

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 3:55:12 PM

Your details

Title Mr

First name David

Last name Farmer

Email

Postcode 2259

Submission details

I am making this submission as Other

Submission type I am submitting on behalf of my organisation

Organisation making the submission (if applicable) Central Coast Council

Your position in the organisation (if applicable) Chief Executive Officer

Consent to make submission public I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story

Along with many LGAs in NSW affected by the March 2022 floods, the Central Coast was impacted for the third consecutive year, with floods affecting the Tuggerah Lake and surrounding suburbs, and the Hawkesbury River communities of Lower Mangrove, Wendoree Park, Marlow, Bar Point, Spencer, and Gunderman.

The March 2022 Tuggerah Lakes flood led to an Evacuation Order being issued by the NSW SES. Residential areas of the Central Coast that were impacted by the Hawkesbury River flood, which exceeded the 2021 flood level, were not issued with an Evacuation Order. Tuggerah Lakes residents also experienced a secondary coastal process driven (waves and tide rather than catchment rainfall) flood in April 2022.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.2 Preparation and planning

Comment 1.2a Community preparedness improvements need to be investigated with a view to providing to the community both flood impact education prior to events as well as fast and up to date information relating to rising and receding flood levels. This information should be readily accessible from both the SES and Council websites (emergency dashboards) and should be as close to real time as possible. The provision of this information coupled with the education and information such as flood markers in flood prone areas has the potential to significantly reduce the sole reliance on evacuation warnings and orders issued by the SES, equipping the community with visual drivers to act early and appropriately.

Comment 1.2b Flood prediction and forecasting improvement opportunities exist as Central Coast Council's flooding team have been

developing flood modelling over the past years that is proving to be extremely accurate. Opportunities exist to share this modelling with the Bureau of Meteorology and improve flood predictions and community notifications around the need to evacuate. Council is willing and open to sharing this information both the BOM and with other Councils to bolster preparedness and response across the state.

1.3 Response to floods

Comment 1.3a Apparent disconnect between the LEMC (EOC) and federal resourcing which arrived at Spencer. The ADF arrived and took on clean-up tasks associated with Council infrastructure, yet the EOC were not notified until after the resourcing. Whilst the additional resourcing was welcomed, the ability to ensure collaboration with local response and recovery efforts could have been improved by prior notification.

Comment 1.3b Communications and messaging from the lead combat agency was somewhat fragmented and inconsistent making it difficult for Council to reproduce accurate and timely information for the community. The local community is heavily dependent on council communications. It is strongly suggested that NSW RFS and SES should operate under the same framework, with consideration being given to reviewing the disaster response and recovery agency structure currently serving NSW. The segregated services specialising in their respective disaster types at present translate into varying performance outcomes for each agency during an event. Coordination and management during the response and recovery phased could be better achieved through specialised staff retained in a single agency or under a single framework.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

Comment 1.4a Clarity on the role of Resilience NSW and how they can better support event response and recovery. Whilst Resilience NSW presence on the LRC was appreciated and

consistent, the lack of clarity around exactly what role they play and what support and resources are to be provided resulted in confusion and delays in putting in place forward steps toward recovery.

Comment 1.5b Ongoing issues with the transition from response to recovery, including consideration that recovery may be better positioned by being embedded within the individual lead agencies as opposed to Local Government.

At present, lead agencies are focused and readily active only within the Preparedness and Response phases of disaster events. Whilst Local Government should be a major stakeholder in the Prevention and Recovery phase as it provides for local planning and has a strong and direct link to community, the lead agencies are the specialists with regard to their disaster focus. Following experiences over 4 floods, a bush fire, and a coastal erosion emergency within the last 3 years, it is apparent to Central Coast Council that the separation of the response and recovery phase and functions is rarely clear, which results in unnecessary administration of multiple response and recovery groups, and the potential duplication of effort and wastage of resources. By harmonising the response and recovery efforts through one agency, we feel that response and recovery can occur more efficiently and better serve our community.

Resilience NSW could potentially support the creation of a prevention and recovery role within each agency at a regional level that could coordinate a strategic approach to the whole PPRR framework specific to each type of disaster event. Splitting this responsibility between agencies is leading to a fragmented and ineffective approach to disaster resilience.

matters

RFS and SES may be better funded and administered directly by the state - potentially by Resilience NSW), with financial contribution continuing to be collected from Councils by the state via Emergency Services Levies, to ensure a clear and consistent funding and delivery frameworks across NSW, without the need for Council's to continue to unnecessarily be an intermediary.

The current model drives inconsistencies in the levels of service provided across the state based on which Local Government Area an agency resides in, and the level of support a particular Council may be able to give. The funding and administration of the services is also unnecessarily complex, with Council's paying an Emergency Service Levy to the state, and response agencies and Council's claiming back funds via grants to subsidise the cost of the service. Council's then effectively need to administer and release funds to the services to fund their operations and assets. If the program were centrally funded, rather than by each individual LGA that was required to demonstrate eligibility to claim money back from the state government, our emergency services could arguably run more efficiently, and more equitably.

Comment 1.6b That the funding of disaster claims and grants be administered by a single authority and be planned and strategic rather than ad-hoc and numerous. At present, Central Coast Council is subject to nine different disaster-related claims and grants, administered by a range of different authorities. The funding is welcomed however the disconnected and disorganised approach to release of these funds is resulting in major delays in processing claims . In addition and significantly, the release of the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund immediately following a major and unprecedented almost state-wide flood event is ill-conceived. Disaster

affected areas remain firmly consumed by recovery activities and are not supported at present by any meaningful state- or nation-wide strategies to support risk reduction activities.

State need to focus on building strategies to support local government to identify meaningful and sustainable activities and projects to risk mitigate future disaster events rather than throw large amounts of money at ill-prepared Councils under disaster-related stress.

Supporting documents or images
