

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
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Attachments: [flood Enquiry 2022.docx](#)

Your details

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Submission details

I am making this submission as	Emergency services personnel
Submission type	I am submitting on behalf of my organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Australian Helicopter Industry Association
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	CEO
Consent to make submission public	I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#)

1.1 Causes and contributing factors Submission is attached

Supporting documents or images

Attach files • [flood Enquiry 2022.docx](#)

The Australian Helicopter Industry Association (AHIA)

The AHIA is the national industry body representing helicopter operators and maintainers, as well as many aviation supply companies.

Australia has the world's second largest civil helicopter fleet.

Helicopters are well suited to Australia's operating environment and are used extensively across all states.

EMS operations take place every day and can include flood rescue/relief work, fire-fighting, urgent patient transfer and difficult terrain or marine rescues, to name just a few.

The AHIA is an active member of the Helicopter Association International (USA), contributing regularly on shared safety, operational and regulatory challenges.

NSW Emergency Service issues including flood relief operations

During the recent NSW flood emergency the helicopter industry had up to 50 helicopter assets available that were not utilised.

There is a strong case for more efficient use of industry helicopter assets in future flood and fire emergencies.

The main issues are detailed below:

- There is a lack of engagement with industry – Industry are the subject matter experts and the holders of safety knowledge– industry input is often disregarded by government agencies.
- Dominant price-based tasking – creating a race to the bottom for equipment and pilot capability and encouraging an anti-safety culture. This can ensure over time that NSW communities will receive a consistently poorer product from industry.
- Increasing government ownership of helicopter assets can seriously threaten the viability of the helicopter industry.

One government owned helicopter can remove up to 5 private industry helicopters from the state. In a quiet year 100 hours of work can make an aircraft viable to hold on to for the likely busy year to come. One government owned aircraft can move around the state and take 100 hours off up to 5 different operators making all of them now holding non-viable assets. Consequently, there will be a huge depletion of privately owned emergency service aircraft for each additional government asset.

- Promotion of tow trucking – creates angst and stress within the industry and pits operator against operator instead of a collaborative and organised environment. This

can create a poor safety culture. Pre-determined dispatch is a significantly better model and used in a number of States outside of NSW.

- No recognition of past performance as a company or individual crew or of upgrades and improvements to equipment – government is not getting value for money. They are obtaining the cheapest hourly rate but a bucket of water not on the target or a slow flood rescue makes the next one twice as expensive.
- No response to safety reports submitted by industry to government EMS agencies – this is unacceptable.
- Conroy report – many of the recommendations were misinterpreted or simply ignored. Government agencies made the promise not to purchase/acquire any further aircraft without checking them to industry – they have ignored this completely in building the government fleet.
- Government does not comply with their own rules – government chief pilot for 412's only had a bare endorsement where we can't get a pilot approved without 100 hours on type.
- Government aircraft purchasing behaviour and utilisation is in breach of government competitive neutrality policies.
- Industry has not been advised on the government strategies for aircraft use in emergencies. RFS was supposed to release their 10 year strategic plan to industry years ago. Industry has asked for it and it has not been produced. How can industry invest in very expensive assets for the future good of NSW if we are not educated about what is wanted into the future?
- As the Royal Commission highlighted the NAFC contracts are not long enough in days per year or in consecutive year terms to allow industry to source financing for multi-million-dollar assets – we cannot compete with foreign owned, temporarily imported assets. The Royal Commission recommended NAFC look at longer contracts and a 'modest sovereign fleet', meaning Australian owned.

The Royal Commission did not imply that EMS helicopter assets need to be government owned.

- Public Liability: Why is the government loading themselves up with liability by owning aircraft. They could pass all of this down to industry. Government does not need to buy rescue helicopters for EMS – these operations are highly specialised – why is government opening itself up to unnecessary risks?

Paul Tyrrell

CEO

AHIA

