

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 19 May 2022 11:16:04 PM

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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) MidCoast Council

Your position in the organisation (if applicable) General Manager

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

The comments below relate to experiences concerning the 2019 bushfires, as well as the 2021 and 2022 flood events in the MidCoast Local Government Area.

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

1. Need up-to-date and accurate warnings and predictions: It is understood that BOM released incorrect and out of date early warnings. Some of the warnings for Wingham Peninsula (for the 2021 event) in particular were issued after the flood levels had already exceeded those in the warnings.

2. Lack of understanding awareness in community of what the warnings mean and how to prepare: Local communities need to understand their vulnerability to flooding in their location. There is a need for greater individual resilience during and after an event. Local communities need to be aware that the more significant that the flood event is, the less notice any warnings will provide. Communities are at risk of developing complacency through minor and less severe events .

3. More gauges that are operational, and more robust and reliable technology for gauging stations: Some gauges were inoperable or recording incorrect data. On the Manning River, one gauge was damaged early in the flood event, triggering the need for repair and another one was completely submerged (due to flows exceeding the 1% AEP level in that location). Gauges need to be renewed with more robust and reliable modern technology together with critical gauges located well above flood heights.

1.2 Preparation and planning

1. Need to reconsider planning controls around the 1%AEP and the Flood Planning Level (FPL) being usually 500mm above this. If that level is

accepted as the standard, then it follows that emergency plans and capacity needs to be built around the implications of an exceedance.

2. There is an opportunity for BOM to access data from other weather stations not currently endorsed by BOM.

3. Telecommunications systems should be robust and have redundancies: People could not access emergency services when needed, didn't know what was happening and what they should be doing. Areas vulnerable to disaster need to be supported with a secondary form of communication that can be accessed by the public.

1.3 Response to floods

1. Additional funding for SES for on-ground support: Inadequate number of SES officers resulted in heavy reliance on volunteers.

2. Clear lines of communication and authority between the Incident Management Team (IMT), the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) and local SES incident controllers. The absence of this leads to fragmentation and the need for localised response independent of IMT knowledge and awareness creating inefficiency, confusion and increased risk to the community.

3. IMT personnel need to have relevant experience and knowledge with flooding and the local area. Concern with an IMT staff by inter-state and non-lead personnel with no local knowledge (e.g. who do not understand procedures, responses and have geographical awareness).

4. Ensuring local knowledge is utilised when issuing and lifting orders. Local SES incident controllers should liaise with the EOC when assessing the need for orders and when they are lifted. This will hopefully avoid situations where unnecessary orders are publicly issued and then rescinded shortly afterwards.

5. Coastal erosion can occur concurrently with flooding but is outside the lead combat agency's responsibility. Often different impacts from a single event occur (e.g. coastal hazard and flooding concurrently) and increase the risk to the community. Coastal hazards is not the responsibility of the flood lead combat agency meaning it is not considered until after it occurs. Councils may be able to assist in this planning and response.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

1. It needs to be made clear to all organisations involved in recovery what their responsibilities are.
2. Need a clear understanding of the role of Resilience NSW in recovery and what this looks like on the ground and how they support community and local government during and following an event.

1.5 Recovery from floods

1. Guidelines associated with any financial support/relief must be clear and commitments made through the funding channel must be delivered in a timely manner - that is both to the public and local government authorities.
2. Funding to local government for additional maintenance works and costs following a disaster declaration. Such events adversely impact upon councils ability to fund maintenance works in addition to carrying out councils existing works program. Consequently, infrastructure is more susceptible to damage during a subsequent event.
3. The vulnerability of homeless people and the immediate impact of a disaster on housing availability must be recognised by the state government and incorporated into response. This response needs to be supported by more medium to long term housing support. We had people trying to live out of motels for months though they were on short term arrangements

and anxious about where they would live long term . People were returning to uninhabitable houses in desperation.

Supporting documents or images
