

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
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Attachments: [Flood Inquiry 2022 Submission.pdf](#)

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Submission details

I am making this submission as A resident in a flood-affected area

Submission type I am making a personal submission

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](#)

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [Flood Inquiry 2022 Submission.pdf](#)
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This submission addresses:

“1a *The cause of, and factors contributing to, the frequency intensity, timing and location of Floods in NSW in the 2022 catastrophic flood event including considerations of any role or weather, climate change and human activity*” and makes recommendations to address the issues.

Background

*The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has the most significant flood risk exposure in NSW, if not Australia*¹

*“Analysis of Minerals and radiocarbon dating found that (at Fairlight Gorge near the junction of the Nepean and Warragamba Rivers) a flood at least. eight meters higher than the 1867 flood had occurred in the Holocene period”*² ie during the 1st Nations occupation of Australia.

*The period from 1949 to 1992 had more frequent and larger floods, despite the completion of the Warragamba Dam for water supply in 1960*³

*“The Hawkesbury is not receiving the Infrastructure that reflects a high risk area”*⁴

This submission is focused on the Hawkesbury City Council area and the contribution made by human activity at State government level as wells in the Hawkesbury and adjoining Council areas of The Hills, Penrith and Blacktown. Particularity the impact of decisions made by respective State representatives and Local Councils over years which have resulted in the increasing flooding in Hawkesbury City Council area which was so evident in the recent floods.

The residents of the Hawkesbury have years of experience in being mislead by State politicians and some Local Councillors regarding infrastructure to mitigate flooding in the Hawkesbury. This should be obvious to those involved in listening to the responses from our flood affected community. Those same supposed community representatives have repeatedly ignored community concerns.

History continues to repeat itself with respective governments over many years focussing on enlarging Sydney in a westerly direction, ignoring the impact of covering food producing land with Roads and houses, not requiring those developments to contribute to a sustainable future, encouraging waste of the precious water resources and as outlined above in the quotes above increasing the frequency and size of floods.

This inquiry has sought stories about the recent flood experiences. The link below provides several stories from the experiences of some during the 1867 flood. Very little appears to have changed with people still being rescued from roofs, homes being destroyed and personal possessions floating downstream.

<https://remembering-the-past-australia.blogspot.com/2017/06/1867-year-of-the-floods-in-nsw.html>

1 HNV Regional Flood Study Final Report (July 2019) pii

2 Op cite p 8-9

3 Op cite p 9

4 Floodplain Risk Management Advisory Committee 05 December 2019. p17

North West growth Area – or an alternate description - Continued developed of the Hawkesbury / Nepean Floodplain without considering the increasing potential flooding impact



Extent of the 1867 flood

Figure 3: The 'bathtub' effect of flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley

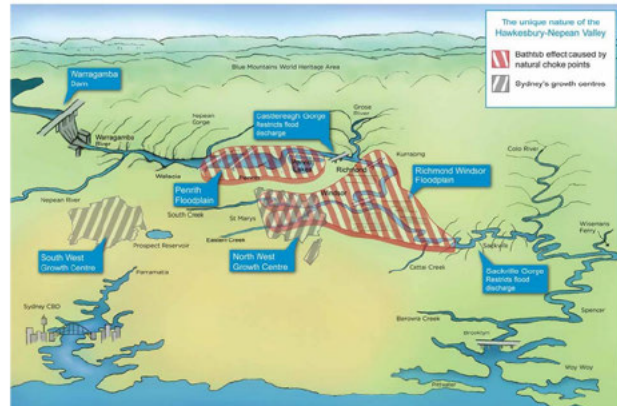
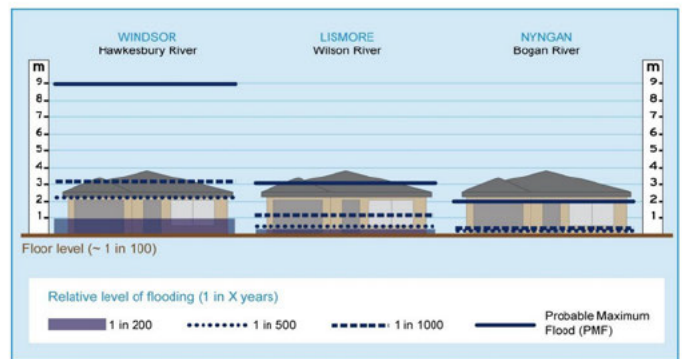


Figure 4: Comparison of flood levels at three NSW floodplains



Source: adapted from (ERM Mitchell McCotter Pty Ltd, 1995)

2015 Floodplain Management Association National Conference

The illustrations above reveal the extent of flooding from the 1867 flood and two diagrams from a paper by Sue Ribbons presented at the 2015 Floodplain Management Association National Conference titled *Hawkesbury- Nepean Valley Flood Management Review – Developing a strategy where flood Depth can be nine metres above Flood Planning Level.*

When the largest flood since records occurred, much of the areas of Western Sydney could be described as green field areas with minimal intensive development, ie the ground had capacity to absorb rainfall before becoming waterlogged and contributing to increased flooding.

Over the last 50 or so years those of us who travel towards Sydney on the Richmond or Windsor Roads have observed with concern the urban sprawl moving westward in response to State and adjoining LGA's planning decisions. Ignoring local community concerns, the Hawkesbury Council developed Bligh Park, South Windsor, Pitt Town and McGraths Hill, all in the Hawkesbury Floodplain with support at State Government level.

What was very evident in the recent floods is the impact of the respective Council and State Government policies on the Hawkesbury community.

The NSW State Government North West Urban Development Policy has rezoned 13 area for growth including areas that have a long history of flooding such as Box Hill, Marsden Park, Riverstone and Vineyard. Land previous predominantly grassland used for agricultural activities is now being land

filled to achieve improved flood immunity and contributing to a significant increase in runoff involving additional water flow into the Hawkesbury River. The recent floods are being reported as acting differently to previous floods. SES failed to accurately predict road, bridge closures and back-flow impact. The NSW Government in co-operation with The Hawkesbury, Hills and Blacktown Council's are responsible for the increased risk of flooding in the Hawkesbury River due to the additional water runoff from these former floodplain now land filled growth areas.

Similarly, urban growth areas of Penrith have been identified as impacting on increased runoff into the Nepean River impact and also on creeks which are now being subject to back flow rises with potential life threatening consequences.

Despite a whole of Government strategy being recommended to address this flooding issue the current State Government and all Councils involved continue to assess individual developments without adequate recognition of the cumulative impact their respective developments have on the floodplain, the Hawkesbury community and the significant increase in water flow from these developments with their increasing contribution to flooding.

The Hawkesbury Liberal and Labor Councillors joined together in 2020 to disband the Flood Advisory Committee so that Community Representatives were no longer able to question the reports being prepared by Government staff. These reports mentioning the snakes and spiders joining the Pitt Town residents during a major flood and advising that flood evacuation modelling studies clearly revealed that the residents of the Hawkesbury were identified as "Collateral" ie would probably drown in their vehicles or their homes due to the inadequate capacity of flood evacuation routes to cope with the existing population numbers partially due to the increase in population in the areas adjoining LGA's.

Current planning strategies focus on mitigation not prevention. Hawkesbury residents are at risk of increased frequency of flooding, increased flood heights and increased loss of lives. Another impact is the impact of insurance costs resulting in uninsured properties in the flood plain as well as the significant cost of flood recovery.

Recommendation:

Before any further development of floodplain or areas which are identified as having the capacity to increase water flow in to the Hawkesbury-Nepean River these development should be required to collect, store and use the water, including grey water generated from the development fully within the development site.

Development of sites across NSW which have the capacity to increase flooding should be established on flood prevention not mitigation planning rules.

Serious mitigation strategies leading to prevention planning should be considered for all flood affected areas in NSW. The funds currently allocated to the raising of the dam wall project which is another mitigation idea should be diverted to significantly improve flood evacuation and or buy back schemes for areas identified as high risk flood areas.

Pitt Town evacuation route

Pitt Town, established in 1810 by Governor Macquarie and re-sited to higher ground in 1815. The area's history as an island during major floods, complete with potentially unsavoury wildlife trying to avoid floods is well documented.

Hawkesbury City Council in 1998 resolved to explore the development of Pitt Town as one of five areas for potential development in the Hawkesbury. Despite repeated advice regarding the unsuitability of the project from the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning up to 2000 Council continued to pursue the development in conjunction with developer land owners.

Some local community groups strongly opposed amendment 145 to the 1989 LEP released in 2004 proposal to increase development of Pitt Town. One of these objections was that an increase in population associated with the development would have evacuation difficulties with potential loss of life and that the nominated evacuation roads were inadequate. Development was referred to the NSW Government for Gateway Assessment.

The construction of the Pitt Town Flood evacuation route was a condition of consent linked to the development of Pitt Town. The evacuation route was not built by the developer although he did donate funds to two Hawkesbury City Liberal councillors towards their campaigns to enter State politics. The current evacuation route was eventually funded by taxpayers several years later. Briefings to State, Local Council and community representatives as recently as 2020 raised evacuation concerns and potential loss of life for the Pitt Town community in the event of a major flood.

Recommendation:

This flood evacuation route needs to be upgraded by the State Government.

The Replacement Windsor Bridge

As early as 2009 community representatives were advising the then RTA representatives that a bridge similar to the one over South Creek where approach roads are flooded but the bridge is high and dry was unacceptable.

The Liberal State member for Hawkesbury in 2012 distributed a flyer throughout his Hawkesbury Electorate stating that *“The new high level bridge will provide flood free access for residents of Wilberforce, Glossodia, Freemans Reach, East Kurrajong, Colo Heights and other areas west of the Hawkesbury River”*

The Replacement Windsor Bridge cost taxpayers \$137 million. Since its completion in 2020 this replacement bridge has been closed and under flood waters on three occasions. The replacement of a 1 in 3 flood level historic bridge with a 1 in 3 flood level approach onto the replacement bridge should never be allowed to be repeated.

The current Hawkesbury State representative acknowledged the flooding of the approach road in her submission on 16 June 2022 but she also was a strong and vocal supported the replacement Bridge Project so must accept hers and the previous two Hawkesbury State representatives complicity in this wasteful project which fails to improve flood immunity for our community.

Recommendation:

A repeat of the State Government constructing a replacement Bridge with minimal improvement on flood immunity and approach roads which are flood affected should not be repeated. A 1in 100 year flood level should be the minimum flood immunity level for infrastructure in the floodplain to match residential flood level planning requirements.

Duplication of the Richmond Bridge at North Richmond

Again the Hawkesbury community is currently being offered, for a third time in living memory, a higher level bridge with an approach road subject to flooding. The current State Government continues to support a duplicated Richmond Bridge at North Richmond with the eastern approach road subject to flood inundation. A flood evacuation route to provide flood access from those west of the Hawkesbury River to the rest of Sydney in times of flood and widely supported by the community has been rejected by the current State Government even when additional Federal funds were made available.

Recommendation:

The duplication of the Richmond Bridge at North Richmond should be constructed on the previously identified flood evacuation route at the 1 in 100 level as a minimum. Ie the purple route or similar.

Hawkesbury flood Evacuation routes and potential loss of power for the Hawkesbury residents west of the Hawkesbury River.

During the 2021 floods almost 50% of the Hawkesbury community were isolated by landslides on the Bells Line of Road and the Putty Road, the only evacuation routes available for these residents during the flood. The community were left with inadequate essential services, insufficient food and medical supplies, poor to non existent communications, sewer failures, no hospital, no police station, no ambulance station, petrol reserved for essential service vehicles such as SES, RFS and Police.

The saving grace was that for this in this particular flood electricity supplies continued uninterrupted but State and Local Government representatives have been brief on the probability that in a major flood in the Hawkesbury residents west of the river may loose power and it may take up to three months for power to be restored. State and Local Councillors had been briefed in recent years about the strong possibility of these combined events occurring

Recommendation:

The State Government needs to ensure that communities with the potential to be isolated by flood but not directly affected by flood waters are provided with a secure electricity supply to ensure that essential services such as access to water, sewerage systems, essential health and life saving mechanism are available. Similarly the capacity for food supplies and essential medical supplies should also be maintained.

Flood Evacuation routes for the Richmond Community.

Modelling provided during briefing session to both State and Local Council representatives reveal the potential for loss of lives due to the limited capacity of the existing road infrastructure to adequately cope with flood evacuation for some of our community due to development in adjoining Local Government ares such as The Hill, Blacktown and Penrith.

The only evacuation routes currently planned are to the south and east. Communities outside the Hawkesbury who live along these routes will have priority access to flood evacuation routes simply by their closer proximity to these routes. Modelling has been confirmed that, even without accidents blocking these evacuation routes, they have insufficient capacity to meet demand and loss of life for some Hawkesbury residents will be the collateral damage in a major flood event.

Recommendation:

This issue needs to be addressed by the State Government. It is essential that a flood evacuation route linking the east to the west is provided as part of the duplication of the Richmond Bridge for our Hawkesbury community and that those most at risk are supported with access to sufficient flood evacuation options and not be excluded by not assessing development on a whole of state objective

C Edds

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Concerned Hawkesbury Citizen

