lismore, Tweed Heads, Mullumbimby, Brunswick Heads, Ballina, Evans Head, Wardell, and Coraki in the Northern Rivers and North Coast regions.



As at 13 May 2022, nine temporary accommodation sites have been secured by the NSW Government to house around 800 temporary modular homes. The secured sites are located at:

- Wollongbar Sports Field, Wollongbar;
- Adjacent to Tweed Holiday Parks, Pottsville North;
- Bath Street, Wardell;
- Park Street, Evans Head;
- Booyong Street, Evans Head;
- Alphadale Street, Lindendale;
- Southern Cross University, Lismore
- The corner of Wagner and Uralba Streets, Woodburn; and
- Lismore Golf Course, East Lismore.

On 12 May 2022, the first temporary accommodation site of Wollongbar began receiving displaced residents. The site has the capacity to house up to 220 people, and is part of the ongoing housing recovery process to assist around 25,000 households.

With the announcement of the nine secured temporary accommodation sites and the placement of pods procured by Resilience NSW, the work of the Taskforce is shifting to the long-term housing outcomes to support the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC).

Additionally, to support the ongoing housing recovery efforts, DPE has made changes to the planning system to allow public authorities to establish these temporary housing sites without development consent. Legislative amendments to existing instruments have also been made to:

- Make demolishing damaged buildings easier
- Enable homeowners to undertake non-structural repairs and to make good their buildings (i.e. restore its conditions or make good any damage caused), and
- Allow those impacted to use shipping containers for storage purposes for up to two years without council approval.

These changes were part of a broader set of natural disaster recovery provisions and advice DPE has provided to Councils.

Longer-term housing solutions will be led by the NRRC which was announced on 19 April and will be legally established on 1 July 2022. David Witherdin has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the NRRC.

The NRRC will coordinate planning, rebuilding and construction work of essential services, infrastructure and housing across multiple government agencies to help people in the Northern Rivers communities to rebuild their homes and lives as quickly as possible.

The NRRC will sit within the Department of Regional NSW and report to the Deputy Premier. The NRRC will be supported by an advisory board consisting of local representatives, such as local members of parliament and mayors, as well as leaders in the community, ensuring local expertise and knowledge is at the core of the NRRC work. Currently, DRNSW and Public Works coordinate trades people, smooth procurement and work with local government via a coordination office which will form part of the NRRC from July 2022.

The establishment of the NRRC will allow the NSW Government and local governments to respond and implement any relevant outcomes of the Independent Flood Inquiry and be a source of collaboration, coordination and long-term strategic vision for the Northern Rivers.

## 4. Appendices

### 4.1 Acronyms

<b>ADF</b>	Australian Defence Force
<b>BoM</b>	Bureau of Meteorology
<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and Linguistic Diverse
<b>COMDISPLAN</b>	Australian Government Disaster Response Plan
<b>DACC</b>	Defence Assistance to the Civil Community
<b>DCS</b>	Department of Customer Service
<b>DPC</b>	Department of Premier and Cabinet
<b>DPE</b>	Department of Planning and Environment
<b>DPI</b>	Department of Primary Industries
<b>DRFA</b>	Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements
<b>DRNSW</b>	Department of Regional NSW
<b>DSNSW</b>	Dam Safety NSW
<b>EDM</b>	Electronic Direct Mail
<b>EMPLAN</b>	NSW State Emergency Plan
<b>EP&amp;A Act</b>	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)</i>
<b>HFRS</b>	Northern NSW Housing Flood Recovery Service
<b>LEOCON</b>	Local Emergency Operations Controller
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Area
<b>NRRC</b>	Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation
<b>NSW SES</b>	NSW State Emergency Service
<b>PIFAC</b>	Public Information Functional Area
<b>PPRR</b>	Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery
<b>REOCON</b>	Regional Emergency Operations Controller
<b>SCC</b>	State Command Centre
<b>SEMC</b>	State Emergency Management Committee
<b>SEOC</b>	State Emergency Operation Centre
<b>SEOCON</b>	State Emergency Operations Controller
<b>SERM Act</b>	<i>State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 (NSW)</i>
<b>SERCON</b>	State Emergency Recovery Controller

SES Act	State Emergency Service Act 1989 (NSW)
SHQ	State Headquarters
SRC	State Recovery Committee
TfNSW	Transport for NSW

## 4.2 Overview of NSW Government agencies' roles in relation to the 2022 flood events

Cluster/Agency	Role
Aboriginal Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work across government to ensure consideration and coordination of response and recovery efforts for Aboriginal people and communities.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide on-the-ground situational reports on issues, needs and risks for Aboriginal people and communities.</li> <li>▪ Relay information and ensure open communications between Aboriginal communities and organisations and relevant NSW Government agencies, and vice versa.</li> <li>▪ Support Aboriginal leaders of communities that have been substantially impacted to be involved in all local Emergency Management Committees to ensure cultural safety is considered during both response and recovery phases.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Working directly with combat agencies during the response phase to support Aboriginal communities.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For example, in the Northern Rivers area, when the community raised concerns directly with Aboriginal Affairs NSW regarding the supply of food to isolated communities, Aboriginal Affairs NSW liaised with local Emergency Management coordination who tasked the Australian Defence Force to do food drops at the Aboriginal communities of Jubullum, Tabulam, Baryulgil and Malabugilmah, which were cut off as a result of flood waters and landslides.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Department of Communities and Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activates DCJ Disaster Welfare roles in the event of an emergency, including the District Welfare Services Functional Area Co-ordinator. Trained Disaster Welfare staff are mobilised to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supports Resilience NSW with frontline support to establish and manage the operation of evacuation centres</li> <li>▪ Coordinates the delivery of key welfare services to meet the immediate needs of affected people, including referring clients to other agencies where required and conducting outreach.</li> <li>▪ Liaises with Resilience NSW, government and non-government agencies to provide an annual audit of preparedness plans</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source and provide suitable emergency accommodation to affected people by:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mobilising the disaster welfare team in the Housing Contact Centre to receive referrals and place people into emergency accommodation</li> <li>▪ Establishing an on-the-ground housing specialist team to work with people in emergency accommodation to help them source longer term suitable housing and refer to services as appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Supporting public housing tenants affected by floods e.g. adjusting policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
<p>Department of Customer Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the Telecommunications Services Functional Area.</li> <li>• <b>NSW Telco Authority</b> – leads the Telecommunications Services Functional Area to deliver the operational communications needs of government agencies and essential services. This includes liaising with telecommunications carriers and emergency service organisations to manage communications in emergencies, and managing the NSW Public Safety Network, which provides radio communications for emergency services agencies and other government agencies. Prior to construction, all NSW Telco Authority sites are assessed to ensure adherence to planning legislation and regulation.</li> <li>• <b>Service NSW</b> – provides frontline support at all Disaster Recovery Centres, Community and Business hubs, including the provision of tailored and specialised support for individuals and businesses via the agency’s Customer Care and Business Concierge services. These supports are also available over the phone for customers with access issues. Service NSW administers grants for customers and businesses with support from Revenue NSW and administers the online digital Disaster Assistance Finder tool. Service NSW also answers the Disaster Assistance Line on behalf of DCJ, and deploys Mobile Service Centres to provide face-to-face interaction to assist with document replacement and grant assistance to severely impacted or poorly serviced communities as required.</li> <li>• <b>Revenue NSW</b> – provides financial relief for customers in affected areas with the suspension of enforcement action for overdue fines</li> <li>• <b>SafeWork NSW, NSW Fair Trading and NSW Registry of Births, Deaths &amp; Marriages</b> – offers free replacement of certain licences, permits and certificates</li> <li>• <b>SafeWork NSW</b> – provides advice and resources to assist industries return to business safely, participates in disaster recovery centres, promotes available business rebates</li> </ul>

<p>Department of Education and TAFE NSW</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist NSW SES with the coordination of the evacuation of schools and the immediate welfare of students until returned to the appropriate carer.</li> <li>• Provide space in schools and TAFEs for evacuation centres where necessary.</li> <li>• The Department of Education is also responsible for supporting early childhood centres as the regulator for this sector.</li> </ul>
<p>Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Office of Sport</b> – manages the closure of sports facilities and the utilisation of sport and recreation camps for evacuation centres.</li> <li>• <b>Create NSW</b> – provides support to address the needs of the arts, screen and cultural sectors in the affected regions.</li> <li>• <b>Destination NSW</b> – coordinates with Tourism Managers to discuss the impacts of the flooding events and how to best support the visitor economy.</li> </ul>
<p>Department of Planning and Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the Environmental Services Functional Area, the Housing Recovery Taskforce Functional Area and the Energy and Utilities Services Functional Area.</li> <li>• Activates various flood specific teams to offer coordination support. This includes the Environmental Services Functional Area Incident Management Team, Flood Response Team, Local Government Emergency Response Support Group, Crisis Management Team, Incident Management Team, and a working group between Property Development NSW and its property and facility management service provider</li> <li>• Activates Crown land sites as evacuation centres,</li> <li>• <b>NSW Planning Group</b> – implements the NSW Planning System to limit exposure of development to natural hazards and climate change. The Planning Group worked with councils to ensure the planning system is not an impediment to the recovery process. It is also Chair of the Housing Recovery Taskforce to identify temporary housing sites.</li> <li>• <b>Environment and Heritage Group</b> – actions the NSW State Flood Plan to prevent and prepare for flood events. This includes overseeing the delivery of the NSW Flood Prone Land Policy through the Floodplain Management Program, and working closely with NSW SES on the Flood Data Access Program to share data and information through the NSW Flood Data Portal. The Group also engages with flood consultants and coordinates the collection of key flood information to improve future flood risk management activities</li> <li>• <b>Environment Protection Authority</b> – leads the development and delivery of the initial relief clean-ups with Public Works Advisory and chairs the Waste and Environment Recovery sub-committee.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Parks and Wildlife Service</b> – responsible for closing and re-opening roads and campgrounds, and facilitating the safe access by emergency services to roads within National Parks.</li> <li>• <b>Crown Lands and Local Government Group</b> – Crown Lands has collaborated with key stakeholders and government agencies on the use of Crown lands for emergency occupation and to secure short-term accommodation. The <b>Government Architect</b> advises on the design of accommodation pods.</li> <li>• <b>DPE Homes Group</b> including the <b>Aboriginal Housing Office</b>, the <b>Land and Housing Corporation</b>, and <b>NSW Police Force Housing</b> – completed maintenance of flood damaged social housing and police housing properties and provided support for affected Aboriginal communities.</li> <li>• <b>DPE Water</b> – leads the provision of technical and operational assistance to local councils, and coordinates status updates from local council-owned water utilities.</li> <li>• <b>Water NSW</b> – manages the NSW Government’s water level gauges for the flood warning network in non-tidal areas in the State.</li> <li>• <b>Dam Safety NSW</b> – keeps NSW SES updated on at-risk dams.</li> <li>• <b>Manly Hydraulics Laboratory</b> – provides BOM with real-time access to data from stream and rain gauges and offshore ocean data in relation to storm surges. It also provides direct technical and on-the-ground support to NSW Engineering Emergency Management (Department of Regional NSW) as well as flood forecasting services directly to local government and other NSW agencies on a contractual basis.</li> </ul>
Emergency services organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NSW SES</b> – leads the response. It establishes a State Command Centre, requests inter-agency support and activates the functional area supporting plans, conducts state operations as per the NSW SES Incident Management Framework, manages the emergency assistance telephone line, and coordinates public information management strategies.</li> <li>• <b>Fire and Rescue NSW</b> – assists with the warning or evacuation of at-risk communities; undertakes protection tasks such as sandbagging; undertakes damage assessments; and assists with rescue operations.</li> <li>• <b>NSW Rural Fire Service</b> – assists with the warning or evacuation of at-risk communities; coordination of aviation support through the State Air Desk; undertakes protection tasks such as sandbagging; coordination of emergency services base camps; pumps water out of low-lying areas; and assists with clean-up operations.</li> <li>• <b>NSW Ambulance</b> – leads the out-of-hospital emergency medical response to the sick and injured, undertakes aeromedical rescue and swift water rescue on request of the SES.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resilience NSW</b> – leads the Welfare Services Functional Area. Apart from this, Resilience NSW is primarily responsible for the recovery operations including establishing the Disaster Recovery Centres, administering the Disaster Relief Account, and brokering financial support from the Commonwealth Government, private and not-for-profit sectors.</li> </ul>
Infrastructure NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages and coordinates implementation of the <i>Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy</i>.</li> </ul>
NSW Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the Health Services Functional Area.</li> <li>• Provides acute services at hospitals, and general health services at evacuation centres, including mental health supports.</li> <li>• Works with Primary Health Care Networks to support the primary care needs of flood affected communities.</li> <li>• Public Health Units work to prevent the spread of infectious diseases following floods</li> </ul>
NSW Police Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the Public Information Services Functional Area.</li> <li>• Assists NSW SES with the warning and evacuation of at-risk communities, and assist with rescue operations.</li> <li>• Conducts road and traffic control operations.</li> <li>• Coordinates searches of missing people.</li> <li>• Coordinates security of supply lines, and evacuation and damage areas.</li> <li>• Leads the State, Regional and Local Emergency Management and consequence management response in support of the combat agency.</li> </ul>
Regional NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area and the Engineering Services Functional Area</li> <li>• Develops funding packages, community planning and coordination, and emergency response delivery.</li> <li>• The <b>Department of Primary Industries</b> – plays a key role in preparing, responding to and assisting in recovery from animal and plant biosecurity emergencies, natural disasters and other emergencies affecting the agricultural sector</li> <li>• <b>Local Land Services</b> – responsible for preparedness, response and recovery for emergencies impacting on primary production or animal health and safety, and for providing and facilitating education and training in connection to emergency management</li> <li>• <b>Public Works</b> – leads the NSW Government flood clean-up response, and the Flood Property Assessment Program and supports LGAs with</li> </ul>



	<p>water and wastewater restoration, property assessment and demolition, essential public asset restoration, levee repairs and riverbank erosion assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Office of the NSW Cross Border Commissioner</b> – supports cross-border communities with preparedness and recovery for major events, including floods.</li> </ul>
<p>Transport for NSW</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the Transport Services Functional Area.</li> <li>• Undertakes impact assessments of roads and rail networks, and works to repair and restore these assets.</li> <li>• Liaises with the freight industry to ensure supply of essential goods and fuel is maintained.</li> <li>• Coordinates the mobilisation and deployment of all transport resources across all modes of transport that may be needed to support emergency operations.</li> <li>• <b>NSW Maritime</b> assists with on-water taskings including evacuation of communities, medical transport of paramedics and patients, delivery of essential medicines, movement of supplies, such as fuel and equipment, transportation of injured wildlife and attending to sunken vessels, and vessels at risk of causing a marine incident.</li> </ul>