

# Regional NSW 2022 flood response

The 2022 floods in the Northern Rivers region of NSW were the worst on record, requiring flood response teams to mobilise to help communities deal with the consequences. Then, when flooding struck the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers while clean-up efforts were underway on the North Coast, the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) flood response teams mobilised immediately to respond to a second natural disaster.

The challenges were immense. Private and public infrastructure was damaged or contaminated, the road network and access across the region was significantly compromised. The NSW Public Works Engineering Emergency Management teams mobilised to undertake site inspections and engineering assessments of damaged buildings, infrastructure, and land slips. Massive amounts of waste were piled near houses and power lines, and around water services. It had to be removed quickly to minimise the risks of contamination. Individuals and businesses needed immediate physical and financial support.

NSW Public Works needed to develop procurement processes, manage multiple contractors, and coordinate complex logistics to mobilise crews in collaboration with Local councils and others to undertake emergency repair works to critical public infrastructure like water treatment plants, and to commence the huge waste clean-up process.

During 2021 floods, NSW Public Works had developed new efficient approaches to bulk waste removal. Learning from and building on this approach enabled waste to be removed five times quicker in 2022. At the height of the operation there were 113 clean-up crews on the ground and 372 trucks operating. Around 218,100 tonnes of rubbish were removed in 32,000 truck movements.

The whole DRNSW operation required significant cross-agency effort and a vast amount of consultation. NSW Public Works worked closely with numerous government agencies to provide a coordinated response from the emergency headquarters. The Regional Development and Programs (RDP) team simultaneously engaged local stakeholders to help prioritise response efforts. This included facilitating forums with the general managers and mayors of local councils; organising industry roundtables and multiple subcommittees who met to tackle specific aspects of the recovery, such as the State Recovery Waste and Environment subcommittee; and engaging with commercial landlords to understand their needs.

The RDP team also worked rapidly in collaboration with government, communities, and stakeholders to design and develop financial assistance packages. They conducted face-to-face workshops and market research to identify supply chain issues and funding needs. This enabled the RDP and Public Works teams to develop the Flood Property Assessment Program to help homeowners assess damage and arrange

demolition services if needed. With Resilience NSW and DPE the DRNSW teams were heavily involved in the procurement and implementation of the Flood Response – Temporary Housing Programs to provide temporary homes to displaced people. The assistance programs delivered \$802 million in support packages for businesses, landholders, primary producers, and local councils and helped support rebuilding efforts.

With this coordinated effort, DRNSW was able to efficiently remove potential health and safety hazards and respond directly to community needs. Its work was carried out under intense public scrutiny, and often under the pressure of tight deadlines. The solution to each challenge required a multi-agency response that demonstrated the benefits of close collaboration, pooled expertise, and sustained resourcing capabilities – showing government agencies could work together to provide the most appropriate response during a crisis.

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