



Hawkesbury City Council

Attachment 4
to
item 1

Recovery Action Plan - Hawkesbury
Nepean Region

date of meeting: 7 September 2021
location: by audio-visual link
time: 5.30 p.m.

Recovery Action Plan

Hawkesbury Nepean Region

NSW Severe Weather & Flood Event – March-April 2021

August 2021

Draft v2



Resilience
NSW

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Dharug, Darkinjung and Guringai people of the Dharug nation, the traditional owners and custodians of the land encompassed in the Hawkesbury Nepean flood recovery region. We acknowledge the trauma that has resulted from the significant destruction of the land and natural environment because of the severe weather and flooding. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging leaders.

We commit ourselves to working with Aboriginal people on recovery in the region.

Purpose

This Regional Recovery Action Plan (the Plan) documents the arrangements to manage and coordinate the **recovery** from the severe weather and flooding that impacted the Hawkesbury Nepean region in New South Wales between March and April 2021. Activities undertaken during the response and immediate relief phases of the flood are not captured in the Plan.

The Plan identifies the scope, impact, objectives, strategies, priorities, and actions that will drive ongoing recovery operations including linkages to ongoing bushfire recovery operations. It documents the recovery structure and considerations which underpin recovery efforts.

This plan was endorsed by the Hawkesbury Nepean Regional Recovery Committee on 26 August 2021

Executive Summary

The Hawkesbury Regional Recovery Action Plan outlines the medium and long term recovery priorities following the March 2021 floods and storms.

Overview

In March 2021, a record level of rainfall fell across NSW resulting in flooding over many areas along the state's coastline and interior. The persistent rainfall led to flooding in the Hunter, Central Coast and communities in the Hawkesbury Nepean Valley. Evacuation Warnings and Orders were issued for numerous locations. The Flood was categorised as a 1 in 20 year event.

This was the first major flood experienced by many people living in downstream communities. New residents were not prepared for flood impacts. Many of the lower lying areas are where many of our socially vulnerable members of the community are located, including social housing tenants and those living permanently in caravan parks.

A range of recovery services were established to support the community with the tireless support of local councils, government and non-government agencies. New bespoke Recovery Support Services were established to help long-term occupants of caravan parks who lost their homes. Three Recovery Centres were established, as well as Mobile Recovery Hubs for rural communities. The Hawkesbury Regional Recovery Committee and Sub-Committees will now lead a range of initiatives to support the long-term recovery.

A key factor in the flood recovery has been the compounding effect of multiple and consecutive disasters. Communities across the region are adapting and recovering from the 2019/20 bushfires, COVID-19 and, most recently, the March 2021 flood. These events have been difficult on their own, but their interplay has had a cumulative effect on community wellbeing, mental health, housing stress and business recovery. It is important to acknowledge that while this Recovery Action Plan predominantly focusses on the flood, there are overlapping recovery strategies taking place across the region at this time. In particular a number of strategies are underway to build preparedness and resilience to bushfire in the region. These are detailed briefly in the Plan.

Recovery Priorities - Subcommittees

The recovery priorities in the Hawkesbury region have been mapped by three recovery Subcommittees of the Regional Recovery Committee: the Animal and Agriculture Subcommittee, the Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee and the Business, and the Industry and Tourism Subcommittee. These committees have representatives from across the government and non-government sector and have led ongoing effort in the region.

Early in the recovery it was decided that the establishment of an Infrastructure, Waste & Environment Subcommittee at a regional level in metropolitan Sydney would be duplicating the work being undertaken by the State Waste & Environment Subcommittee. PWA Advisory and the Environment Protection Authority had representatives on the Regional Recovery Committee.

The key strategic priorities for the next six months are described below. These will be regularly reviewed, and actions complemented by other ongoing initiatives in the region such as the appointment of new Flood Community Recovery Officers and broader Recovery Support Services.

Priority Tasks for Animals & Agriculture Subcommittee

Public Information - Develop resources and FAQ documents for those affected in the animal, agriculture, and horticulture sectors.

Public Events - Mini meeting at Sydney markets and in south west Sydney to assist specific sectors.

See Annex A for complete Animal & Agriculture Subcommittee Report and Action Plan.

Priority Tasks for Business, Industry & Tourism Subcommittee

Monitoring for cross-crisis impacts, heavily impacted business sectors, indirect impacts to businesses, insurance issues.

Ongoing provision of advice and support to affected businesses.

See Annex B for complete Business, Industry and Tourism Subcommittee Report and Action Plan.

Priority Tasks for Health & Wellbeing Subcommittee

Mental health services and support – facilitate and promote access to services in the community and at recovery activities, produce mental health factsheet, provide opportunities for workers/volunteers to monitor wellbeing and access peer support.

Financial support and services – promote Service NSW storms and flood customer care services as a one-stop-shop for navigating and registering for recovery support services, promote and monitor availability of financial assistance and support, coordinate allocation of grants and donated funds.

Donated goods, services and funds – promote and monitor the availability of donated goods and services, connect charitable organisations with GIVIT to facilitate sourcing and matching of donations, explore opportunities for recovery support services to establish referrals to skilled volunteer organisations.

Communication and engagement – support the coordination of targeted recovery communications with communities, develop communications and engagement framework to support the strategic planning of activities in the region, target mobile recovery and outreach to affected areas.

Temporary/transitional housing – provide ongoing case management support to tenants of flood-affected caravan parks and properties, refer residents living in substandard conditions to DCJ Housing Link2Home, explore the need for demountable housing for residents needing to remain in the area while rebuilding and repairs occur or alternative accommodation is identified.

Clean-up and remediation – connect residents to NSW Storm and Flood Clean-Up Program and record needs not covered by the Program, refer residents to Riverbank Remediation Program, map impacted areas and residents regarding the extent and duration of access issues, link residents conservation and remediation initiatives and potential funding.

Coordination of recovery activities and collaboration between services – run a recovery planning workshop through the Subcommittee, develop coordination arrangements for managing recovery activities between agencies and with communities, provide capacity building opportunities to support effective community participation in recovery planning processes and coordinated delivery of recovery actions.

Building disaster resilience – explore opportunities to involve communities and community organisations in local recovery and preparedness planning, support and promote preparedness initiatives, promote availability of emergency management training.

See Annex C for complete Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee Report and Action Plan.

Hawkesbury Nepean - Overlapping Recovery Strategies for Bushfire and Flood Affected Communities

2019/20 Bushfires

Short Term Bushfire Recovery Strategies:

- Recovery Centres
- Recovery Assistance Points
- Community outreach programs

Medium Term Bushfire Recovery Strategies

- Community Recovery Officers for Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, and Wollondilly
- Bushfire Recovery Support Services

March 2021 Floods

Long Term Bushfire Recovery Strategies

- BCRRF Grants
- BLERF Grants
- Extension of Bushfire CRO's

Short Term Flood Recovery Strategies:

- Peppercorn Bespoke Recovery Support Service
- Three recovery centres
- Mobile recovery support program
- NSW Clean Up Program

Longer Term Bushfire Recovery Strategies

- BCRRF Grants
- BLERF Grants
- Black Summer Bushfire Grants
- Extension of Recovery Support Services

Medium-Long Term Flood Recovery Strategies:

- Appointment of flood-specific CRO
- Long term Recovery Support Services
- Sub-committee action plan priorities

Scope of Flood Impact

Background

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley covers 425 square kilometres of floodplain. The extent of the floodplain is based on the largest possible flood event, the probable maximum flood. The key areas of the Valley floodplain are at Wallacia, around Penrith, Richmond-Windsor, and small pockets downstream of Sackville. The Valley floodplain also includes the backwater effects (the river backing up) of flooding from the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, such as South Creek and Eastern Creek.

The Valley floodplain sits mainly within four Local Government Areas: Penrith City, Hawkesbury City, The Hills Shire, and Blacktown City, and includes the key population centres of Penrith, Richmond and Windsor, and many surrounding suburbs. Parts of the Gosford, Hornsby, Liverpool, and Wollondilly Local Government Areas are also included.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has a high flood hazard, with both historical and geological evidence of rapid widespread flooding across the Valley. The Insurance Council of Australia considers this Valley to have the highest single flood exposure in New South Wales, if not Australia. Approximately 134,000 people live and work in this region. This number is forecast to double over the next 30 years.

The Flood Event

In March 2021, the Hawkesbury-Nepean region experienced flooding, affecting low-lying areas along the river system. The flood was labelled 1:10 – 1:20 year flood.

Location	Observed March 2021 Peak Level (metres AHD*)	Approximate Likelihood (1 in X chance per year)	Flood Classification
Warragamba Dam	118.23	1 in 10-20	-
Wallacia Weir	35.16	1 in 5-10	Minor
Penrith	24.13	1 in 20	Moderate
North Richmond	14.91	1 in 10-20	Major
Windsor	12.93	1 in 10-20	Major
Sackville	9.71	1 in 10-20	Major

Table 1: Peak river levels, approximate likelihood rating and flood classifications from the March 2021 flooding in the Hawkesbury Nepean region. *Australian Height Datum. Equivalent to metres above sea level. Data sourced from Infrastructure NSW.

This was one of the first major floods experienced by many in the downstream communities. New residents to the area were not prepared for flood impacts. Many of the lower lying areas are also where many of our socially vulnerable members of the community are located. This includes social housing tenants and those living permanently in caravan parks.

A total of 160 persons presented to Evacuation Centres operated across Hawkesbury and The Hills LGAs.

Impact Summary

Local catchment and overland flooding resulted in bridge and road closures and damage, causing major community disruption. The failure of Bells Line of Road resulted in response and re-supply issues for populations west of the Hawkesbury River.

The Rapid Impact Assessment in the Hawkesbury identified that while the damage was dispersed, the low-lying areas of Cattai, Ebenezer, Pitt Town area, Sackville and South Windsor had a number of properties damaged. This assessment happened shortly after the event as an early indication of damage. In the Hills Shire, a significant amount of damage was concentrated in the Wisemans Ferry, Lower Portland, Leets Vale and Sackville area. These locations were prioritised for recovery centres and mobile recovery services shortly after the flood.

To date, there has been limited damage reports from the small business sector. But significant reports of damage to primary producers (turf farmers in particular) and landholders (market farmers and vegetable growers) as well as tourism operators (specifically a large number of caravan parks) along the river system.

Detailed impact assessment information indicating the summary of buildings destroyed and damaged by Local Government area is presented in the following table.

Type	Destroyed	Damaged
Blacktown LGA		
Residential	0	17
Commercial	0	0
Industrial	0	8
Outbuilding	0	9
Hawkesbury LGA		
Residential	30	385
Commercial	1	47
Industrial	1	13
Outbuilding	9	142
Penrith LGA		
Residential	3	3
Commercial	0	1
Industrial	0	0
Outbuilding	0	2
The Hills LGA		
Residential	18	18
Commercial	3	11
Industrial	0	1

Table 2: Summary of damage in five LGAs in the region. Figures as at 22 April 2021.

The overall view from service providers in the community is that there is a cumulative effect on the levels of trauma and fatigue in the Hawkesbury community as a result of the 2019/20 bushfires, February 2020 flood, COVID-19 pandemic, and now the March 2021 flood. Existing recovery providers have also noticed this flood event has directly impacted new geographical locations and different communities that had not been previously impacted by recent natural hazards. This increases the overall number of residents who have been affected by at least one, if not more, natural hazards in the last 24 months

Scope of Ongoing Bushfire Recovery

Bushfires impacted the Greater Sydney region in early December 2019. Over the 2019/20 fire season the region saw almost 800,000 hectares of land burned. Some of these same bushfire-affected areas were affected by the March 2021 severe weather and flooding and as a result there is overlap between the ongoing bushfire recovery and flood recovery. In addition, there have been different areas only affected by flood, resulting in a larger area in region undergoing recovery. The following table outlines the different LGAs that were both bushfire affected and flood affected or only flood affected.

Bushfire & Flood Affected LGAs	Only Flood Affected LGAs
Blue Mountains	Blacktown
Hawkesbury	Campbelltown
Penrith	Cumberland
Wollondilly	Fairfield
	Liverpool
	The Hills
	Parramatta

Table 3: Bushfire and flood affected LGAs

The following paragraphs present some of the main ongoing bushfire recovery strategies until July 2021 in the Hawkesbury Nepean region: Community Recovery Officers, temporary Recovery Support Services, bushfire funding announced in the region.

Community Recovery Officers

Community Recovery Officers (CROs) have been working in 22 bushfire-affected local government areas (LGAs) in NSW to support communities throughout their recovery journey. The officers are imbedded in councils and are responsible for the development of a range of recovery initiatives alongside community groups and stakeholders. Community Recovery Officers ensure community recovery needs are understood and that recovery information, events and activities can be tailored to meet local needs. These positions are jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

In the Greater Sydney region, CROs have been placed in Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, and Wollondilly LGAs. The CROs' roles have included:

- Assisting residents navigate their way through council with any bushfire recovery related activities such as development applications, rates discounts, waste removal and referral to the local Recovery Support Services.
- Conducting stakeholder engagement activities such as workshops to seek and understand the recovery needs of the LGA.
- Provide recovery and resilience activities related to the needs of the community, including youth game days, music festivals, recovery workshops, coffee catch ups, and delivering courses like chain saw handling and first aid.
- Providing support to council through submitting bushfire grants and managing community, micro grants through the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund.
- Reporting back to Resilience NSW on current and emerging issues.

Recovery Support Services

The Recovery Support Service (RSS) is a temporary case management service to help disaster-impacted people navigate the recovery services and supports they need including financial assistance, mental health, emotional support, and rebuilding, and providing advocacy on behalf of clients with services like insurance agencies and lawyers. This program is jointly funded by NSW and Commonwealth governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DFRA).

In response to the 2019/20 bushfires, 7 providers were activated across NSW. In the Greater Sydney region there are 3 providers: Community Links Wollondilly, Gateway Family Services and Department of Primary Industries.

The key supports provided by the RSS include:

- access to available financial grants and payments;
- emotional support and referrals into clinical mental health as required;
- support with clean up and debris removal options;
- assistance navigating the rebuild process including DAs, council interaction and engagement of tradespeople;
- advocacy with legal matters including insurance payments;
- connecting clients with other recovery opportunities, services and supports;
- and encouraging clients to reengage with their local communities and own support networks.

LGA	Total Active Cases	Total Closed Cases	Total Cases
Blue Mountains	50	41	91
Hawkesbury	101	138	239
Wollondilly	27	49	76

Table 4: Total cases supported by Bushfire Recovery Support Services. Figures as at 30 June 2021

Bushfire Grant Funding

There are three key grants programs that have been launched since the 2019/20 bushfires to support community recovery as follows:

Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) – Resilience NSW

In 2020, the NSW Government launched the Bushfire Community Recovery & Resilience Fund. The fund focusses on those areas that were disaster declared after the 2019-20 bushfires to support medium and long term projects that support community recovery and help build resilience.

In the first round, Blue Mountains City Council, Hawkesbury City Council and Wollondilly each secured \$250,000 grant for their communities to support disaster recovery.

The second round of applications closed in December 2020 with a range of projects approved across the region to support community recovery. Please refer to Table 6 for more information.

Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLERF) – Regional NSW

The Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Package is part of a \$4.5 billion bushfire support program co-funded by the Australian and NSW Governments for bushfire recovery, response and preparedness in NSW. It is designed to support job retention and creation in bushfire impacted regions. A diverse range of projects are funded in the region, driven by the specific recovery needs of each community and guided by locally led applications.

Black Summer Grants Program – National Recovery & Resilience Agency

In July 2021, the Australian Government announced a \$280 million Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program to help communities for recovery and resilience. The grant allows applications to apply for grants between \$20,000 and \$10 million.

Resilience NSW is working closely with Regional NSW to conduct a gap analysis of existing bushfire funding to guide where new applications and projects may be best placed to meet unmet community needs.

Bushfire Recovery Programs – NSW Environment Protection Authority

The EPA's Bushfire Recovery Programs are a \$95 million package of five bushfire recovery programs that address the ongoing bushfire waste challenges faces by public land managers in NSW. The five programs are the Bushfire-Generated Green Waste Clean-Up and Processing Program (Green Waste Program), the Aboriginal Lands Program, the FenceCycle Program, the Council Landfills Program and the Bushfire Dumping program.

Blue Mountains City Council, Hawkesbury City Council and Wollondilly Shire Council received funding for the first phases of some of the programs as detailed in Table 6 below. The second phase of programs closed on 30 June 2021, with Blue Mountains City Council submitting applications for the second phase of the Green Waste Program, Council Landfills Program and Bushfire Dumping Program and Hawkesbury City Council and Wollondilly Shire Council submitting applications for second phase of the Green Waste Program. These applications are currently under assessment and successful funding is yet to be announced.

Grant	Total Funding	Projects Summary
Blue Mountains LGA		
BCRRF Stream 1	\$250,000	1 project: a council-led community recovery grants assistance program, tourism recovery marketing

program, a town activation program, and a resilience festival

BCRRF Stream 2	\$2,508,986*	22 projects: youth support partnership, street art project, youth worker, capability building for businesses, renovation of community facilities, strengthening neighbourhood connections, emergency planning and response training, community events, mental health support, community education and workshops, household preparedness, development of local resilience and preparedness strategies, community information sharing mechanisms
BLERF	\$12,794,588*	11 projects: improving community infrastructure, destination management program, community workshops and education, creation of a business and community resilience and recovery hubs, development of walking trail, bushland restoration and protection, development of community bushfire committees, supporting residents with property repairs and preparedness, country and culture restoration
Green Waste Program Stream A	\$10,000	Data Collection Initiative - Grant to assess and document the extent of remaining bushfire-generated green waste in the LGA.
Council Landfills Program Phase 1	\$11,867	Impact Assessments - Council was provided with consultants to assess, quantify and report on the impacts that receiving bushfire waste has had on their landfill.
Bushfire Dumping Program Phase 1	\$18,484.38	Data Collection Initiative - Scoping the extent of bushfire dumping Council was provided with a designated consultant to scope the extent of bushfire dumping in their region.

Hawkesbury LGA

BCRRF Stream 1	\$250,000	1 project: a council-led resilience strategy and community education project
BCRRF Stream 2	\$1,913,295*	14 projects: mental health support and education, community preparedness, youth events and education, community workshops, upgrading community infrastructure, social events, art recovery project, household preparedness
BLERF	\$3,440,308*	6 projects: business support and resilience program, community infrastructure, bushland restoration and protection, community continuity planning, property repair support and preparedness, community bushfire committees, community advice and support service hubs

Green Waste Program Stream A	\$10,000	Data Collection Initiative - Grant to assess and document the extent of remaining bushfire-generated green waste in the LGA.
Council Landfills Program Phase 1	\$11,867	Impact Assessments - Council was provided with consultants to assess, quantify and report on the impacts that receiving bushfire waste has had on their landfill.
Penrith LGA		
BCRRF Stream 2	\$313,790*	5 projects: mental health support and education, community workshops, household preparedness
Wollondilly LGA		
BCRRF Stream 1	\$250,000	1 project: council-led development of a community recovery hub toolkit
BCRRF Stream 2	\$1,158,037*	10 projects: mental health support and education, upgrading community infrastructure, internet connectivity in public spaces, fire resistant gardening, mobile recovery and resilience hub, community workshops, household preparedness
BLERF	\$4,407,623*	5 projects: tourism recovery and destination promotion, upgrade community facilities, property repair support and preparedness, community bushfire committees, local workforce strengthening
Green Waste Program Stream A	\$10,000	Data Collection Initiative - Grant to assess and document the extent of remaining bushfire-generated green waste in the LGA.

*Table 5: Summary of bushfire funding and projects by LGA. *These amounts include projects that are being implemented across multiple LGAs.*

Hawkesbury Nepean Regional Recovery Committee

The Hawkesbury Nepean Regional Recovery Committee (HNRRC) was established in March 2021 to drive and coordinate the storm and flood recovery efforts in the five impacted LGAs across the Hawkesbury Nepean region.

The HNRRC is Chaired by Alison Morgan (Resilience NSW) and has representatives from the 3 levels of government, industry and not-for-profit bodies, and focuses on recovery with a regional lens. The HNRRC's work is centred around work with Local Governments to achieve local and regional outcomes, and acts as an interface with State agencies and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency on the recovery effort.

The HNRRC is committed to ensuring that the flood recovery operations are:

- Inclusive and collaborative;
- Integrated and coordinated;
- Adaptable to changing community needs;
- Empowering and supportive of community self-determination; and
- Sharing the responsibility of recovery actions.

Key functions of the HNRRC have been to:

- Develop and coordinate the implementation for the Recovery Action Plan that aligns with local impact assessments and plans. This is achieved through subcommittees reporting to the HNRRC.
- Ensure that relevant stakeholders, especially communities affected, are involved in the development and implementation of recovery objectives and strategies and are kept informed of progress made.
- Identify, pre-empt and manage local and regional recovery issues and trends.
- Ensure that recovery activities are in line with the NSW Recovery Plan.
- Report progress of recovery strategies to the SERCON and the State Recovery Committee.
- Schedule and participate in a Recovery Committee debrief process.

Subcommittees

The HNRRC established three Subcommittees:

- Animals and Agriculture (Chaired by Graham Wilson, Local Land Services)
- Business, Industry and Tourism (Chaired by Tim Poole, Western Parkland City Authority)
- Health & Wellbeing (Chaired by Vanessa Nieuwenhuis, Resilience NSW)

The work of the Subcommittees is detailed later in this report and forms the basis of the regional recovery strategies going forward.

Working Groups

The HNRRC established two working groups to assist with the regional flood recovery effort:

Elected Representatives Reference Group. This group provided a forum for Federal and NSW local Members of Parliament to receive advice about recovery efforts and provide

feedback from constituents. Separate briefing sessions were also held for local Mayors and the Chair of the HNRRC also attended and briefed some local Councils and Councilors.

Hawkesbury Nepean Riverbank Task Group. This group evaluated the damage to the riverbanks, creeks and tributaries along the Hawkesbury Nepean river system and the ensuing recovery issues that arose. It developed and implemented appropriate recovery strategies to assist landowners, businesses, and communities in recovering from the disaster and be better prepared for future flooding events.

Agency Representation

The following agencies were represented on the Hawkesbury Nepean Regional Recovery Committee, subcommittees, and working groups.

Local Councils

Blacktown City Council	Blue Mountains City Council
Camden Council	Campbelltown City Council
City of Parramatta Council	Cumberland City Council
Fairfield City Council	Hawkesbury City Council
Liverpool City Council	Penrith City Council
The Hills Shire Council	Wollondilly Shire Council

Regional Agencies

Greater Sydney Commission	Western Parkland City Authority
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State Agencies

Aboriginal Affairs	Department of Communities and Justice – Housing
Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment	Department of Primary Industries
Infrastructure NSW	Local Land Services
Natural Resources Access Regulator	NSW Environment Protection Authority
NSW Health	NSW Police REOCON & REMOs
NSW Small Business Commission	NSW State Emergency Services
NSW Treasury	Public Works Advisory
Regional NSW	Resilience NSW
Service NSW	WaterNSW

Commonwealth Agencies

Insurance Council of Australia	National Recovery and Resilience Agency
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Flood Recovery Actions March to August 2021

Clean Up Program

On 27 March 2021, the NSW and Commonwealth Governments announced the activation of the NSW Storm and Flood Clean-up Program. The clean-up program was to assist households, businesses, primary producers and local councils affected by the floods and will include both insured and uninsured properties. The costs were shared 50:50 between the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. This program was implemented in two stages: 1) immediate relief, 2) complex clean up.

In the Hawkesbury Nepean region this program was coordinated through local strike teams made up of NSW SES, NSW Fire and Rescue and NSW Rural Fire Service. The Australian Defence Force also provided support for bulk waste removal and the Public Works Advisory deployed skip bins. A total of 1,652 skip bins were deployed to Hawkesbury Council and The Hills Shire Council collecting 3,7871 tonnes of waste in the Hawkesbury and 2,825 tonnes in The Hills Shire.

Shoreline and Waterways Clean-up Program

In early April, the EPA tasked the State Air Desk to conduct aerial surveys using high resolution imagery of impacted river systems and coastlines. These surveys provided situational awareness for the extent of damage to river systems from the storm and flood event, including the Hawkesbury Region waterways. The flood impacted area was identified as coastal rivers and coastlines stretching from the Hawkesbury River to the Queensland border. Impacts included significant erosion and riverbank instability, anthropogenic debris and organic debris (vegetation).

The types of debris deposited included soft plastics, hard plastics (drums, tanks, floats), whitegoods, infrastructure, vehicles/vessels and organic waste (vegetation). The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) identified this debris as posing a significant risk to human health and the environment and the safety of navigation.

The EPA engaged specialist marine contractors, AVCON Projects to conduct clean-up operations in the river. Clean-up operations were nearing completion but are currently suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions.

To date 1750m³ of flood debris has been removed from Hawkesbury region waterways.

Shoreline and Waterways Maintenance program

A maintenance phase will soon commence for the Shoreline and Waterways clean-up program. Contractors will be engaged and deployed to collect flood debris that emerges from the action of tides, currents and weather which is reported to the EPA, including reports through Environment Line 131 555.

The contract for this program is out for tender until 27 August 2021.

Recovery Centres

Three Recovery Centres were established in the Hawkesbury-Nepean area to provide support to flood affected communities. Based on the initial damage assessments conducted by the NSW State Emergency Service, the flood caused significant damage across low-lying areas in the Hawkesbury and The Hills Local Government Areas.

Recovery Centres are 'one-stop shops' for government and non-government services for people affected by emergencies that:

- Provide a safe place for those affected by the disaster to meet and discuss their experience and needs
- Provide direct provision of government and non-government information and services in one easy to access location
- Expedite the provision of support

Resilience NSW worked with the Hawkesbury City Council and The Hills Council to set up recovery centres at South Windsor, North Richmond and Wiseman's Ferry. These centres were fitted out with the support of NSW Public Works and operated by in partnership between council and Resilience NSW. A range of agencies attended the centres while they operated including:

- Service NSW
- Council
- Department of Communities and Justice (Housing)
- NSW Health (Mental Health Unit)
- Australian Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Services Australia (Centrelink)
- NSW Legal Aid
- Department of Primary Industry
- Disaster Welfare Services
- Rural Financial Counselling
- Environmental Protection Authority
- St Vincent de Paul Society

These agencies offered a range of services including grants to replace destroyed personal items for people on low income without insurance, grants for flood affected primary producers and small business, as well as one-off payments through the Australian Government, Australian Red Cross and Salvation Army. Visitors were greeted by the Australia Red Cross on their arrival and people that became distressed could access psychological first aid through trained volunteers, social workers, chaplains or NSW Health, depending on their needs. For the first time in a major disaster, Service NSW managed the registration process of customers, documenting their story and connecting customers with relevant agencies based on their needs.

For a summary of the support services available to flood affected, please see Table 8.

When the three Recovery Centres were established there was a strong demand for recovery information in the weeks following the flood (refer to Figure 1). The South Windsor and Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centre were well-attended by the local community. Approximately 700 people registered their household for support across the centres, with

many people returning for follow-up advice. In total, there were 1600 presentations at the centre. There was a significant decline in demand for recovery support in the final weeks of the centre operations, suggesting that many people received enough initial support and information to start their recovery process.

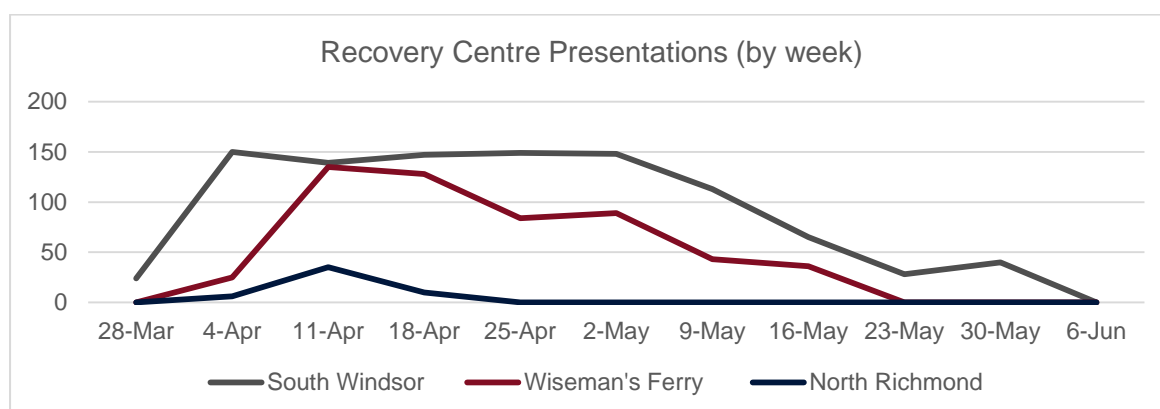


Figure 1: Visitation numbers to the South Windsor, North Richmond and Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centres

South Windsor Recovery Centre

The South Windsor Recovery Centre opened its doors on 1 April 2020 at the South Windsor Family Centre. The Family Centre is operated by Peppercorn Services, is well regarded by the local community for offering a range of services in the Hawkesbury including children services, community transport and senior support. It remained open for nine (9) weeks and in that time had over 1000 presentations. South Windsor was the busiest recovery centre across the region with multiple agencies available onsite.

The South Windsor Recovery Centre became a central support point for a number of groups affected by the flood. In particular, long term residents of caravan parks that suffered significant damage, those that needed emergency accommodation until their homes were safe to return to, primary producers and culturally and linguistically diverse community including the Market Gardener community. The Market Gardeners in particular come from a range of backgrounds. On-demand translation services were available at the centre and were accessed by a number of Cantonese, Korean and Kmer speaking customers.

The South Windsor Recovery Centre closed on 4 June 2021. However, recovery support continues to be available through the Richmond Service NSW, where customers can book a phone or face-to-face appointment on available flood services.

North Richmond Recovery Centre

The North Richmond Centre was established in close proximity to flood affected farmland and properties to give primary producers easy access to support. The Centre was open for a short time only, with a strong community preference to attend the South Windsor Recovery Centre and visitations at the centre remaining low. It opened on 7 April and closed on the 21 April with 51 visitors in this time.

Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centre

The Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centre opened its doors on 9 April 2020 at The Retreat, Old Northern Road, Wiseman's Ferry. The Centre was established in partnership between The

Hills Council, Hawkesbury City Council and Resilience NSW to support flood affected communities on the boundary of these local government areas.

The Centre had 363 presentations, with a small number of socially isolated members of the community visiting the centre on a regular basis for support with applications, navigating services and a chance to talk with service providers around their changing needs. A number of clients in insecure housing arrangements made multiple visits to the centre for legal advice, social support and extensions to their emergency accommodation.

The Wisemans Ferry Recovery Centre closed on 21 May 2021.

Recovery Centre	Dates Operational	Total Visitations
South Windsor	1 April – 4 June 2021	1,003
North Richmond	7 – 21 April 2021	51
Wiseman's Ferry	9 April – 21 May 2021	540

Table 6: Operational dates and total visitations to the South Windsor, North Richmond and Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centres

Recovery Centre Service Visitation	South Windsor	North Richmond	Wiseman's Ferry
Anglicare	119	0	68
Council	111	11	149
Department of Primary Industries	29	0	12
Disaster Recovery Chaplains	239	0	66
Disaster Welfare Services	10	2	6
Environment Protection Authority	2	0	11
Health	20	6	14
Housing	50	5	14
Housing by Resilience NSW	0	0	24
Insurance Council of Australia	0	0	1
Legal Aid	61	1	43
Red Cross – meet & greet	760	49	355
Rural Assistance Authority	0	1	0
Rural Financial Counselling	110	2	0
Salvation Army	363	18	187

Services Australia (Centrelink)	378	22	304
Services NSW	470	66	401

Table 7: Summary of service visitation in South Windsor, North Richmond and Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centres

Community Recovery Hubs

Hawkesbury City Council is leading the coordination of Community Recovery Hubs across the region. The Hubs provide place-based access to recovery services for anyone affected by the floods or 2019/20 bushfires. Services and agencies attending the Hubs include council, Service NSW, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Rural Financial Counselling Service and NSW Health.

These Hubs were mobilised early in flood recovery, running weekly in Wilberforce, Colo Heights and St Albans up until June 2021. Hubs are now held fortnightly and include an additional fourth location at Bilpin. Health and wellbeing support and activities, including exercise and arts and crafts groups, are now run alongside the hubs. Since the commencement of COVID lockdown restrictions Hubs are being facilitated online, offering continued access to services as well as a range of wellness activities to support ongoing community recovery.

Immediate Flood Recovery Support Service

An urgent need was highlighted very early in the recovery phase to assist flood impacted individuals who were permanent residents of caravan parks in the Hawkesbury-Nepean area. Initial outreach work with this cohort indicated that most are on very low incomes and are reliant on support from aged care or NDIS services, mental health, drug or alcohol counsellors, or Parole Officers. Many will not be able to return to their homes in the foreseeable future. An in-principle agreement was reached with Peppercorn Services to provide intense and tailored case management support to these individuals.

In the period 30 March to 3 May 2021 Peppercorn Services provided support to a total of 84 cases. A summary of the assistance provided is in the table below.

Assistance Provided	Total Cases
Financial grant assistance – Disaster Relief Grants	4
Temporary housing	54
Clean up of properties	8
Emotional support	35
Clinical mental health support	1
DCJ Housing/Link Wentworth housing	38
Assistance/prompting to go to a Recovery Centre	43

Transport	9
Access to Peppercorn Brokerage to fill service gaps	15
Counselling	2
Legal Aid	13

Table 8: Summary of immediate assistance provided by Peppercorn as at 3 May 2021

Long Term Flood Recovery Support Service

Peppercorn Services have now been approved to expand their Recovery Support Service until 18 March 2022 and to broaden their reach to any flood impacted residents in the Hawkesbury and Hills LGAs. The Recovery Support service will provide tailored case management support to individuals and families through their recovery journey. There will be a team of 5 FTE Recovery Support Workers and recruitment will be finalised by the end of August 2021. Peppercorn will work with councils and other recovery partners to identify residents who can be referred into the service. By the end of August 2021 over 400 people have been identified. Peppercorn will also continue providing support to the 86 permanent residents of the Wilberforce Caravan Park who they have been working with since March. ResNSW has also finalised an agreement with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) for a Recovery Support Service across multiple flood impacted LGAs to target support for primary producers and landholders through to 31 May 2022. The DPI RSS will consist of 24 FTE staff across three teams – North, Mid Coast, and Greater Sydney/Southern. producers and landholders who requested a call back. Over 100 primary producers and landholders in the Greater Sydney recovery region have indicated they need RSS support.

Riverbank Remediation

The severe weather and flood event had a catastrophic impact on riverfront communities. Floodwaters have caused extensive damage to residential properties, public infrastructure, agriculture, businesses, cultural sites, and the environment. Private landowners on the riverbanks were particularly impacted and initial assessment undertaken by the Environmental Protection Authority and Local Land Services indicate that many sections of the riverbank will require remediation work.

In the Hawkesbury Nepean a Taskforce under the Regional Recovery Committee was created to investigate these issues and scope potential solutions. The Taskforce met between March and June 2021. The key issue identified was the existing approval process required for landowners to get approval to undertake any remediation works on their land. The current process is complex, costly and very slow. As a result, landowner are reluctant to seek approvals and many will undertake unauthorised and inappropriate works. In many cases this results in long-term environmental damage that can have implications for neighbouring landowners and the entire river system.

In response to this the Taskforce developed a model to support a “Fast-Tracked” Riverbank Approval Program. The key elements of this are a focus on the compression of the timelines and steps required for approval, without compromising the environmental standards and protections in place. The model “Fast Tracked” process is a state-wide program that provides a framework to ensure all relevant agencies are consulted about specific applications, can apply consistent approaches to remediation works and can consider applications as quickly as possible. The process provides one point of entry for landowners

seeking approval to undertake works. Technical advisors will provide support to a landowner from the initial assessment of a site through to design, approvals, and completion of works.

The “Fast Tracked” Approval process received funding in July 2021 under Category C of the Disaster Assistance Grants and the program will be implemented and managed by Local Land Services as part of a broader Riverbank Remediation package.

Disaster Relief Grants

Financial assistance was made available to eligible individuals and families who experienced damage to their homes and/or contents in the March 2021 floods. This assistance is provided in two categories: replacement of essential household contents and essential structural repairs. This assistance is provided to re-establish a basic standard of living, not to replace insurance or compensate for losses.

To be eligible the following must apply:

- Primary place of residence was damaged by the disaster,
- Do not have insurance for the damage,
- Are a low income earner with limited financial resources; and
- It has been less than 4 months since the disaster.
- The application process includes an income and assets assessment.

The table below provides a summary of the total number of applications received across the five impacted LGAs in the region.

Local Government Area	Total Applications Received
Blacktown	7
Hawkesbury	57
Penrith	4
The Hills	10

Table 9: Total Disaster Relief Grants received. Data as at 28 June 2021.

Service NSW Partnership

Resilience NSW trialed a new partnership with Service NSW during this flood recovery to improve support to disaster affected communities. This partnership included a number of services, as follows:

- Recovery Centres: Service NSW led the registration process in recovery centres by recording clients details, collecting information on how they were affected by the flood and directing them to agencies that could assist (including but not limited to housing services, financial aid, legal advice, insurance, relief and small business grants).
- Disaster Assistance Finder: Service NSW expanded the ways that people could access support by developing an online ‘Disaster Assistance Finder’. The tool allows customers to provide a few personal details and provides information on a range of assistance they could be eligible for. Customers could also contact Service NSW on a 24/7 phone number for flood recovery advice.

- Outreach services: Service NSW worked with the Hawkesbury City Council to run outreach services to rural locations that were adversely affected by the flood. Refer to the section on 'Mobile Hubs' for more information.
- Flood Recovery Appointments – As Recovery Centres closed, Service NSW and Resilience NSW worked together to design a 'flood recovery appointment service'. The service allows people to come forward for flood advice and support after temporary recovery centres close. Clients can make an appointment directly with Service NSW for a face to face appointment at one of their centres. This service is being offered through the Richmond and Penrith Service NSW Centres. However, under COVID restrictions the service can only be delivered via phone to limit risk. Staff and Service NSW sit with the client and help them navigate a range of government and non-government services that will help them in their recovery.

Resilience NSW will continue to work with Service NSW to refine the service and improve how support is coordinated and accessed by disaster affected communities. A key priority following the flood is how to streamline how information is shared between agencies to improve the timeliness of support services.

Bushfire Community Recovery Officers Pivoting to Flood Recovery

Community Recovery Officers (CROs) have been funded in some councils by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to provide ongoing bushfire related community recovery activities. In March 2021 we received approval for the CROs funded in Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Wollondilly councils to pivot their activity to support flood recovery where needed.

- The Blue Mountains CRO supported residents with general clean-up and waste removal and referrals to the Step by Step Recovery Support Service as required.
- The Wollondilly CRO supported residents with general clean-up and waste removal and referrals to the Community Links Recovery Support Service as required.
- The Hawkesbury CRO provided on-ground intelligence throughout the flood event. The CRO established outreach hubs in flood impacted localities, enabling place-based access to disaster assistance. The CRO also developed a residents register with Council, seeking consent to refer residents to recovery support services and providing updated communications regarding the status of flood cleanup, grant assistance and recovery support services.

Community Recovery Officers - Flood Recovery

The Round three of Flood Funding agreed between the Commonwealth and NSW Governments in August 2021 included funding for Community Recovery Officers in The Hills, Hawkesbury and Central Coast LGAs.

The new CROs are funded for a period of 24 months and are embedded in and managed by councils to support their community. Their focus will be to identify local recovery needs, develop local recovery programs, assist in accessing information and resources, and provide leadership and community capacity building.

Disaster Assistance Grants under the DRFA – Round Three

In August 2021 The NSW and Commonwealth Governments agreed to a third round of funding under the Disaster Recovery Funding Agreement. This funding has eight programs. Detailed program costings and guidelines will be finalised by the end of September 2021.

1. **2021 NSW: Flood Industry Recovery Package**

Supply Chain Support and Sector Development Grants to support the immediate and longer-term recovery needs for heavily impacted producers and businesses in the agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture and forestry industries in flood impacted regions in NSW.

2. **2021 NSW Floods – Community Infrastructure Repair Program**

Local Infrastructure Recovery Packages for high to severe impacted disaster declared Local Government Areas (LGAs) for the rebuilding or repair of damaged essential community infrastructure

3. **Rural Landholder's Grant**

Grant of up to \$10,000 to reimburse the cost of clean-up activities, losses or damages beyond the vicinity of the residential dwelling, not covered by insurance, for rural landholders who do not qualify for the \$75,000 Primary Producer grant or the \$50,000 Small Business grant or the \$50,000 non-profit organisation grant.

4. **Restoration of Riverbanks**

A range of assistance to support public and private land managers restore environmental assets following damage from the March 2021 Severe Weather Event and fortify them so the effects of future stresses and shocks are far less.

5. **NSW Mental Health and Community Wellbeing Package**

Funding to enable provision of mental health services to storm and flood affected individuals and communities through the following programs:

Headspace Community and Schools Resilience Project

Aboriginal Mental Health Disaster Recovery Program

Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery Program

Regional Youth Resilience – Community Coordinator Program

6. **Restoration of Jenolan Caves**

Assistance to support public land managers restore environmental assets following damage from the March 2021 event and in some cases rebuilding them to a more resilient standard.

7. **Local Recovery Resources - Community Recovery Officers**

Grant funding to high impact local councils, as determined by Resilience NSW.

8. **Blaze Aid and other Volunteer Organisations**

Funding provided to BlazeAid and/or other volunteer and not-for-profit organisations for fencing materials, tools and equipment to support rural landholder fencing programs in flood affected communities.

9. **Infrastructure Betterment Fund for NSW Public Assets**

Funding for state agencies and local governments to restore/rebuild damaged public assets to a more resilient standard. This includes essential public assets as defined by the DRFA as well as other public assets not usually funded under the DRFA, damaged in the 2019-2020 bushfires or the 2021 storms and floods.

Key Recovery Challenges

The table below identifies the key recovery challenges faced in the period immediately after the flood operations were completed.

Issue	Challenge
Cumulative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many LGAs that were impacted by the flood event in the Greater Sydney region had been significantly impacted by prolonged drought, the 2019/2020 bushfires, and major storm damage prior. The arrival of COVID-19 and associated lock-down has resulted in financial and social disruption across the region. The cumulative impact of drought, fires, storms, floods and COVID-19 has had a proven a constant challenge for the design and implementation of community recovery activities.
Community health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disruption of community networks due to affected residents being required to move out of the area where there is public and private housing stock available. Complex health, legal and regulatory issues that have complicated the return home of long-term occupants of damaged caravan parks. Ongoing support is needed. Increased demand for mental health support. Existing providers in the area do not bulk bill and had long waiting lists prior to the flooding. Increased demand for addiction support. Increasing rates, frequency and severity of domestic violence cases. Only one specialist domestic violence service in the Hawkesbury LGA. Demand for case management and direct support to walk alongside clients through evacuation centres, short and long term recovery services. A key need for place-based service delivery as many residents in outlying suburbs are unlikely to present at recovery centres.
Community sector capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better coordination and communication among local services around donated goods and immediate relief to limit duplication. Psychosocial support for community sector staff and volunteers due to long-term increased demand of services as a result of multiple disasters impacting the region. Many services are not formally funded to support disaster recovery and have to go “outside” of their guidelines to provide further support to their clients.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited housing supply due to several compounding factors: the lack of affordable rentals prior to the floods, the extent of damage to homes, insurance status, and insecure tenancy arrangements.

Clean up

- It is unclear how many residents are still managing a set of issues including land contamination with sewerage, insecticides, fertilisers and animal carcasses, with some concerns about the safety of residents that are cleaning and repairing damage without appropriate training and equipment.
- There could be ongoing community health issues relating to residents living in contaminated accommodation including mould, respiratory illness and infections.
- Ongoing clean-up related issues affecting households and businesses including the removal of difficult waste and bulky items unable to be removed due to size or access issues, and exposure of unapproved structures and activities through flood damage.

Financial counselling and financial aid

- Increased demand for support with grant applications and eligibility, particularly for primary producers.
- Many landholders are only now beginning to experience cash flow and loss of income stressors. This is in part due to the full loss now becoming clear and also due to the time of year (winter) which halts some types of planning and turf growing.
- A lack of insurance or underinsurance for flood is impacting the ability to repair and rebuild.
- Perceived inequity between fire and flood recovery funding.

Legal services

- Increased demand for legal services around understanding tenancy rights and support with pre-existing civil law issues that have been highlighted through the flood impact.

Animals and agriculture

- Reports from vets that there are several large animals who require euthanasia and safe disposal, procedures that are expensive for the owner, weeks after the flooding has passed.

Riverbank residents and business owners

- Turf farmers have experienced significant business and income loss. For many this is their second loss in just over a year, noting that the flood in February 2020 did not trigger the grants available for the March 2021 flood.
- Insurance affordability is a large and growing longer term issue.
- A number of river-based tourism businesses remain closed or partly closed due to clean up. Some employ a significant number of local workers which has a disruptive flow-on effect.
- A number of river-based farmers have sustained losses of pastures, fences, animals, hives and crops. It is unclear how many will be eligible for the grants in they only derive part of their income from their land.
- Flood recovery information needs to be translated into Cantonese, Khmer, Vietnamese and Tagalog to reach the significant culturally and linguistically diverse communities of market gardeners and vegetable grows in the region.

Tailored support needs to be made available.

- Reports of landholders and businesses feeling overwhelmed, confused and frustrated by the lack of clarity on how and when they can undertake work to restore their section of the riverbank.

Telecommunications

- Poor internet and phone connectivity in some areas impacting recovery communications and residents' ability to engage with support.

Table 10: Summary of key recovery challenges. Data from needs assessment and subcommittee reports.

ANNEX A: Animals and Agriculture Subcommittee Report & Action Plan

As part of the recovery response to the Hawkesbury Nepean Floods of March 2021, an AASFA Sub-Committee was established by the Greater Sydney Regional Recovery Committee. This report summarises and concludes its activities.

The committee met online on the following dates.

Meeting 1 – 22 April 2021

Meeting 2 – 6 May 2021

Meeting 3 – 3 June 2021

Overview of Flood Event and Response in the AASFA Sector

Advice of likely heavy rain across the region was received in the week of 15-19 March 2021 with intense rainfall predicted for 20-21 March. DPI and LLS jointly organised to have staff available to assist in an AASFA response over this time. They also made preliminary arrangements to open animal evacuation centres at Penrith Paceway and Castle Hill Showground in consultation with relevant local governments and REMOs. Other potential evacuation sites were deemed not suitable as they are in potential flood affected areas.

Widespread heavy rain occurred from 19 March and over several days. River levels rose rapidly in the Hawkesbury River catchment and other regional catchments over the weekend of 20-21 March, reaching a peak of about 13.5 metres in Windsor early in the next week. As this river height put Penrith Paceway at risk it was formally closed to animals on 21 March, after which all animal owners were advised to take animals to Castle Hill Showground.

At a peak there were about 100 animals at this showground. Preliminary plans were also made to open other animal evacuation centres in southwest Sydney and Sydney Olympic Park if required however these were not needed. As the flood unfolded GS LLS and DPI worked with SES, Police, Local Governments and welfare agencies to coordinate rescue of stranded animals and then provision of fodder where needed. Animal welfare agencies, particularly Animal Welfare League, assisted with the care of animals at Evacuation Centre.

Preparations by owners – Owners were encouraged to move animals from the likely flood zone to higher ground prior to flooding occurring and a large number did so. For instance, a local pony club moved over 100 animals to a Southern Highlands property. After the flood peaked there was typically a 1-2 week period before people could return to their properties and also return animals to previously flooded areas.

A state-wide hotline was established by NSW DPI to provide a single contact point for landholders needing assistance in relation to AASFA issues. Approximately 100 calls in Greater Sydney region were logged

Damage Assessment Summary

Livestock

Number and nature of requests for assistance – see Appendix 1

Number of animals evacuated – only limited information is available on the number of animals moved off flood prone properties to other localities; however, based on the relatively small number of animals taken to evacuation centres it appears that this was a common practice by many animal owners. LLS data indicates that the following animals were held on properties that were held of properties that received substantial flooding however it is not known how many remained on higher parts of properties and how many were moved off property.

Dead animals - 3 horses, 16 cattle, 2 sheep, 1 pig, 16 chickens, 4 goats reported

Bodies removed - 6 horses, 4 cattle, 12 sheep and goat bodies removed

Ongoing livestock problems – e.g. injuries and chronic pneumonia in horses

Number of fodder assistance requests supplied and amount

Floodplain Horticulture

Number of Property's impacted: estimate 60 vegetable producers

Estimated cost of direct damage: \$3.5 million

Nurseries

Number of Property's impacted: Nil reported re nurseries, 15 reported regarding cut flower producers due to storm damage

Estimated cost of direct damage: \$ 750000

Turf

The table below is the updated estimate of lost turf (farm gate value):

These figures represent Hawkesbury Growers and one grower in the Taree area also impacted by the floods.

The figures don't include the cost to growers to clean up paddocks and re-establish farms.

The calculations are based on average farm loss and average farm crop value.

Estimated value of lost turf: (June 2021)	\$ 86,656,097
Estimated quantity of lost turf – square metres	8,678,480

Recovery Actions to Date

Workshops

Flood Pasture Recovery Workshop on 15 April, hosted by GS LLS – 35 attendees

Vegetable Grower Flood Recovery Workshop 30 April, hosted by GS LLS - 55 attendees

Recovery Centres (NB: all recovery centres now closed)

South Windsor Recovery Centre (ResNSW-led in partnership with Hawkesbury City Council)

Total recovery centre registrations: 994

Primary producer-related registrations (of total): 137

Rural Financial Counselling Service Assistance: 108

DPI/LLS Assistance: 29

Wisemans Ferry Recovery Centre (ResNSW-led in partnership with Hawkesbury City Council, and support from Hills Shire Council)

Total recovery centre registrations: 499

Primary producer-related registrations (of total): 18

Rural Financial Counselling Service Assistance: 6

DPI/LLS Assistance: 12

North Richmond Recovery Centre (ResNSW-led in partnership with Hawkesbury City Council)

Total recovery centre registrations: 51

Primary producer-related registrations (of total): 3

Rural Financial Counselling Service Assistance: 2

DPI/LLS Assistance: 1

Mobile Recovery Hubs (council-led)

- Hawkesbury City Council has held weekly flood recovery hubs across multiple locations – Wilberforce, Colo Heights and St Albans.
- Hubs commenced 10 April.
- Primary producer-related agencies including RFCS attended these hubs until mid-May.

Flood Recovery Business Info Sessions (ResNSW-led with support from multiple agencies and councils [Hawkesbury, Hills, Penrith])

- Wednesday 12 May and Wednesday 26 May at Pitt Town District Sports Club.
- Primary producer-related agencies including DPI and LLS attended these sessions.
- Approximately 40 businesses (equating to about 100 people) attended across both sessions.

Business Workshops

Flood Recovery Business Information Sessions on 13 & 26 May, 100+attendees.

Property Visits

Four vegetable growing properties in Kemps Creek were visited by GS LLS staff. Growers sustained damaged/loss crops, damaged infrastructure (greenhouses), flood debris, irrigation and pumps. Information was provided on recovery support and RAA contact details.

Information Resources

Information was published in the Nursery and Garden Industry NSW & ACT magazine on available resources and encouraged affected nursery and garden enterprises to report damages through the DPI Damage Assessment Survey

Freshcare Factsheet – re food safety in food events (Appendix 1)

The following resources are also currently under preparation:

Storms and Floods Industry Recovery Program Guideline (approx.17 pages)

Primary Producer Recovery Grant - Aquaculture Fact Sheet (approx. 3 pages)

Primary Producer Recovery Grant - Horticulture Fact Sheet (approx. 4 pages)

Primary Producer Recovery Grant - Agriculture Fact Sheet (approx. 4 pages)

Industry Support

There has been engagement with key equine industry contacts to understand needs. This has included assistance in the euthanasia and disposal of a small number of horses which sustained ongoing injuries and infections (e.g. pneumonia)

Related Response Actions

DPI state led AASFA work – NSW DPI has provided central coordination of the response including state-wide damage assessment and seeking industry wide support packages.

These are being finalised in consultation with industry, state and national governments.

As of 4 June 2021, 2,450 primary producer applications for assistance were received and \$11.4 million dollars were disbursed. About 5% of these properties are within Greater Sydney.

Riverbank restoration work – A riverbank taskforce with relevant agency and local government stakeholders was established. It has been assessing impacts and investigating approvals processes required for riverbank remediation works.

Removal of hazardous chemicals – EPA has assisted in removing and disposing of drums and other containers of hazardous chemicals which were washed away and deposited on riverbanks and other locations throughout the catchment

Removal of debris and other hazards –Local government, with assistance of other agencies has assisted with removal and disposal of debris and other hazards found during clean up. works

Future Needs and Planned Actions

- FAQ document for those affected in the animal, agriculture and horticulture sectors.
- Mini meeting at Sydney markets and in south west Sydney to assist specific sectors
- Resilience NSW to translate and publish information into Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer and Arabic
- Supply veterinarians with information brochures as needed
- Consider and produce information on biosecurity risks posed by import of materials from further away as local feed supplies impacted. Especially South East Queensland, risk of translocating cane toads and Red Imported Fire Ants

Appendix 1: Food Safety Guidance for Flood-Affected Produce

Freshcare guidelines:

For flood affected produce there is some guidance in Freshcare documentation (see attached, page 33) which states,

"Produce that has come into contact with flood water is not harvested unless it meets limits of E. coli <10 cfu/g and Salmonella Not Detected/25g, or customer specifications"

This is only an industry standard at the moment of course, but it is in the draft compliance plan for the FSANZ Hort Standard.

Flood affected produce may not be as big an issue for something like potatoes which are fully cooked but would probably assess on a case by case basis.

The Freshcare standard also talks about suitability of irrigation water and this has also been put into the draft compliance plan. For something like leafy greens especially, it would be necessary to review any irrigation water sources that may have been contaminated as a result of flooding.

Freshcare Factsheet – Incident Management Insert: Flood event

Natural Disaster Assistance Guide for Primary Industries

Natural Disaster Damage Assessment

Appendix 2: Farms Holdings with Livestock

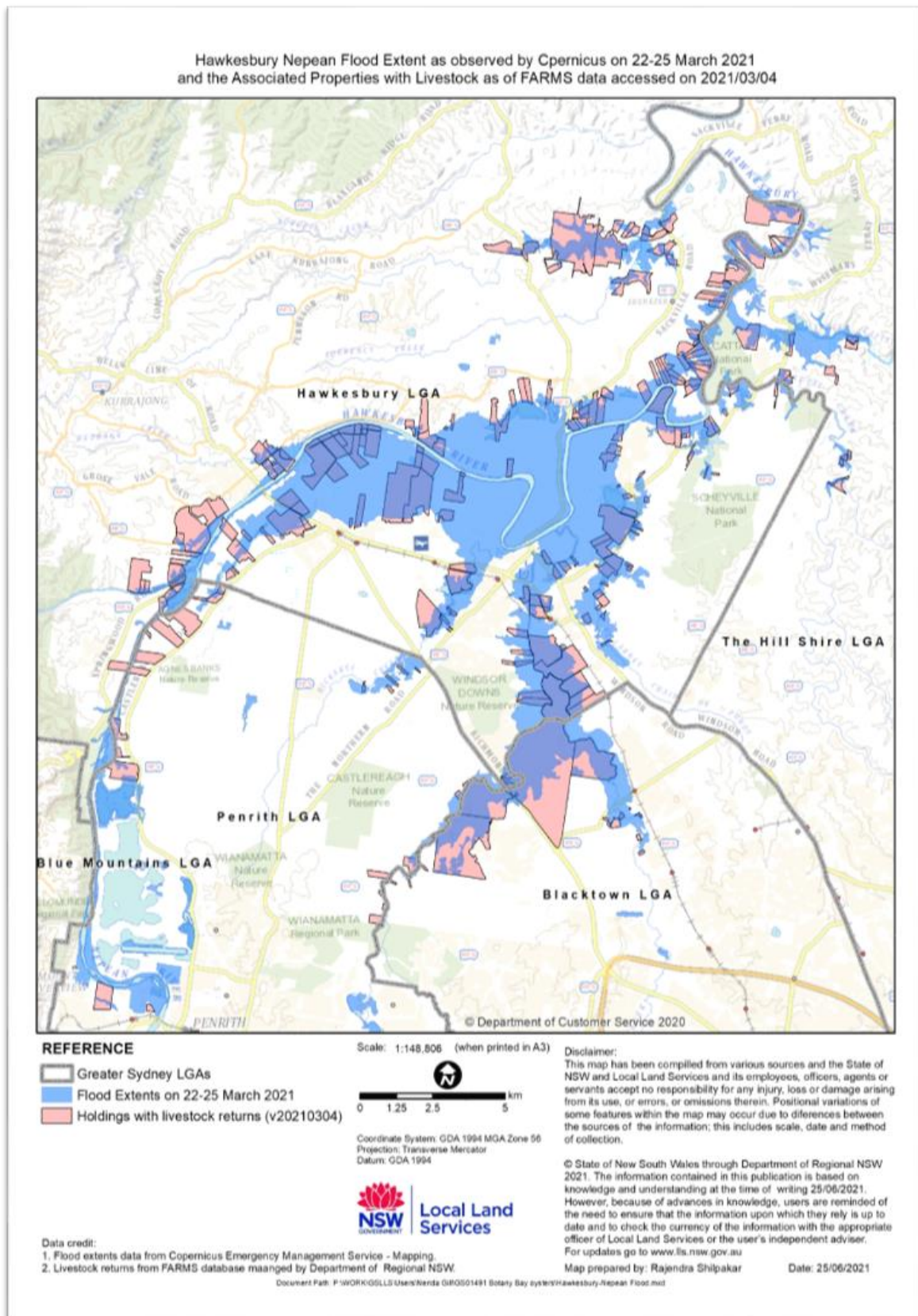
Number of FARMS holdings with Livestock in 2020/21 within flood extent of March 2021 flood

Livestock type	Number of holdings	Total livestock number
ALPACAS	14	34
BEEF_CATTLE	120	2,948
BUFFALO	0	-
CAMELS	1	1
DAIRY_CATTLE	5	72
DEER	1	48
EMUS	0	-
GOATS	16	132
HORSES	114	1,507
LLAMAS	1	7
OSTRICH	0	-
PIGS	6	247
POULTRY	5	450,204
SHEEP	36	700
Total	221	455,900

Note: Livestock data summary is based on Annual Land and Stock Returns 2020 as recorded in FARMS data as of 2021/03/3

Flood extent layer derived from Copernicus Emergency Management Service - Mapping: at <https://services9.arcgis.com/ZFlIzBMHgtgI0EYj/arcgis/rest/services/Copernicus%20Observed%20Flood%20Extents%2020200321/FeatureServer>. with areas <5ha omitted for the analysis.

The spatial information is shown in the map below



Appendix 3: Property Damage

Property Damage Estimate by LGA – Greater Sydney

Note: this is summarised information that has not been independently verified – it also does not separate between damage to property and buildings on agricultural properties and other properties – however as a substantial number of the damaged structures on the river floodplains are likely to be associated with agricultural enterprises it provides an indication of the level of property damage affecting this sector

	Residences Destroyed	Residences Damaged	Commercial/Industrial Properties Destroyed	Commercial/Industrial Properties Damaged	Outbuildings Destroyed	Outbuildings Damaged	Totals
Blacktown	0	17	0	8	0	9	34
Canterbury Bankstown	0	63	0	0	0	0	63
Central Coast	4	540	0	5	0	10	559
Hawkesbury	30	385	2	61	9	142	639
Hornsby	0	10	0	1	0	1	12
Penrith	3	48	0	1	0	2	54
Hills Shire	18	391	3	12	6	46	476
Totals	55	1454	5	88	15	201	1837

ANNEX B: Business, Industry and Tourism Subcommittee Report & Action Plan

Overview

The January 2021 Storm and Flood event caused widespread disruption to the community as well as damage to businesses across the Western Parkland City. There was particular direct damage to businesses along the floodplains in the Hawkesbury Local Government Area, including caravan parks, turf growers and tourism businesses.

The impacts on infrastructure and the cancellation of bookings and orders has also caused disruption to supply chain businesses in the region. While most businesses were able to quickly recommence trading, some of those suffering property damage and loss of infrastructure directly impacted by the floods face a long recovery journey. This has been exacerbated by restrictions to travel and tourism associated with the COVID pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

The Business, Industry and Tourism subcommittee brought together key agencies to identify and address challenges faced by the businesses in the region. The subcommittee was chaired by the Western Sydney Parklands Authority and members included Resilience NSW, Service NSW, NSW Treasury, NSW Small Business Commission and Destination NSW as well as Hawkesbury and Wollondilly Councils.

A report on the response from each agency is included in Attachment A, and summarised in the following sections.

Impacts

Caravan parks in the region were particularly affected, with 38 caravan parks, mainly along the Hawkesbury flood plain, the most significantly affected. Turf growers, equestrian businesses and ski-parks had longer-term direct impacts including silt contamination from the floods and the degradation of riverbank and water access facilities for tourism businesses. The oyster and fishing industries that operate on the river were significantly impacted by the flood event.

It was observed that some businesses did not seek assistance (particularly local Council) assistance with flood recovery particularly with removal of debris from properties near the river including haybales, water tanks, farming equipment, pallets and piping as well as fallen trees and vegetation. Other, mainly tourism and agricultural businesses were primarily concerned about the riverbank erosion and needed certainty regarding timeframes for re-establishing access to the river (eg boat ramps). Caravan park owners and other river-adjacent businesses consider that river access is critical for their business survival

There were examples of uninsured primary producers who obtain more than half of their income from other sources, eg partner's income and contract work/trades. This type of business is unlikely to qualify for either \$75k primary producer grant or \$50k small business grant to repair fences, replace equipment and infrastructure on their property. These case studies were collected by Service NSW and a suitable funding response being considered by ResNSW in consultation with the Commonwealth.

Tourism businesses also noted that the public perception of widespread damage outlasted the damage itself, meaning that after the event there was a slow recovery of bookings and visits. The subcommittee had evidence of media reports that areas were “not safe to visit” due to damage to roads and lack of accessibility to destinations.

The impact of this event on the region’s economy is more severe due to the cumulative impacts of bushfires, floods and the pandemic over the past 3 years. Despite the considerable government responses and support, the members of the committee noted significant risk in term of the long term viability of some businesses, and the impacts on mental health of individuals across the business community.

Most of the businesses engaged by representatives of the subcommittee did not have effective financial capacity to effectively cope with the impacts of 3 events. For example, many businesses do not have flood insurance, citing the costs of flood cover is prohibitively expensive.

NSW Government Response

Service NSW acted as the front door for all businesses seeking support. As well as staffing the recovery centres, their team conducted outreach both over the phone and in person around the severely impacted areas.

Two business recovery events were held at Pitt Town Sport Centre on 13 May and 25 May 2021, with 100 people representing 48 businesses attending the events.

Resilience NSW and local councils stood up recovery centres along the Hawkesbury, with three in Hawkesbury LGA. Centres allowed businesses direct access to recovery support teams from a multitude of agencies and organisations.

Re-opening of roads and other infrastructure was an important enabler of local economic recovery. The significant efforts in waste clean-up assisted in getting back to business.

Applications for \$50,000 small business recovery grants were highest in the Hawkesbury LGA, with over 200 applications received by Service NSW as at 13 August 2021. A similar number of businesses applied across the combined nearby areas of Penrith, The Hills and Blacktown. Significant numbers of applications were received from Western Sydney businesses impacted by the initial storm damage.

Flood affected agricultural businesses including turf farmers, market gardeners, equestrian & horse studs and small rural landowners was referred to the Agriculture subcommittee. Non-agricultural businesses directly impacted including cafes, water ski parks, Go Kart Track & Function Centre were referred to Service NSW and Business Connect for ongoing discussions.

Councils provide assistance and support for their local businesses and continue to play a key role in community recovery. Their work restoring local roads and removing rubbish and debris contributed significantly to local economic recovery.

Business Council of Australia have been providing support for businesses through their BizRebuild program including Retooling and Professional Services grants. How many grants?

Some Businesses reported the application process for the \$50K grant was challenging which required regular discussions with Service NSW to ensure sufficient evidence was provided to support applications.

Gaps and Challenges Noted

- Mental health continues to be a visible factor for business owners. One business owner tearfully admitted that she couldn't face opening a letter from Revenue NSW about land tax and was having sleepless nights wondering what would happen if she couldn't pay up on time. This was flagged with the Small Business Commission for follow up with Revenue NSW.
- There is still a lot of debris around commercial properties near the river including haybales, water tanks, farming equipment, pallets and piping as well as fallen trees and vegetation. Businesses have yet to report this to council – we raised it with them.
- Businesses are now facing the implications of loss of income, e.g. cashflow issues and decisions around what to rebuild and we referred relevant businesses to Services Australia and the business connect free advisory service.
- Several attendees were primarily concerned about the riverbank erosion and had questions around the process for re-establishing access to the river (e.g. boat ramps) as well as asking for financial support from government. Caravan parks and other river-adjacent businesses said that river access is critical for their business survival.
- A few businesses were struggling with need to provide evidence to support their application for the \$50k grant. This was partly because of the complexity of the evidence needed and partly because of mental fatigue or lack of confidence with online forms and processes. Service NSW local business concierge have commenced outreach to businesses to help them with the applications.
- There were more examples of uninsured primary producers who obtain more than half of their income from off farm, e.g. partner's income and contract work/trades. This type of business is unlikely to qualify for either \$75k primary producer grant or \$50k small business grant to repair fences, replace equipment and infrastructure on their property. These case studies are being collected by Service NSW and a suitable funding response being considered by Resilience NSW in consultation with the Commonwealth.
- Significant amount of the direct flood impact is on agricultural businesses including turf farmers, market gardeners, equestrian & horse studs and small rural landowners
- Caravan Park businesses also significantly impacted (there are 38 caravan parks impacted on the Hawkesbury and a large number of these are in this area)
- There are a handful of non-agricultural businesses directly impacted including cafes, water ski parks, Go Kart Track & Function Centre. We have details of these and have forwarded them to Service NSW and Business Connect to follow up
- There are only a small number of businesses coming into the Recovery Centre, and there is a need for outreach. Service NSW and Rural Financial Counsellors now conducting outreach to targeted businesses in the area.
- The early bridge closure of the Windsor bridge (without any notification to businesses) impacted business owners e.g. Macquarie Park Boathouse Café who had been working on re-

locating their stock but weren't able to do it due to the early closure of the bridge (resulting in a large stock loss that could have been avoided)

- Businesses are finding the application process for the \$50K grant challenging and need support from Service NSW. Many of them having to have at 2-3 discussions with Service NSW as they gather more information.
- Turf farmers and caravan park owners have the most complex issues to resolve – particularly due to the riverbank erosion. There is a need to continue to provide support, guidance and information for these businesses
- Many of the directly impacted businesses are exhausted, and very stressed – the clean-up has been difficult and getting their businesses 're-opened' challenging. Some of the turf farmers have lost significant amount of the turf stock.
- None of the businesses we spoke with had flood insurance.

Organisation Reports

Department / Agency	Overview of your flood and storm recovery activity (including any impact data/information for the region)	Current status with delivering flood and storm recovery activities (including any progress data) - are there any ongoing or outstanding activities?	Flood and storm recovery emerging issues/recovery gaps to be addresses (if any), indicating any work planned or underway
NSW Small Business Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued representation for impacted businesses and industries from the flooding events. Participation in Recovery Committees and Sub-Committees. Advocated again on the issue of eligibility for financial supports to primary producers with off-farm income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected focus to recently announced restrictions and supporting small businesses impacted. Participate in Recovery Committees and BIT Sub-Committees. 	<p>Monitoring situation for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cross-crisis impacts to business heavily impacted business sectors indirect impacts to businesses insurance issues
NSW Treasury – Business Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of free Business Connect support to flood affected areas from 10 March 2021 – eDMS, flyers, social media, other govt agencies Business Connect advisors onsite at RNSW recovery centres w/c 12th April Additional support provided directly to customers at their business locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial response providing advice to businesses to cover key initial issues of business recovery planning; access to available grants/funding; access to mental health services Service delivery has reverted to BAU advice through Business Connect advisor network and online resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key business issues addressed from 10 March 2021 covering access to finance/grant funding; business planning, recovery to rebuild; IT/digital support and access to mental health services No outstanding issues gaps to be addressed; business advice and support continues through Business Connect BAU services
Hawkesbury City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Business e-newsletters sent out monthly (important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New requests for skip bins will cease as at 25 July 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community preparedness and flood

- information shared on an as need basis).
- Hawkesbury Business Hub on corporate website set up as a central location for business information.
 - Ensuring businesses are connected to Service NSW for assistance and grants.
 - Community Hubs held fortnightly (shut during lockdown public health orders) this is used as a venue to provide engagement and support to the whole community.
 - Use of social media platforms to share emergency services and recovery services information.
 - Council have developed an emergency dashboard - <https://disaster.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/>
 - Significant road and bridge repair work continues; current impacts to local agricultural and tourism industry
 - Advice and support to flood impacted residents/businesses regarding clean-up support available i.e. in line with NSW Storm and Flood Clean-up Program Guidelines
 - Coordination of skip bins and contractors to support residents with physical clean-up activities, in line
 - Council will continue to liaise with state government regarding additional support to more vulnerable impacted residents/community
 - Clean up continuing.
 - Issues with riverbanks continue to be challenging.
 - Bridge destruction in Upper Colo and Bells Line of Road are major issues causing significant hardship for the community with additional travel time, costs and safety issues. Council providing regular updates through the Communications team.
 - Agribusiness affected by riverbank challenges.
 - Production of crops and turf still being impacted by remediation work to the riverbanks
 - awareness; minimise impact. Particular focus on caravan parks due to the significant impact on infrastructure and returning business
 - CALD networks to support and prepare market gardeners in Pitt Town Bottoms and Cornwallis
 - Evidence of impact on mental health in community of multiple traumas. Current COVID lockdowns are impacting this further.
 - Significant impact in community around grant funding both for individuals and community building causing division fire vs flood funding and flood early 2020 vs 2021 flood.
 - Building resilience in the community.

with guideline

- Liaise with state government regarding additional support to more vulnerable community members

Wollondilly Council

- The SES identified 54 properties that were impacted by the flood/ storm event, with approximately 30 having inundation issues.
 - A further 4 properties presented to Council (not identified by SES). These residents had issues including inundation of wastewater, landslips and crop loss.
 - Wollondilly Shire Council suffered a landslip on a road in Orangeville. This road remains closed while investigations take place plan for repair.
 - Council provided free waste services to impacted residents allowing them to dispose of waste resulting from the flood/ storm event for free. This service was offered to 54 residents. Only three residents took up the free tip service.
 - The Colong Stock Route suffered extensive damage forcing the road to be closed for safety purposes until repairs could be made. This resulted in several residents becoming stranded. Some residents chose to evacuate while others chose to remain on their properties.
 - Salvation Army, Service NSW and Rural Financial Counselling.
 - Council hosted outreach from Salvation Army and Rural Financial Counselling Service. This allowed residents to access financial support locally.
 - Several primary producers have indicated that they were not eligible for support due to the primary loss suffered being loss of crops.
 - There is an ongoing mental health issue for impacted residents, particularly those impacted by the 2016 flood/ storm event. The fear and anxiety caused by rising water levels is a significant issue for people previously impacted by storm/ flood events.
-

Repairs have now been completed and access is restored for residents.

- Wollondilly Shire Council worked alongside the SES to provide aerial supply drops of food and medication to residents stranded in Yerranderie and the Burragorang Valley.
 - Community Recovery Officer provided support to residents including referrals to the Recovery Support Service, the Salvation Army, Service NSW and Rural Financial Counselling.
 - Council hosted outreach from Salvation Army and Rural Financial Counselling Service. This allowed residents to access financial support locally.
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ANNEX C: Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee Report & Action Plan

Context / introduction

Several LGAs in the Greater Sydney region experienced significant bushfire impacts in the 2019/20 fires. This was followed by storm and flood damage in February 2020, and the arrival of COVID-19 and restrictions resulting in financial and social disruption across the region. The subsequent impact of the March 2021 severe weather event has exacerbated a raft of pre-existing recovery-related issues across, and within, a number of communities.

This cumulative impact is a key consideration – and challenge – for the design and implementation of community recovery activities and is implicit in many of the recovery themes and issues addressed below. In addition, among community there is a perceived inequity between fire and flood recovery funding (with many feeling there are fewer funds available to flood impacted communities), and a sense of feeling forgotten and ignored once floodwaters receded and the Stage 1 – Immediate Relief phase of the Clean-up Program was complete.

NB: the main geographic focus of this Recovery Action Plan is on flood-affected LGAs within the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. However, significant flood and storm related impacts were experienced throughout the Greater Sydney / Central region. As such, the recovery actions described below are applicable across the region, with location-specific services identified where necessary.

Guiding principles

The development of this Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan is guided by the National Principles for Disaster Recovery:

- Understand the context – Successful recovery is based on an understanding community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics
 - Recognise complexity – Successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community.
 - Use community-led approaches – Successful recovery is community- centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.
 - Coordinate all activities – Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.
 - Communicate effectively – Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.
 - Recognise and build capacity – Successful recovery recognises, supports, and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and
-

resilience.



Mental Health Services, Counselling and Support for Wellbeing

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
<p>Emergence of a range of psychosocial support needs across and within communities.</p> <p>Residents requiring support to navigate and access services and assistance to respond to both acute and ongoing / cumulative emotional, physical and financial impacts of the severe weather event (and previous fire, flood and pandemic experiences).</p> <p>Access to mental health / counselling services: long wait list.</p>	<p>Facilitate / promote access to emotional and mental wellbeing support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW Mental Health Line Counselling services via PHN Local services (GPs, Community Health Centre, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Headspace) Crisis support online and phone services (e.g. Head to Health, Lifeline, Suicide Call Back Service) Step by Step / PHN Wellbeing Team Tailored / sector specific services (e.g. Headspace for young people, Are you Boggled Mate? for primary producers). <p>Utilise soft entry points to mental health support and services (recovery support services, community hubs and recovery activities, social groups [Men's Table etc])</p> <p>Develop mental health factsheet (coordinated by NRRRA with ResNSW and CRO, developed with NSW Health and PHN)</p> <p>Identify and integrate services / support specific to children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop understanding of support needs and counselling services for schools in flood-affected areas (staff, students and families). 	<p>Immediate / ongoing</p>	<p>Recovery support services</p> <p>Service NSW</p> <p>NSW Health (mental health clinicians, including RAMHP)</p> <p>PHN</p> <p>Council / CRO</p> <p>ResNSW</p> <p>NRRRA</p> <p>Department of Education</p> <p>Be You – Early Childhood Australia and Headspace</p> <p>Red Cross</p>	<p>The psychosocial recovery needs of disaster-affected individuals and communities are understood and effectively supported</p> <p>Mental health services are available for those directly seeking or referred to these services.</p> <p>Clear referral pathways enabling timely and appropriate referrals</p>
<p>Workers and volunteers are working long hours and facing an extensive work program for the recovery period.</p> <p>Many have been working in bushfire recovery since early 2020 and are now</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for workers / volunteers to monitor their own wellbeing and provide peer support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional supervision & EAP services for frontline workers exposed to vicarious 		<p>Training providers (e.g. RAMHP, Red Cross, Lifeline, Wesley Suicide Prevention, Step by Step etc)</p>	<p>Communities in recovery (including people working in formal and informal roles) have access to the wellbeing supports they need</p> <p>Through appropriate training and</p>

dealing with dual / compounding recovery issues.

Workers in front-of-house roles, e.g. hairdressers, cafes and pubs, have specific support needs

- trauma.
- Red Cross: Recovery Basics and Self Care, Mental Health Matters
- Lifeline: Psychological First Aid, SafeTalk Suicide Awareness, Accidental Counsellor, Mental Health Chats
- Wesley Mission: Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention and Gatekeeper training programs
- RAMHP: Community Support Skills, Wellbeing and You, Workplace Support Skills, Volunteer Wellbeing, Mental Health First Aid, Vicarious Trauma Training
- Step by Step: Walk With
- Forums with recovery-focused psychologists (e.g. Rob Gordon, David Younger).

Provide appropriate psychosocial support at community events (e.g. Red Cross volunteers trained in psychological first aid, Step by Step /PHN Wellbeing Team).

EAP services

Step by Step / PHN Wellbeing Team

support, frontline workers /volunteers able to monitor their own wellbeing and provide peer support.

Financial Support and Services – government & non-government

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
<p>A lack of insurance (or underinsurance) for flood is impacting the ability to repair and rebuild.</p> <p>Many have also experienced a loss of income during and after the event due to an inability to attend their jobs and / or their workplace being flood-affected (i.e. caravan and ski parks, primary producers, turf farmers).</p> <p>Perceived inequity between fire and flood recovery funding (fewer funds available).</p> <p>Grant application fatigue.</p>	<p>Promote Service NSW storms and floods customer care service as one-stop-shop to navigate and register for recovery support services.</p> <p>Promote (and monitor) availability of financial assistance and support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants / payments: Disaster Recovery Payment and Allowance (Federal), and Disaster Relief Grant (NSW) Recovery support services, Givit, NGOs for cash /fuel cards, utility assistance, small grants etc Financial counselling 	<p>Immediate / ongoing</p>	<p>Service NSW</p> <p>Services Australia</p> <p>Council / CRO</p> <p>ResNSW</p> <p>DPI / RAA</p> <p>Rural Financial Counselling Service</p> <p>Disaster Welfare Services</p> <p>Recovery support services</p>	<p>Communities and individuals supported in understanding and accessing: finance and financial counselling available to support recovery; independent insurance advice.</p> <p>Community members have access to financial assistance measures to assist with rebuilding damaged and destroyed homes.</p> <p>Disaster-affected individuals and families receive payments to help with immediate relief and recovery,</p>

- Business support / sector support

Givit

including lost income as a result of the event.

Red Cross, Salvation Army, Anglicare, Vinnies, Lions, Rotary, Rural Aid

Provide information on where to seek independent insurance advice – addressing lack of coverage, processing claims and future planning for disaster

Insurance Council of Australia

Households, families, and individuals have the information needed to make decisions.

Legal Aid

Pending availability, **coordinate allocation of grants / donated funds** across services and donors and **investigate additional support for grant applicants**.

H&WB Subcommittee

TBD

Donated Goods and Services / Disaster Relief Appeal Funds

Community need / recovery issue

Recovery action

Timeframe / status

Responsibility

Intended outcomes

Broad range of needs around donated goods (vouchers, household items, animal feed) and services (trades, removalists).

Many residents are experiencing financial stress in meeting flood-related costs due to lack of insurance / under-insurance and loss of income. Costs relate to clean-up of buildings (increased electricity / gas use for heaters drying out buildings), and larger primary producer and hobby farmer properties (re-establishment of fencing, crops, hives and infrastructure).

The loss of fencing, crops and feed is particularly significant for those landholders working to re-establish these assets following the bushfires.

Promote (and monitor) availability of donated goods and services:

- Household goods, cash /fuel cards, support with tradespeople etc (Givit, Lions, recovery support services, faith-based groups)
- Primary producer support including animal feed (Rural Aid and Lions)
- Help with fencing and clean-up of rural properties (RuffTrack, Landcare), and house-hold remediation (e.g. Habitat for Humanity).

Connect charitable organisations with Givit to facilitate sourcing and matching of donations:

- Share messaging directing donors to GIVIT online platform (away from charities, churches, and councils etc who become rapidly inundated).

Explore opportunities for recovery support services to establish referrals to skilled volunteer organisations (e.g. Habitat for Humanity).

Clear communications around support available to flood recovery, including initiatives around Givit and ABC appeal etc

Immediate / ongoing

Recovery support services

Service NSW

Council / CRO

ResNSW

Givit

Red Cross, Salvation Army, Anglicare, Vinnies, Lions, Rotary, Rural Aid

Community members are able to respond to their own needs and to support the other members of the community.

The community is not experiencing excessive stress and hardship arising from the disaster.

Communication and Engagement

Community need / recovery issue

There is a range of agencies providing service and support information (and updates) in different formats. The community needs a coordinated approach to communications, with information being relevant, clear and targeted

Recovery action

Support the **coordination of relevant, clear and targeted recovery communications** with communities.

Maintain current recovery service and support information, and distribute via multiple channels:

Timeframe / status

Immediate / ongoing

Responsibility

Council / CRO
ResNSW (Comms Team *can* provide strategic communications support)
Service NSW

Intended outcomes

Communities receive the information they need to make decisions; this information is relevant, clear and targeted.
Engagement activities are context-specific, fit-for-purpose and

Some CALD communities may require translation services (e.g. primary producer and market garden cohort). Low levels of literacy need to be considered in some remote areas.

Some residents may not be seeking support because they are unaware of recovery services and / or are unfamiliar with eligibility criteria.

Communities need to be able to voice their own needs through a number of channels and formats.

Poor internet and phone connectivity in some areas impacting recovery comms and ability to engage with support.

- Hawkesbury Council Flooding Assistance Information updates
- Service NSW Storms and floods customer care service

Develop communications and engagement framework to support the strategic planning of activities across the region:

- Base communications on field insights, info and service requests, and feedback; tailor to specific cohorts (CALD) and needs (low literacy).
- Identify existing comms channels and formats* to promote recovery information.
- Develop key messages to deliver consistent comms across the region for: recovery support services; clean-up; Service NSW Customer Care Service.
- Adhere to best practice principles for communicating in recovery (Red Cross).

Share comms plans, approaches and insights via H&WB Subcommittee (standing agenda item) to:

- ensure consistent and coordinated activities – ‘one voice’
- adapt approaches in response to changing community needs and operating environment (e.g. COVID).

*** Communications channels / formats:**

Newsletters, council updates, websites/‘your say’ platforms, social media, newspapers, noticeboards, radio, community meetings, coffee and chat, listening posts etc.

Recovery support services (DPI RSS for translator support)

Multi-cultural NSW (via ResNSW)

H&WB Subcommittee

Red Cross (resources / training)

participatory.

The community can express its changing disaster recovery needs

Poor internet and phone connectivity impacting recovery communications and ability to engage with support.

(NB: these are largely pre-existing comms infrastructure issues exacerbated by multiple

Target mobile recovery and outreach to affected areas.

Develop / utilise offline registration methods (e.g. Service NSW ‘truncated’ registration form)

Escalation of comms infrastructure issues

Immediate / ongoing

Council / CRO

Recovery support services

Service NSW

ResNSW

disaster events)

via **functional service area** and / or NRRA to Federal level.

NRRA

Red Cross

Temporary / Transitional Housing

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
People with destroyed or damaged properties requiring support and information on availability of temporary / transitional housing options.	Provide ongoing case management support to tenants of flood-affected caravan parks and properties:	Immediate / ongoing	Recovery Support Service (Peppercorn)	Case management service assesses the needs of households and individuals and assists them to obtain services, advice and support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodation advice and support• Access to legal advice on tenancy and finance issues relating to accommodation and / or property repairs• Material and financial support (debts and fines)		DCJ Housing / Community Housing Provider	Understanding of recovery issues affecting tenants, and identification of appropriate responses.
			Legal Aid	Tenants' recovery needs being effectively addressed.
			Council (compliance, environmental health)	Landlords / estate agencies supported in understanding recovery support services available for their properties and tenants.
			Charitable organisations (accessing GIVIT for donated essential and household items)	
	Refer residents living in substandard conditions to DCJ Housing Link2Home 1800 152 152 (e.g. on blocks with damaged or destroyed buildings, or in off-site accommodation)	Immediate / ongoing	Recovery Support Service (Peppercorn)	Residents in substandard conditions / urgent housing situations have alternative accommodation options. Where possible these address specific recovery needs (i.e. for primary producers to be near their work, animals/ livestock).
	Identify support mechanisms for impacted residents living in informal or unapproved dwellings		DCJ Housing / Community Housing Provider	
			Legal Aid	
			Council (compliance, environmental health)	
			Charitable organisations	
	Explore need for demountable housing for residents and families needing to remain on their land (or in-area) while rebuilding / repairs occur (or alternative accommodation identified)	Immediate / ongoing	ResNSW / Minderoo Foundation	Residents with strong affinity to the land able to live in safe conditions on-site during re-build.
	Council / CRO			

- Minderoo housing pods, Habitat for Humanity mobile cabins.

Recovery support services
Habitat for Humanity
GIVIT (for access to furniture and household items)

Clean-up and Remediation

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
<p>There are a range of ongoing clean-up related issues affecting households and businesses.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the removal of 'difficult' waste and bulky items unable to be removed due to size or access issues • exposure of un-approved structures and activities through flood damage • riverbank erosion impacting businesses and primary producers (and complexity of remediation process) • internal / household remediation relating to mould and damp • inaccessible roads and bridges • low levels of insurance cover impacting affordability of remediation (not covered by clean-up program). 	<p>Connect residents to NSW Storm and Flood Clean-Up Program – information from council or through Service NSW</p> <p>Communicate public health and clean-up advice (e.g. NSW Health 'Mould and your health' factsheet)</p> <p>Referral to riverbank remediation program</p> <p>Record clean-up and waste removal needs not covered by the NSW Storm and Flood Clean-Up Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating mould and removing damaged fixtures / fittings. • Access to heavy machinery. • Moving bulky materials to property boundary for skip collection. <p>Explore (and communicate) support for residents needing clean-up assistance (e.g. access to equipment and materials, grants, NGO support):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Givit • Habitat for Humanity • Local Landcare / Bushcare groups • Training courses on repairing fences, re-establish gardens, replacing carpets etc <p>Explore potential client referral mechanisms / MoUs between recovery</p>	<p>Immediate / ongoing</p>	<p>Council / CRO</p> <p>Recovery support services</p> <p>ResNSW</p> <p>NGOs supporting restoration and repairs (e.g. Habitat for Humanity, Red Cross, Landcare / Bushcare)</p>	<p>The community is aware of clean-up processes, roles and responsibilities (as per NSW Storm and Flood Clean-Up Program)</p> <p>Households, families, and individuals have the information needed to make decisions, including availability of clean-up / restoration support services for in-eligible clean-up activities</p> <p>Referral mechanism to appropriately skilled and resourced volunteer workforce to assist property clean-up and restoration</p> <p>Communities able to plan repair and rebuilding, and prioritise according to community needs and values</p> <p>Community members are aware of the risks of future disasters, and this is reflected in their repair and rebuild activities</p>

support services and NGOs with skilled volunteer workforce.

<p>Damaged roads and bridges causing relative social isolation (and business disruption).</p> <p>Impacts causing community anxiety and hindering recovery. Limited access in some locations for emergency services, clean-up, and water haulage.</p> <p>Pre-existing poor road condition exacerbated by severe weather (e.g. potholes), impacting accessibility.</p>	<p>Map impacted areas and residents and extent / duration of access issues.</p> <p>Identify nature of damage and status relative to NSW Storm and Flood Clean-Up Program.</p> <p>Source fuel cards via Givit / NGOs to assist with additional travel costs (for detours).</p> <p>Prioritise referral to recovery support services.</p> <p>Connect impacted businesses to Disaster Recovery Allowance (Services Australia) and flood disaster recovery small business grant (Service NSW)</p> <p>Remediation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawkesbury Council addressing Greens Rd (Lower Portland) and Upper Colo Bridge access issues. Council updates via newsletter and website 	<p>Immediate / ongoing</p>	<p>Council / CRO</p> <p>Service NSW</p> <p>Givit</p> <p>Recovery Support Services</p>	<p>Isolated / inaccessible communities are reconnected with essential health and social services</p> <p>Community members can access appropriate services to deal with health needs</p>
<p>Large amounts of anthropogenic waste and green waste (trees and branches) causing safety and navigational hazards</p>	<p>Shoreline and River Clean-up Program</p>	<p>Immediate/ ongoing</p>	<p>NSW EPA</p>	<p>Reduce/remove risk of pollution and damage to the environment</p> <p>Continued use of waterways for amenity and recreation</p> <p>Support to aquatic industry such as fishing and oyster farming</p>
<p>Cumulative landscape impacts of bushfire and flood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil erosion (from storm run-off) affecting paddocks, farm dams and the stability of fire damaged trees and river health Weed proliferation Access road / paper road issues (Mid-Western LGA) 	<p>Link residents and landholders with initiatives, services and potential funding on soil conservation, farm dams, native vegetation and weed identification and management.</p> <p>Map impacted areas and residents and extent / duration of access issues.</p>	<p>Timing TBC</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Council / CRO</p> <p>Recovery Support Services</p> <p>Local Land Services / Soil Conservation Service</p> <p>Landcare</p>	<p>Communities have the information needed to make decisions and are supported with landscape restoration efforts</p>

- Pollution of the Hawkesbury River due to erosion and unstable river banks

Coordination of Social Recovery Activities, and Collaboration Between Services and Staff

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
<p>The recovery space can be difficult for communities to navigate due the range of services and supports available (often temporarily).</p> <p>With a number of services (and associated support and grants) coming online throughout recovery, there is a risk of service duplication and sub-optimal client outcomes without effective coordination.</p>	<p>Develop coordination arrangements for managing recovery activities between agencies and with communities</p> <p>Map services and potential referral pathways process; facilitate referrals to relevant services.</p> <p>Run a recovery planning workshop through the H&WB Subcommittee to define:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what successful recovery looks like for affected people / communities, and for programs / services • principles for how services want to work together in their work with communities • how best to organise services in this work, and make the best use of collective resources 	<p>Timing TBC</p> <p>Not commenced</p>	<p>H&WB Subcommittee</p>	<p>Referral networks for case management established.</p> <p>Understanding of recovery service 'ecosystem' – access, roles, responsibilities etc.</p> <p>Service coordination to maximise community outcomes.</p>
	<p>Provide capacity building opportunities for recovery staff to support effective community participation in recovery planning processes and coordinated delivery of recovery actions. Focus on up-skilling around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative and partnership approaches • collective impact / asset-based community development • working in complexity. 	<p>Early recovery</p> <p>Commenced (recovery staff from several councils recovery support services attended 'Collaborati</p>	<p>ResNSW</p> <p>Recovery partners: councils, CROs, recovery support services, Red Cross, NRRRA</p>	<p>Capability uplift across participating organisations and communities leading to more effective and sustained delivery of recovery actions.</p>

Social Connectedness is Promoted through Community Events, Activities, and Story-telling

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
<p>Community members are needing to make sense of their recovery situations, debrief on response experiences, define recovery needs, and identify recovery outcomes (including preparedness and resilience building)</p> <p>Emergence of community fracturing and conflict (between groups, individuals, leaders); and conflict between community and organisations (e.g. council)</p>	<p>Identify suitable types of events with communities to build connectedness and allow for identification of recovery needs.</p> <p>Run community hubs that assist households and individuals to obtain services, advice and support.</p> <p>Host community conversations – creating a safe space to debrief on disaster response, discuss community recovery needs, and identify recovery outcomes and resilience / preparedness needs and attributes.</p> <p>Initiate community activities from a community development perspective (using a strengths-based approach).</p> <p>Liaise with SES on opportunities to participate in community debriefs, preparedness activities etc)</p>	<p>Commence d (hubs)</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Council / CRO</p> <p>Recovery support services</p> <p>ResNSW</p> <p>Community</p> <p>SES (and other response agencies)</p> <p>Red Cross</p>	<p>Community members are able to respond to their own needs and to support others</p> <p>Community members are aware of each other's potential needs from future disasters through formal and informal networks and plans</p> <p>Community members have social networks to support each other</p> <p>The community can express its changing disaster recovery needs</p> <p>Community feedback supports the development and ongoing adaptation of recovery support plans.</p>
<p>Geographically remote residents / communities with limited access to recovery services</p>	<p>Service NSW storm and flood assistance – appointment-based service</p> <p>Consider Zoom/Team link-ups to hubs</p> <p>Outreach (recovery support services) / mobile recovery</p> <p>Leverage off existing community / health services outreach into remote areas (e.g. telehealth, pharmacist medication delivery)</p>	<p>Immediate / ongoing</p>	<p>Service NSW</p> <p>Recovery support services (outreach)</p> <p>Council (mobile recovery)</p>	<p>Needs and profile of more remote residents and communities understood and recovery activities tailored accordingly</p>

Building Disaster Resilience in Individuals, Communities and Service Providers

Community need / recovery issue	Recovery action	Timeframe / status	Responsibility	Intended outcomes
<p>Longer term support for the area should consider building community (and community sector) preparedness and resilience to future flood events via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in emergency management planning • Training in emergency management 	<p>Explore opportunities to involve communities and community organisations in local recovery and preparedness planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Resilience Networks (council / CRO) • Community-led Resilience Teams (Red Cross) • Community Action Teams (SES) • Disaster Recovery Mentor Australia (DRMA) network (Red Cross) <p>Promote availability of emergency management training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ResNSW accredited and non-accredited training • Red Cross: Beyond the Assembly Point 	<p>Timing TBC</p> <p>Not commenced</p>	<p>Councils / CRO</p> <p>ResNSW</p> <p>Community / CSOs</p> <p>SES and other local emergency services</p> <p>LEMC</p> <p>Red Cross</p>	<p>Community members are able to respond to their own needs and to support other members of the community</p> <p>Community members are aware of each other's potential needs from future disasters through formal and informal networks and plans (i.e. social connectedness)</p> <p>Community members are aware of the risks of future disasters</p> <p>Mutual assistance systems, social networks and support mechanisms are capable of adapting to emergencies when these occur</p>
<p>Anxiety around further flood events in the near future (and levels of resilience and readiness)</p> <p>(NB: social research in Hawkesbury indicated low levels of awareness and preparedness prior to flood)</p>	<p>Support household and community initiatives to practically and psychologically prepare for emergencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise existing preparedness, community development, local emergency services and community continuity plan development programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Red Cross RediPlan disaster preparedness guide • Explore initiatives to meet the needs of specific groups, e.g. elderly, Aboriginal, youth, children, people with disabilities, social housing tenants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (PCEP) ◦ Red Cross Pillowcase Project to assist children in preparedness 	<p>Timing TBC</p> <p>Not commenced</p>	<p>Dept. of Education</p> <p>Red Cross</p> <p>SES / RFS</p> <p>ResNSW</p> <p>Centre for Disability Research and Policy (Uni of Sydney)</p> <p>INSW – H-N Flood Risk Management Directorate</p>	<p>Community members are able to respond to their own needs and to support other members of the community</p> <p>Community members are aware of each other's potential needs from future disasters through formal and informal networks and plans (i.e. social connectedness)</p> <p>Community members are aware of the risks of future disasters</p> <p>Mutual assistance systems, social networks and support mechanisms are capable of adapting to emergencies when these occur</p>

- and resilience
- NSW SES 'For Schools' resources
- NSW RFS Project Firestorm.

Promote preparedness initiatives for communities, businesses, CSOs:

- Get Ready
 - SES 'It's Flooded Before' campaign elements and SES website link, plus SES school resources
-

ANNEX D: Hawkesbury Nepean Community Needs Assessment

This report provides a snapshot of the community impact and needs in the Hawkesbury region following the March 2021 floods.

In March 2021, the Hawkesbury-Nepean was hit with major flooding, affecting low-lying areas along the river system. The flood was labelled a 1:10 – 1:20 year flood and caused major disruption across the region. Many of the lower lying areas are also where a number of socially vulnerable members of the community are living. This includes social housing tenants and those living permanently in caravan parks. This is a region that will continue to experience significant floods.

Following the initial impact and deployment of recovery services, Resilience NSW and Hawkesbury Council brought together 13 Community Service Organisations (CSOs) to discuss the impact of the flood and the longer-term recovery needs of their clients in the region. These organisations were asked to complete a needs assessment to capture their insights on how the flood affected their services and staff, as well as their community and clients.

This snapshot also includes input from field staff working in three recovery centres that were set up in South Windsor, Wisemans Ferry and North Richmond. These staff have been working directly with flood affected customers and have insights on emerging recovery issues.

Please note this snapshot needs to be acknowledged as partial as many residents who have been flood-impacted and need support may not yet have come forward. It also relies on the views of a relatively small sample of community service providers and field staff.

The key issues that have been witnessed to date:

- An increase in demand for a range of community services, including food hampers, housing, financial aid, mental health, legal and domestic violence support.
- The lack of affordable housing in the region compounded by the impact of the flood, making it difficult for some to start the recovery process.
- A large number of properties and businesses were affected along the river system, including vegetable grower communities, with significant work needed to restore the riverbank.
- A number of caravan parks in the Hawkesbury that were damaged during the floods, with Wilberforce Caravan Park in particular, sustaining damage to approximately 40 caravans highlighting the vulnerable circumstance of some people at these sites.

Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Overview

At the height of the flood, evacuation orders were issued and evacuation centres were established at North Richmond, Richmond, Castle Hill, and Wisemans Ferry with 359 people registering.

A Rapid Impact Assessment was conducted in the Hawkesbury and The Hills region, identifying a number of small communities along the river system where properties were damaged (refer to Table 2 for more information). This assessment occurred shortly following the event as an early indication of damage only. Based on this information, three recovery centres and a mobile recovery service were established shortly after to support these communities.

To date, there have been limited damage reports from the small business sector but there have been reports of damage to primary producers, turf farmers and landholders especially market farmers and vegetable growers. Tourism operators, specifically a large number of caravan parks along the river system, have also been significantly impacted.

The overall view from service providers in the community services and NGO sector is that there is a cumulative effect on the levels of trauma and fatigue in the Hawkesbury community as a result of the 2019/20 bushfires, February 2020 flood, COVID-19 pandemic, and now the March 2021 flood. However, existing recovery providers have also noticed this event has directly impacted new geographical locations and different communities that had not been previously impacted by a natural hazard. This increases the overall number of Hawkesbury residents who have been affected by at least one if not more natural hazards in the last 24 months.

Recovery Data Snapshot

The following offers an overview of the impact and recovery data from the most recent floods. In particular, it highlights that three recovery centres were established and there was a strong demand for recovery information in the weeks following the flood.

The South Windsor and Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centre were well-attended by the local community. Approximately 600 visitors registered for support with many people then returning to the centres for ongoing advice. There was a significant decline in demand for recovery support in the final weeks of the centre operations, suggesting that most people have accessed the information they need to start their recovery process.

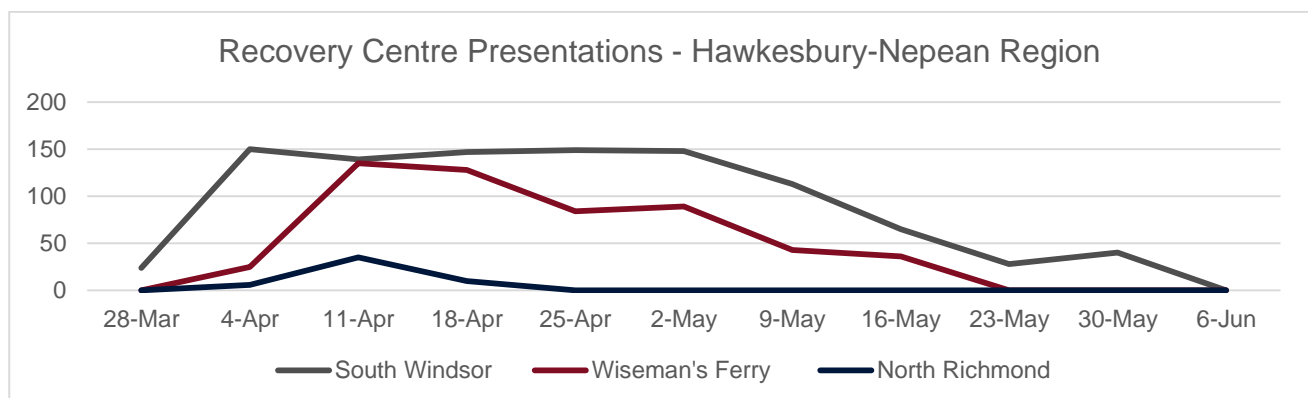


Figure 1: Visitation numbers to the South Windsor, North Richmond and Wiseman's Ferry Recovery Centres

The table below is a snapshot of state-level data on clients supported through the Recovery Support Services and recovery centre registrations. It demonstrates that a number of people were unable to work and approximately 180 people believe their homes are uninhabitable.

Data	Description	Hawkesbury	The Hills
Recovery support services	Current customers receiving short term recovery case management	84	1
Recovery centre	Recovery centre visitations across the three	1593	

registrations	recovery centres (including return visits)	
Flood impacted ability to work (as indicated by the client at the time of registering with the recovery centre)	296	31
Number of people reporting they were living in uninhabitable homes (as disclosed by client at the time they attended the recovery centre)	173	16
Previously affected by a disaster in the last 5 years	320 (61%)	30 (62%)

*Table 1: State-level recovery information *Note that this data is from a point in time as at 21 June 2021. Although it is a useful indicator of impact and offers insights on how the flood-affected people, it should not be considered comprehensive.*

Small businesses that were affected by the flood have been able to apply for small businesses grants to help their recovery. A number of grants have been requested, with work still underway to assess these claims. Most applications have been submitted from the Hawkesbury LGA.

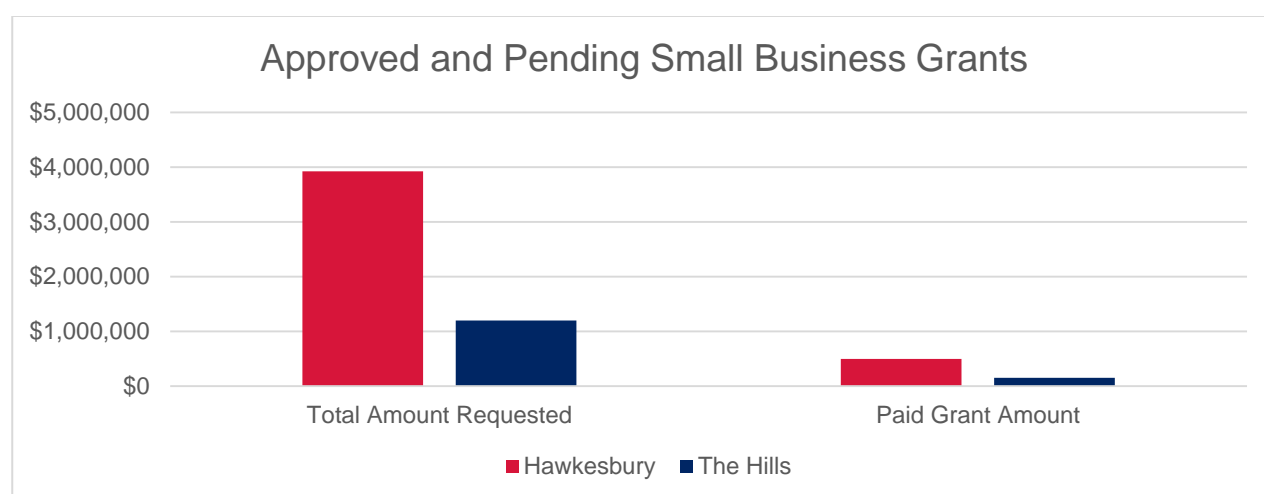


Figure 2: Approved and pending applications for the small business grants as at 23 June 2021

The following table highlights that damage to homes and property was dispersed across a number of small communities in the Central Coast, the Hawkesbury, and The Hills regions. It demonstrates the extent of initial damage to homes of people on low incomes and without insurance, with 43 applications approved to date for disaster welfare grants.

LGA	Suburb	Recovery Centre Registrations	Disaster Welfare Grant Applications Total	SES Rapid Damage Assessment - Total Destroyed, Severe & Moderate Damage Total
Central Coast	Gunderman	36	2	94

Hawkesbury	Ebenezer	34	2	23
Hawkesbury	Lower Macdonald	59	4	8
Hawkesbury	South Windsor	34	3	13
Hawkesbury	Wilberforce	79	9	77
Hawkesbury	Windsor	34	8	20
The Hills	Leets Vale	0	0	39
The Hills	Lower Portland	10	0	50
The Hills	Sackville North	0	1	37
The Hills	Wiseman's Ferry	20	7	200

Table 2: Areas of high impact based on the initial Rapid Impact Assessment

Key Analysis and Findings

The following describes the feedback from community service organisations in the Hawkesbury region on the ongoing needs of their clients. It is based on the 18 responses from 13 community services organisations that provide a range of services, including but not limited to: housing and homelessness services; domestic and family violence; health; education; mental health; disability services; aged services; community development; bushfire recovery; local government; financial counselling and youth services. Please see attachment for a list of attendees.

These organisations predominantly work in the Hawkesbury, with a few also servicing the Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Penrith, The Hills, Blacktown.

The following outlines their views on the impact and recovery needs of the community.



Community organisations were directly affected

85% of services were affected by the March floods.

- The floodwaters meant that some staff couldn't get to work, offices were closed, key services were delayed like food and hamper distribution and support for rough sleepers. Some organisations diverted their resources to support other providers which in turn affected their ability to perform their key functions. Many staff were personally and professionally affected.



Increased demand on services

- Four of the organisations have employed additional volunteers or staff to meet the demand from the floods. Some organisations wanting to bring on extra staff have found it hard to find and retain volunteers through successive disasters.
- One service had waiting lists before the floods. Some providers reported an increase of 50-60 clients since March. In one case, this included 14-15 families. The Salvation Army has reported an additional 300 clients since the flood.



Adapting to changing community needs

- With successive stressors from the bushfires to COVID to the floods, many services have had to expand their offerings to meet the needs of their clients.
- For example, a number of the community services, including drop-in services have adopted a case management model to help connect customers with a range of wrap-around services to help them recover. In most cases, this has been done without the benefit of additional funding. Many services evolved and adapted their services to better support increasingly complex and diverse needs of their clients.
- It should be noted that for most of these services, they are not formally funded to support disaster recovery and have to go “outside” of their guidelines to provide further support to their clients.

Ongoing Recovery Issues

The survey responses also highlighted a number of ongoing issues with the Hawkesbury region, that continue to affect the community and the progress of recovery.



Immediate needs

- The majority of clients required immediate support, including regular food hampers, replacement of material goods, temporary accommodation, removalists, clean-up support and financial relief.
- As highlighted in Figure 1, the demand for immediate recovery services has declined through the recovery centres.
- Those that still require support require more intensive assistance including, case management services, mental health services and domestic violence services.



Significant impact on health and wellbeing

91% of providers reported the event has affected the physical health and wellbeing of clients.

- Many people lost their possessions, some became homeless, others lost income or employment. Clients with a history of trauma experienced compounding effects from this flood. The floodwaters also affected access to medication in usual timeframes. One service noticed that demand for addiction support has increased.
- 85% reported the flood impacted mental health and wellbeing of clients, with many stating the ‘unknown’ for their clients has increased anxiety and stress levels. Some clients have lost their homes, were separated from pets while in emergency accommodation and have little certainty about their future housing while in temporary accommodation.
- There has been a reported increase in disclosures of suicidal thoughts.
- A number of residents who are in rural/semi-rural properties lost animals/livestock in the floods, which caused significant distress.



Housing

Limited access to stable housing was a consistent theme across the community service organisations.

- Following the flood, some people with damaged homes have been placed in emergency accommodation which has been extended for 4-7 days at a time. A number of people remain in emergency accommodation and are being actively supported into longer term housing.
 - There is a pre-existing shortage of affordable housing in the rental market which has affected people’s ability to move forward in their recovery. The flood has added to the demand for housing with reports of people’s homes being uninhabitable, others that are under-insured or still awaiting outcomes of insurance claims, and people living in insecure tenancy arrangements.
-

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- Some have moved out of area where there is public and private housing stock available. This has offered a degree of security but also disrupted their community and support network.
 - Flood-affected communities have needed removalist and storage services to move to new locations or hold their belongings while in temporary accommodation.
 - For the long-term occupants of damaged caravan parks, there are complex health, legal and regulatory issues that have complicated their return home.



Clean up

- While Phase 1 of the formal clean-up has been completed it is unclear how many residents are still managing related issues including: land contaminated by sewerage, insecticides, fertilisers, and animal carcasses. There are concerns about the safety of residents who are cleaning and repairing damage without appropriate training and equipment.
- It was mentioned by one stakeholder that a mechanism to check and then assist vulnerable people who missed out on the initial clean up could be considered.
- There are ongoing community health issues related to the flood connected to mould, respiratory illness and infections, particularly for anyone living in contaminated accommodation and housing.
- Service providers noted that the damaged and flood-affected landscape is a visual reminder and a trigger for some of their clients. Destroyed areas of the river, uprooted trees, flood debris, loss of landscape are often physical markers for loss and grief.



Mental health support

- Community Service Organisations have noticed a general trend of stress and trauma among their clients following the floods, with anecdotal reports of an increased demand for mental health support. This includes demand for a range of services that are flexible enough to meet the needs of clients, from emotional wellbeing support through to professional trauma counselling and resilience building.
- There were general comments from community services about difficulty in accessing mental health services. However, the Specialist Mental Health Clinician for Hawkesbury notes this has not resulted in many referrals, so more work could be considered to encourage community and recovery services to refer clients to mental health services when they identify a need.
- As the recovery centres opened, staff noticed a number of clients that were understandably distressed as they visited the centres. These customers could access psychological first aid and someone to talk to help them navigate the services. As the recovery centres entered their second month of operation, there was a consistent trend of a smaller number of customers presenting at the centres with complex mental health needs and heightened levels of distress. Resilience NSW developed an on-call arrangement with NSW Health so that critical mental health support could be provided onsite as needed.
- The Primary Health Network and the Bushfire and COVID-19 Trauma Recovery – Specialist Mental Health Clinician for Hawkesbury have identified that there is a gap in places where people who need mental health care can be referred. Most existing providers in the area don't bulk bill and had long waiting lists prior to the flood, affecting access for those in need of support.
- Mental health support also needs to be considered for those people working in the formal and informal roles to support their communities with their recovery. It is important that organisations and volunteers have access to psychosocial supports in addition to their clients.



Domestic violence

- Services noted that rates of domestic violence in the Hawkesbury area have been increasing since the 2019/20 bushfires. The proportion of clients impacted by domestic and family violence has continued to rise over the last 18 months, further compounded by COVID and the most recent March floods.
 - The Women's Cottage is the only specialist domestic violence service in the Hawkesbury LGA. The Hawkesbury does not have a women's health centre or a
-

women's refuge. The Women's Cottage now has one part-time case manager (3 days a week for 12 months in 2021 funded through a COVID initiative). This case worker has an existing case load of 25 clients but since the March 2021 flood the service has received 15 new referrals.

- The case worker and crisis support workers note three significant changes post bushfire and flood: an increase in numbers of women attending their service, an increase in the frequency of violent events for their clients, and an increase in the severity of the violence.



Financial counselling and financial aid

- A large number of residents attending the recovery centres wanted access to immediate financial aid and material aid.
- The Rural Financial Counselling Service attended the recovery centres and saw a large number of clients seeking advice around the grants available for primary producers and to understand the process of applying and eligibility.
- Many landholders are only now beginning to experience loss of cash flow and income stressors. This is in part due to the full loss now becoming clear and also due to time of year (winter) which conflicts with some types of planting and turf growing.



Legal services

- Legal Aid was an important part of the recovery centre services.
- Many residents of this area lack legal literacy skills and many flood-affected residents with the most complex needs were not aware of any of their rights as a tenant, or of the legal support available to advocate for return of paid bonds/rent in advance. Many of these residents were unaware that they could also be supported with things like unpaid fines due to the flood disaster.
- A number of other legal support issues have emerged due to Legal Aid's presence in the recovery centres – specifically in supporting vulnerable residents in caravan parks, many of whom lost all or a large percentage of their home and belongings. The caravan parks have highlighted the ongoing housing challenge for low income and vulnerable people in the area, given limited social housing stock and high private rents compared to income.
- Many of the residents have sought legal help for the first time and a range of pre-existing civil law issues have been identified, such as: people eligible for social housing who were not on the waiting list, loans, debts and fines causing financial hardship or remaining unpaid, people with the right to apply for Victim Support payments who have not previously received this advice, and unresolved issues accessing Centrelink and Veterans payments.



Coordination and communication

- Community service organisations highlighted the need for better coordination and communication among local services around donated goods and immediate relief. During the initial response to the flood, many providers proactively sourced and coordinated goods for their clients. There is room to improve partnerships and coordination to limit duplication and help match donated goods with those that need them.



Case management and direct support

- There is a strong need for services that walk alongside members of the community hardest hit by a major disaster, from the point of entry into an evacuation centre through to short and longer term recovery services. The flood response, evacuation process and recovery can be difficult to navigate alone.
- Availability of transport is an issue when clients need to be evacuated but have little means to leave an area at risk of rising floodwaters.



Animals and agriculture

- The rural and semi-rural nature of the area means that a number of residents lost stock and large animals, particularly horses and cattle.
- Disposal of carcasses and euthanising of large animals, including animals that were

impacted by the floods but didn't die immediately. Reports from vets indicate there are numbers of horses who will still require euthanasia and safe disposal (which are expensive for the owner) weeks after the flood has passed.



Caravan park occupants

- There are 37 caravan parks in the Hawkesbury-Nepean, with many located in low-lying areas of the river system. Approximately half were affected by the floodwaters and reported damage to caravans and site facilities, requiring help to clean up debris and make repairs.
- In particular, one caravan park had 40 caravans damaged, many that were the primary homes for their occupants. 84 of these residents are receiving complex case management services to help their flood recovery, and a proportion are likely to need ongoing support.
- Occupants of caravan parks have been receiving support from legal services, around a couple of key issues, including:
 - Site fees being charged, and refunds of rent paid in advance where their tenancy or site agreement is terminated by the resident due to the flooding; and
 - Confusion over the rights and timing of residents' ability to return to flood-damaged parks, with some residents reluctant to raise disputes with management.
- Evacuation procedures were not activated and/or communicated effectively, and concerns remain around the process to clean up these sites and access by support services.
- A further systemic issue arising in the Wiseman's Ferry area is residents being charged significant energy reconnection fees.



Riverbank residents and business owners

- Turf farmers were one of the major businesses impacted in the Hawkesbury primarily as they are low-lying and based next to the river. Many have experienced significant business and income loss. For many turf farmers in the Hawkesbury this is their second loss in just over a year, noting the flood in February 2020 did not trigger the grants available for the March 2021 flood.
- A large number of river-based tourism businesses were badly affected. Some businesses sustained significant losses, while many caravan parks appear to be uninsured or underinsured, due to prohibitive insurance costs. Some of these caravan parks employ a large number of local workers, which has further disruptive flow-on effects. A number of the larger and more significantly impacted parks remain partially or fully closed. Many are still involved in clean-up activities, coordinating tradespeople, and trying to remove flood debris.
- In the longer term there is a significant and growing issue in this region about insurance affordability.
- For a number of river-based farmers there has been loss of pastures, fences, animals, hives, and crops, including their winter planting season. It is unclear how many of these businesses will be eligible for the grants if they only derive part of their income from their land.
- There is a significant culturally and linguistically diverse community within the market gardeners and vegetable growers in Hawkesbury and Nepean areas. The key known language groups are Cantonese, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Tagalog. Flood recovery information needs to be translated into these languages and tailored support made available to the community.
- There were reports of landholders and businesses feeling overwhelmed, confused, and frustrated by the lack of clarity on how and when they can undertake work to restore their section of the riverbank.



Issues of geographic isolation, poor road networks, poor telecommunication

There is a need for place-based service delivery as many residents in the Hawkesbury, particularly in outlying areas of the LGA, are unlikely to present at recovery centres.

- Key areas of impact are not in urban centres, many of the impacted residents have a culture of 'self-reliance' and don't traditionally access welfare and community services

in town.

- It is important to link additional recovery support services to mobile recovery units still operating from the bushfire recovery work.



Preparedness

- Longer term support for the area should consider building community preparedness and resilience to what is likely to be future flood events, as a mechanism to also reduce some of the psychological impact on communities.
-

Next Steps

This report will be shared with key organisations, council, and relevant stakeholders to guide planning of appropriate recovery support processes as well as medium and longer term recovery priorities in the Hawkesbury-Nepean region.

Resilience NSW and Hawkesbury City Council would like to thank all the community service organisations, council and government staff that generously gave their time and information to develop this snapshot.

Appendix 1: Participating Organisations and Data Limitations

Participating Organisations

- Bligh Park Community Services Inc.
- Glossodia Community Centre
- Hawkesbury City Council
- Hawkesbury Community Outreach Services
- Hawkesbury Helping Hands Inc.
- Link Wentworth
- North Richmond Community Centre
- Peppercorn Services Inc.
- Platform Youth Services
- Red Cross
- Richmond Community Services Inc.
- The Salvation Army
- The Women's Cottage

Data Limitations

The following methods were used to collect data regarding flood impacts and community:

- A community needs assessment with responses from community service organisations. A small sample of these organisations attended the meeting to provide input. The community service organisations were invited to complete a survey to capture observations on how the flood affected the delivery of their services and the clients they assist.
- Accounts from the recovery centres in the Hawkesbury region. This data has been used to draw out key themes from clients attending the centres, noting that many community members have opted to access support through Service NSW website, phone line and reach out directly to support agencies.

ANNEX D: Local Government Profiles – March 2021 Floods

Local Government Profile



Resilience
NSW

Flood Event - March 2021

The Hills Shire

Impact	Destroyed	Damaged	Data set
Residences	18	391	22/04/2021
Facilities	3	12	22/04/2021
Outbuildings	6	46	22/04/2021
Loss of Human Life	1		
Livestock			8/06/2021
Fencing Damage - DPI Survey (km's)			8/06/2021
Flood Footprint (% of LGA Flooded)		1.4%	

Programs	Approved	Value	Data set
Small Business Grants - \$50K	35	\$ 681,679	3/08/2021
Primary Producer Grants - \$75K	2	\$ 150,000	30/07/2021
Phase 1 Cleanup - Immediate Relief (tonnes)	2825	\$ -	5/05/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Payment	2877	\$ 3,385,600	4/07/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Allowance			4/07/2021
Volunteer Camps (BlazeAid/Backtrack)		\$ -	18/05/2021
Community Recovery Officer			

Total of listed programs

\$ 4,217,279

Community Recovery Officer (Flood) YES

Local Government Profile



Resilience
NSW

Flood Event - March 2021

Hawkesbury

Impact	Destroyed	Damaged	Data set
Residences	30	385	22/04/2021
Facilities	2	60	22/04/2021
Outbuildings	9	142	22/04/2021
Loss of Human Life			
Livestock	2		8/06/2021
Fencing Damage - DPI Survey (km's)	13.6	\$ -	8/06/2021
Flood Footprint (% of LGA Flooded)		2.6%	

Programs	Approved	Value	Data set
Small Business Grants - \$50K	124	\$ 1,966,757	3/08/2021
Primary Producer Grants - \$75K	52	\$ 3,412,434	30/07/2021
Phase 1 Cleanup - Immediate Relief (tonnes)	3871	\$ -	5/05/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Payment	6009	\$ 7,097,000	4/07/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Allowance	330	\$ 1,138,407	4/07/2021
Volunteer Camps (BlazeAid/Backtrack)		\$ -	18/05/2021
Community Recovery Officer	1	\$ 220,000	

Total of listed programs

\$ 13,834,598

Community Recovery Officer (Flood) YES

Local Government Profile



Resilience
NSW

Flood Event - March 2021

Wollondilly

Impact	Destroyed	Damaged	Data set
Residences			22/04/2021
Facilities			22/04/2021
Outbuildings			22/04/2021
Loss of Human Life			
Livestock			8/06/2021
Fencing Damage - DPI Survey (km's)		\$ -	8/06/2021
Flood Footprint (% of LGA Flooded)		0.0%	

Programs	Approved	Value	Data set
Small Business Grants - \$50K	11	\$ 127,508	3/08/2021
Primary Producer Grants - \$75K	9		30/07/2021
Phase 1 Cleanup - Immediate Relief (tonnes)		\$ -	5/05/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Payment	3173	\$ 3,925,600	4/07/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Allowance			4/07/2021
Volunteer Camps (BlazeAid/Backtrack)		\$ -	18/05/2021
Community Recovery Officer	1	\$ 220,000	

Total of listed programs

\$ 4,273,108

Community Recovery Officer (Flood) No

Local Government Profile



Resilience
NSW

Flood Event - March 2021

Hornsby

Impact	Destroyed	Damaged	Data set
Residences		10	22/04/2021
Facilities		1	22/04/2021
Outbuildings		1	22/04/2021
Loss of Human Life			
Livestock			8/06/2021
Fencing Damage - DPI Survey (km's)			8/06/2021
Flood Footprint (% of LGA Flooded)			

Programs	Approved	Value	Data set
Small Business Grants - \$50K	11	\$ 137,233	3/08/2021
Primary Producer Grants - \$75K	1	\$ 50,000	30/07/2021
Phase 1 Cleanup - Immediate Relief (tonnes)			5/05/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Payment	1289	\$ 1,469,600	4/07/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Allowance	<20	\$ 48,399	4/07/2021
Volunteer Camps (BlazeAid/Backtrack)		\$ -	18/05/2021
Community Recovery Officer			

Total of listed programs

\$ 1,705,232

Community Recovery Officer (Flood) No

Local Government Profile



Resilience
NSW

Flood Event - March 2021

Central Coast

Impact	Destroyed	Damaged	Data set
Residences	4	540	22/04/2021
Facilities		5	22/04/2021
Outbuildings		10	22/04/2021
Loss of Human Life			
Livestock			8/06/2021
Fencing Damage - DPI Survey (km's)	0.2	\$ -	8/06/2021
Flood Footprint (% of LGA Flooded)			

Programs	Approved	Value	Data set
Small Business Grants - \$50K	82	\$ 1,039,936	3/08/2021
Primary Producer Grants - \$75K	19	\$ 895,220	30/07/2021
Phase 1 Cleanup - Immediate Relief (tonnes)		\$ -	5/05/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Payment	35031	\$ 41,375,400	4/07/2021
Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Allowance	48	\$ 174,137	4/07/2021
Volunteer Camps (BlazeAid/Backtrack)		\$ -	18/05/2021
Community Recovery Officer			

Total of listed programs

\$ 43,484,693

Community Recovery Officer (Flood) YES