

The Senate

Select Committee on Australia's
Disaster Resilience

Interim Report

September 2023

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Terms of reference

On 30 November 2022, the Senate resolved to establish a Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience to inquire into and report on:

- (a) current preparedness, response and recovery workforce models, including:
 - (i) the role of the Australian Defence Force in responding to domestic natural disasters,
 - (ii) the impact of more frequent and more intense natural disasters, due to climate change, on the ongoing capacity and capability of the Australian Defence Force,
 - (iii) the impact on the Australian Defence Force in responding to domestic natural disasters, and
 - (iv) the role of Australian civil and volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and state-based services in preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters, and the impact of more frequent and more intense natural disasters on their ongoing capacity and capability;
- (b) consideration of alternative models, including:
 - (i) repurposing or adapting existing Australian civil and volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and state-based services, and
 - (ii) overseas models and best practice;
- (c) consideration of the practical, legislative, and administrative arrangements that would be required to support improving Australia's resilience and response to natural disasters; and
- (d) any related matters.

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

- 1.68 The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience recommends that the House of Representatives Economics Committee examine insurance companies' handling of flood payouts.

Recommendation 2

- 1.70 The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience recommends that a parliamentary inquiry be established into land planning with respect to natural disaster resilience.

Recommendation 3

- 1.72 The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience recommends that, in light of the current Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (Colvin Review), the Review considers evidence provided to the Select Committee around the need to use funds to build back better and standardise a regime across the States and Territories.

Recommendation 4

- 1.73 The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience recommends that the Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements (Glasser Review) look at the current COMDISPLAN and the triaging of emergencies in light of its impact on the Australian Defence Force.

Chapter 1

Interim Report

Introduction

- 1.1 The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience was appointed by resolution of the Senate on 30 November 2022 to inquire into Australia's preparedness, response and recovery workforce models, as well as alternative models to disaster recovery. The committee will consider the role of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and state-based services, and the support required to improve Australia's resilience and response to natural disasters.
- 1.2 Further detail about the scope of the inquiry is available in the committee's terms of reference which are listed separately at the start of this report.
- 1.3 The committee was originally to present a final report by the last sitting day in September 2023 (14 September 2023). However, on 9 August 2023 the Senate agreed to extend the committee's reporting date to 24 April 2024.
- 1.4 In lieu of that final report, the committee is presenting this interim report.

Submissions

- 1.5 The committee initially resolved to accept submissions until 20 February 2023, but given the nature of the inquiry and the level of community interest, the committee resolved to accept submissions on an ongoing basis.
- 1.6 As of Tuesday, 12 September 2023, the committee has received a total of 138 submissions. These submissions reflect a broad segment of Australian society and come from right across the country; from each state and territory.

Public hearings

- 1.7 So far, the committee has conducted thirteen public hearings around the country. They are listed below:
 - 14 March 2023 Canberra, ACT
 - 12 April 2023 Brisbane, QLD
 - 13 April 2023 Sydney, NSW
 - 19 April 2023 Melbourne, VIC
 - 20 April 2023 Hobart, TAS
 - 21 April 2023 Adelaide, SA
 - 15 May 2023 Kununurra, WA
 - 16 May 2023 Fitzroy Crossing, WA
 - 17 May 2023 Broome, WA
 - 18 May 2023 Perth, WA
 - 27 June 2023 Ballina, NSW

- 28 June 2023 Goonellabah–Lismore NSW
- 29 June 2023 Tweed Heads, NSW

Overview and context

1.8 Australia, and indeed the rest of the world, is now experiencing an increase in the number of natural hazards that become humanitarian disasters, as well as their intensity. This was an anticipated result of global warming which is now manifesting itself into reality.

1.9 Natural disasters are becoming more frequent, occurring concurrently and having significant, long-term impacts on all aspects of our society. There is now expected to be longer and more intense fire seasons, more extreme heat events, less frequent but more intense cyclones, and an increased likelihood of cyclones moving further south.¹

1.10 The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) commented:

As in many parts of the world, Australia is experiencing an increase in the frequency, severity, and impact of climate change-influenced disasters. The seventh biennial State of the Climate 2022 report shows Australia is experiencing ongoing, long-term climate change, and has warmed on average by 1.47 (± 0.24) degrees since 1910.²

1.11 Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) in their submission noted:

Recent research and discussion papers have highlighted the challenges emergency management workforces face as a result of a changing climate. With the increased frequency and intensity of disaster events, more and more communities are affected. Half of Australia's LGAs [Local Government Associations] were subject to a disaster declaration in 2022.³

1.12 This will not come without an economic cost. The Department of Home Affairs offered this analysis of what the costs are and how they are expected to grow:

The cost of natural disasters in Australia is estimated to increase from an average of \$18.2 billion in 2016 to \$73 billion per annum by 2060, even under a low emissions scenario.⁴

1.13 More significant, climate change and the increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters will bring a significant human cost. The Department of Health and Aged Care observed:

Findings from a recent Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements indicate that natural disasters (and extreme weather) give rise to increased rates of stress, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress

¹ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR), *Submission 29*, p. 4.

² National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), *Submission 83*, p. 3.

³ AIDR, *Submission 29*, p. 4.

⁴ Department of Home Affairs, *Submission 80*, p. 3.

disorder (PTSD), alcohol and substance abuse, aggression and violence, suicide, and exacerbation of other underlying mental health problems. Long-term mental health impacts are also linked to the practical challenges of rebuilding after a natural disaster, including experiences relating to housing, insurance and obtaining financial assistance.⁵

- 1.14 At the same time, the ability of Australian society to respond to these challenges is diminishing through the decreased number of volunteers available. Natural Hazards Research Australia observed:

Research shows that formal volunteering is declining and that change is required to ensure a sustainable model into the future. These changes include reducing the administration burden on volunteering and also increasing the flexibility to enable people to volunteer.⁶

Key themes

- 1.15 Through the evidence the committee collected, a specific set of key themes have emerged in terms of disaster resilience. The following list summarises those themes.

Suitability of Defence for Disaster Response

- 1.16 Several submissions supported the notion that the ADF should not be the main agency for natural disaster relief. While praising the efforts of the ADF and noting tremendous logistical and ancillary capacity that the ADF has, ADF personnel are not trained fire-fighters nor responders, and these tasks are best done by those agencies with specific skills and experience.

- 1.17 The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) argued that ADF deployment should complement existing local capabilities.

- 1.18 The United Professional Firefighters Union of WA stated:

...it is not the role of the Australian Defence Force to respond to domestic natural disasters, but that of the lead agency in this area, DFES. This view is supported by the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) who state the primary role of the ADF is defending and protecting Australia.

Although, the ADF does not have the capability or resources to fight bushfires and does not train to do so, it can provide ancillary support through its capabilities and resources during and after natural disasters.⁷

- 1.19 Defence itself has stated that while it will, of course, respond to government direction, deployment to natural disasters will undermine its capacity to fulfill its primary mission of defending Australia and its interests:

⁵ Department of Health and Aged Care, *Submission 16*, p. 5.

⁶ Mr Andrew Gissing, Chief Executive Officer, Natural Hazards Research Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Wednesday, 19 April 2023, Melbourne, p. 2.

⁷ United Professional Firefighters Union of WA, *Submission 93*, p. 5.

...the increased scope, scale and duration of Australian Defence Force (ADF) commitment to domestic disaster relief has resulted in workforce pressure on both permanent and reserve ADF capacity, which may incur reduced capability within some areas. Increased utilisation of ADF resources during domestic natural disasters has required Defence to reprioritise its workforce to meet Government direction, reducing capacity and opportunity to train, maintain and sustain its workforce to meet the operational requirements of its primary mission.⁸

- 1.20 Defence went on to state in its submission that the establishment of a force dedicated to national crisis response and recovery could be considered as an alternate to the status quo. This would have the effect of enabling defence to focus on its core role to protect Australia and its interests.

The establishment of a scalable and deployable civil contingency workforce to support national crisis response and recovery could provide an alternative option to utilising the ADF workforce by increasing the threshold for requests. This could reduce operational tempo, training disruption and relieve workforce concurrency pressure, delivering an increase in workforce availability and corresponding maintenance of ADF capability for employment in its primary role.⁹

- 1.21 This point was reinforced by the ADF when Air Vice-Marshal Chappell, in addressing the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, stated in his opening remarks:

The challenge over the last several years has been the scale and the scope, the duration, of these disaster responses. It has been of a magnitude to create pressure on the Australian Defence Force and Defence that is unsustainable if we are to ensure we are prepared for our primary role, which is to defend Australia and its interests, noting that the strategic environment continues to place pressure on the global and international rules based order upon which Australia's security and prosperity is determined and that we really see pressure on the workforce being a key part of our response to disasters.¹⁰

Governance arrangements

- 1.22 A number of submissions – particularly from government agencies – outlined the legislative and bureaucratic frameworks through which they operate. Others noted the inadequacies of those arrangements, and the limited capacity of local government to respond to the increasing number and severity of natural disasters.

- 1.23 The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services noted:

...with the increasing severity of natural disasters due to climate change, the capacity of local governments to respond is diminishing. The increase in

⁸ Department of Defence, *Submission 25*, p. 2.

⁹ Department of Defence, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Air Vice-Marshal Chappell, DSC, CSC, OAM, Head of Military Strategic Commitments, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, Tuesday 14 March 2023, p. 44.

catastrophic events that are having larger impacts on communities is likely to require an increase in intervention by the State and Commonwealth Governments. Consequently, the increasing size and frequency of these events suggest that there will be an ongoing if not increasing need for additional support and specialist assistance such as that held by the Commonwealth.¹¹

1.24 There was significant comment that local government needs to be better resourced and more inclusively consulted. The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) said:

...there is a mismatch between the amount of local government infrastructure exposed to climate change risks and the resources that local government have to carry out effective adaptation to manage these risks. Australia's efforts to address and respond to climate change is not taking full advantage of the opportunity for partnership and collaboration with local government.¹²

1.25 Mr Graeme Kelly, General Secretary of the United Services Union, provided evidence to the committee of the constant decrease of funding available to local government. Mr Kelly stated that there had been:

...a funding shortage by the federal government since 1975. I am happy to hand something up to the chair, which I have prepared. We've mapped out the total tax revenue funding from the federal government since 1974-75. I particularly talk about the early nineties, when it hit a high...

...the total tax revenue today is at 0.5 per cent of federal funding. In the nineties it was at 1.18 per cent. Local government are being starved of funds, and not only at a federal level. In New South Wales you have rate capping as well.¹³

1.26 Local councils have little say in the equipment they are provided by state governments for their emergency services but must carry the cost burden for maintenance and depreciation.

1.27 Mr Michael Lollback, the Chief Executive Officer of Barcoo Shire Council, observed:

...every year that I do a budget, I start with a massive level of depreciation on assets that council has no real use for but owns. That in itself leaves us in a really difficult position across Queensland in the depreciation of the equipment we hold here. We have very little say on what equipment arrives. There have been instances in the past where flood boats have arrived in local government areas without any consultation with the local

¹¹ Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, *Submission 32*, p. 6.

¹² Australian Local Government Association, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

¹³ Mr Graeme Kelly, General Secretary, United Services Union, *Committee Hansard*, Goonellabah-Lismore, 28 June 2023, p. 20. See also the table Mr Kelly provided to the committee: document five of 'Additional Documents', https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Disaster_Resilience/DisasterResilience/Additional_Documents, (accessed 4 September 2023).

government, only to have them put onto that local government's books to be maintained, fuelled and depreciated.¹⁴

1.28 Councillor Linda Scott, President of the ALGA, reiterated the point:

...in New South Wales and Queensland, the rural fire service assets sit on the council books. The council has to make disclosures each year about the state of those assets and fund the depreciation, but clearly has no care or control over those assets. They don't come under the command of the council. They come under the command of the rural fire service.

We have an example here in New South Wales in Temora, where their town hall was on fire. They called the RFS to come and put out the fire, and the RFS did not attend. There is no better example of a council not having command and control over an asset that was on their books and that they were being asked to sign off on from an audit perspective. Recommending that state and territory associations stop that practice and stop councils being asked to fund the depreciation of assets that they don't control—which should rightly, under state and territory responsibilities, fall under their assets—would be a very welcome move.¹⁵

1.29 Finally, the Northern Territory Government observed that each local jurisdiction faces its own particular challenges, and that emergency management plans must take many factors into account:

Emergency management is multi-faceted and it is widely accepted that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective. The needs and challenges of our communities can vary significantly, therefore emergency management strategies and plans must be tailored to local contexts to be effective.

Emergency management strategies and plans must also take into account community demographics, culture, language, and infrastructure. Communities with large numbers of vulnerable or marginalised populations, such as the elderly or Indigenous communities, may require different emergency management approaches to ensure that their needs are met. Tailoring emergency management plans to local context will encourage and support a shared responsibilities approach to disaster management.¹⁶

Lack of coordination of services

1.30 One recurring theme of particular note was the need for improved coordination of agencies and services – be they government or non-government organisations – during and after natural disasters. Deloitte in its submission noted:

There was an uncoordinated, under-resourced and extremely delayed response from federal, state and local governments during and in the immediate aftermath of the flood events;[and]

¹⁴ Mr Michael Lollback, the Chief Executive Officer of Barcoo Shire Council, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 12 April 2023, p. 5.

¹⁵ Councillor Linda Scott, President of the Australian Local Government Association, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 13 April 2023, p. 24.

¹⁶ Northern Territory Government, *Submission 97*, p. 12.

There was an overwhelming lack of coordination between government agencies, civil volunteer groups, community organisations and volunteers during and in the immediate aftermath of the disaster events.¹⁷

- 1.31 The Business Council of Australia argued that the NEMA is the best placed organisation to coordinate disaster-relief charities:

This submission contends NEMA should take a greater role in the coordination of disaster-relief charities, as well as the dissemination of data to these charities during the emergency and recovery-phases of a natural disaster.¹⁸

- 1.32 Mr Adrian Turner, Director, Minderoo Foundation Fire and Flood Resilience, noted that most coordination occurs after the event, and not in preparation:

Lastly, there is a lot of discussion around a national coordination mechanism, which we commend.

But that mechanism is currently focused on the relief and recovery phase and we recommend and advocate for a similar mechanism for peacetime coordination, with the same level of urgency to lift resilience to disasters.¹⁹

Managing volunteers

- 1.33 The committee noted the issue of managing volunteers and, in particular, the management of Spontaneous Volunteers (SVs).

- 1.34 Disaster Resilience Australia (DRA) is an organisation that seeks to match the skills and experience of military veterans with emergency services specialists to rapidly deploy disaster relief teams in Australia in the wake of natural disasters.²⁰

- 1.35 DRA noted that SVs are individuals or small groups who are not formally associated with any organisation but self-mobilise to assist community members impacted by disasters. This type of volunteering has gained traction in recent years with the rise of social media platforms and communications technology, which has given communities greater access to real time information. DRA believes that, if well led, SVs are a significant force multiplier but remain an underutilised resource in Australia.²¹

- 1.36 At the public hearing of 14 March 2023, DRA noted:

Increasingly, we are also filling a large gap in spontaneous volunteering and in the corporate volunteering space as well. There are lots of databases out there that hold the names of people who want to do that, but there's very

¹⁷ Deloitte, *Submission 63*, p. 2.

¹⁸ Business Council of Australia, *Submission 85*, p. 1.

¹⁹ Mr Adrian Turner, Director, Minderoo Foundation Fire and Flood Resilience, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, Thursday 18 May 2023, p. 3.

²⁰ Disaster Resilience Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 1.

²¹ Disaster Resilience Australia, *Submission 27*, pp. 3–4.

little in terms of being able to mobilise them, deploy them and lead them well on ground.²²

- 1.37 In that same hearing, DRA described how it is currently seeking to manage those SVs. In Queensland, DRA are using a database called EV CREW managed by Volunteering Queensland. DRA explained:

EV CREW is essentially a database. When an event happens, they say, 'If you want to volunteer, go to this database and sign up...' We don't actively push for spontaneous volunteers; they're coming. If we wanted to actively push for volunteers, we could add a zero to the number of people we're mobilising. The most important thing that I could impress upon you is that, regardless of where people are going to sign up, it is the ability to put them on the ground that is the fundamental missing part of the puzzle. It's the ability to have people there to meet them at a reception centre, vet them, equip them, brief them, lead them well on the day, make sure they are safe, bring them back, decontaminate them and debrief them. That is the massive missing piece of the puzzle.²³

- 1.38 Finally, DRA noted that local databases of SVs, rather than a national one, was the best way to manage those volunteers:

It would probably be better to spend money on advertising in the local area and surrounds to mobilise the local population, because, if they're not close to it, if they can't get to it or if they're busy, it won't matter what the national database says. You're probably better off trying to mobilise local resources or using our model.²⁴

Support for rural and remote communities and organisations

- 1.39 Some submitters noted that many disasters are in rural and remote locations making response and recovery more difficult. Submitters stated that rural and regional communities required more support and resourcing in order to respond to emergencies. The Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre Inc (NNIC) commented:

Locally based organisations in smaller rural communities need to be resourced to work in the disaster space and the significant value added to the emergency response process needs to be recognised and incorporated into the various response and recovery processes.²⁵

- 1.40 With regard to accommodation, the Caravan Industry Association of Australia observed:

²² Mr Geoffrey Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Disaster Relief Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, Tuesday 14 March 2023, p. 35.

²³ Mr Geoffrey Evans, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, Tuesday 14 March 2023, p. 41.

²⁴ Mr Geoffrey Evans, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, Tuesday 14 March 2023, pp. 41–42.

²⁵ Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre, *Submission 24*, p. 6.

Areas struck by disaster are often remote and rural by geographical location, this means the stock of crisis or acute accommodation can be very limited.²⁶

1.41 The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal stated:

FRRR strongly believes that grassroots community organisations play a vital and often under-appreciated and under-funded role in both preparedness for, and recovery from natural disasters.²⁷

Connectivity

1.42 Connectivity is a theme that is frequently referred to when inquiries into regional Australia are held. In terms of disaster situations, lack of communication is a significant problem.

1.43 The National Farmers' Federation commented:

Rural communities continue to face connectivity challenges that can directly impact their safety. Not only have recent natural disasters, including floods and bushfires, put peoples' lives at risk, but they have had significant impacts on the ability of regional Australians to operate businesses and access health and education services.²⁸

1.44 Byron Shire Council recommended:

Strengthen strategic and operational connectivity between volunteer organisations with relevant capabilities, including RFS, SES, Marine Rescue, VRA and also including Surf Life Saving Clubs (SLSCs).²⁹

Agriculture

1.45 There was some comment that agricultural growers should be given additional support given the importance of food production. FNQ Growers noted:

One of the biggest issues experienced by our growers is recognition of natural disasters, particularly when it impacts a small numbers of growers, yet the impact is great with significant consequences to production...

FNQ Growers would like to see funding available for crop replacement as a result of damage sustained in natural disasters, be it tropical cyclones, flooding or fire.³⁰

Animals

1.46 As a sub-section of agricultural production, farm livestock remains an important asset in regional Australia. The role of animals in terms of disaster planning and recovery is not often considered. The RSPCA made a series of recommendations

²⁶ Caravan Industry Association of Australia, *Submission 26*, p. 2.

²⁷ Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, *Submission 54*, p. 2.

²⁸ National Farmers' Federation, *Submission 18*, p. 2.

²⁹ Byron Shire Council, *Submission 123*, p. 4.

³⁰ FNQ Growers, *Submission 3*, p. 1.

intended to support better preparation for disasters in terms of animal resources.³¹

Support for charities

1.47 Submitters noted the importance of charities in responding to natural disasters – particularly at a local level. Increased and ongoing support for such charities will strengthen disaster resilience. To that end GIVIT, in their submission, advocated more support for local charities:

By building the capacity of local charities, GIVIT empowers local communities to request exactly what they need for their own recovery. This model is increasingly being recognised by State and Local Governments as the best practice model for community-led donation management during times of disasters, drought and pandemics. By supporting the immediate and long-term physical needs of affected communities, and purchasing locally wherever possible, GIVIT builds community resilience, supports the recovery of local economies and ensures donations do no harm.³²

1.48 Similarly, the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund Inc commented:

The charity model for ongoing capacity and capability needs to adapt to the greater challenges. This requires support to charities and not for profits to nurture and develop community leadership and ensure the recent lessons of recovery and resilience are available.³³

Lack of mitigation investment

1.49 Natural disaster mitigation—or lack thereof—has consistently been an important theme in disaster inquiries and resonates through the submissions. There is a strong perception that mitigation is neglected in comparison to disaster response. Habitat for Humanity Australia observed:

It is commonly remarked that 97 percent of Australian disaster funding goes toward post-disaster recovery, while just 3 percent goes on preparation and mitigation.³⁴

1.50 Similar figures were provided by National Insurance Brokers Association (NIBA):

A Deloitte report... published in 2014, found that for every \$10 spent on post-disaster recovery, only \$1 is spent on mitigation. This is despite research released by the American Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which shows that \$1 spent on disaster mitigation saves society \$6 in future disaster costs.³⁵

³¹ RSPCA, *Submission 46*, pp. 3–8.

³² GIVIT, *Submission 51*, p. 2.

³³ Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund Inc, *Submission 21*, p. 5.

³⁴ Habitat for Humanity Australia, *Submission 44*, p. 1.

³⁵ National Insurance Brokers Association, *Submission 60*, p. 2.

- 1.51 Submitters argued that greater attention from government needs to be put on mitigation. The NIBA commented further:

Natural disaster mitigation has been ignored by consecutive governments, despite numerous inquiries into disaster mitigation and preparedness recommending governments transition spending from post-event recovery to pre-event mitigation.³⁶

- 1.52 The Kyogle Council echoed these comments:

The state and federal governments need to adjust their thinking, and their structures, to focus on a significant investment in improved resilience and large-scale mitigation programs aimed at reducing the impact of such events in the future.³⁷

- 1.53 Submitters noted that improved investment in infrastructure—including housing—would contribute substantially to resilience. The National Farmers' Federation commented:

...the Committee should recommend the Government continue and better support regional investment, in infrastructure and programs, to build resilience to natural disasters. For example, the NFF supports that the Australian Government should provide funding for the repair and reconstruction of roads affected by recent flooding and ensure this is done to a high standard to withstand future climate change-induced stresses on road and freight networks.³⁸

Climate change will exacerbate natural disasters

- 1.54 There was a general recognition amongst submitters that climate change will—and already has—made responding to natural disasters much more difficult. Increased preparation, support and funding will be required to respond to future natural disasters. Greenpeace submitted:

Disaster resilience should begin with prevention. Australia must take strong action to create the greatest possible chance of achieving the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees ('the Paris Goal').³⁹

- 1.55 Linking the climate change question to the deployment of the ADF, Dr Glasser from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) stated:

...the impact more frequent and severe natural disasters, driven by climate change, will have on the capacity and capability of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). As the global climate continues to warm, the ADF will increasingly be called upon to respond to more severe, national-scale disasters within Australia, large-scale humanitarian disasters in our region, as well as to a broad array of climate-driven threats to regional stability and

³⁶ National Insurance Brokers Association, *Submission 60*, p. 2.

³⁷ Kyogle Council, *Submission 58*, p. 2.

³⁸ National Farmers' Federation, *Submission 18*, p. 2.

³⁹ Greenpeace, *Submission 38*, p. 8.

security. We are greatly underestimating how severe these multiple challenges will be and how rapidly they will arise. In this context, our current expectations of the ADF's role are both unrealistic and unsustainable.⁴⁰

1.56 The Northern Territory Government made a similar link:

The NT Government appreciates the ADF's involvement in emergency and disaster response must be balanced against other priorities, such as maintaining operational readiness and ensuring the security of Australia's borders. Yet, the impacts of climate change are likely to place more pressure on emergency management arrangements, systems and personnel.

With more frequent and intense natural disasters expected, it is important that emergency management and Defence capabilities adjust and evolve in a congruent manner to ensure effective emergency management, response and recovery plans are in place to best mitigate the impact of natural disaster events.⁴¹

More emphasis on mental health assistance

1.57 There is a growing recognition of the importance of mental health in communities affected by disasters but also in those volunteers and staff who respond to those disasters.

1.58 Lifeline Australia submitted that there is a clear need for a comprehensive approach to disaster resilience planning in Australia and endorsed the need for mental health and wellbeing to be considered a core element of resilience workforce planning.⁴²

1.59 Phoenix Australia—Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health's submission focussed on preparing and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the disaster workforce in order to ensure its sustainability.

With the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters, there is an urgent need to take a proactive and systemic approach to better prepare and support the wellbeing of the disaster workforce in order to ensure its ongoing capability and capacity to respond to compounding disasters.

A range of evidence-informed wellbeing approaches and initiatives exist that can be adopted or tailored to better equip and support the disaster recovery workforce, and therefore improve Australia's resilience and response to disasters.⁴³

1.60 Rural Aid not only recognises the issue but has also put forward a plan to respond to it:

Addressing the undisputed mental wellbeing challenge in rural Australia requires long-term thinking and commitment. Rural Aid proposes the appointment of more professionally accredited counsellors into more

⁴⁰ Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), *Submission 94*, p. 1.

⁴¹ Northern Territory Government, *Submission 97*, p. 1.

⁴² Lifeline, *Submission 15*, p. 3.

⁴³ Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, *Submission 40*, p. 1.

communities – minimum three-year appointments, to support more farmers (as per its current model), funded by government and corporate/philanthropic supporters.⁴⁴

More funding required for agencies preparing and responding to natural disasters

1.61 A perhaps not unexpected theme coming through the submissions was that of funding support to the various agencies preparing for and responding to natural disasters. The Australian Council of Social Service's recommendations all revolved around greater funding support:

Recommendation 1: Create a permanent enabling fund, the Community Sector Disaster Resilience Fund to strengthen the sector's preparedness and capability to respond to disasters.

Recommendation 2: Create a permanent flexible contingency fund, the Community Sector Disaster Contingency Fund, to allow service providers access to additional funds to rapidly respond to specific disaster incidents.

Recommendation 3: Fund the sector to strengthen its disaster management tool to improve the knowledge, skills and continuity plans of providers in relation to disasters and extreme weather.⁴⁵

1.62 The Australian Local Government Association observed the disconnect between what local council are responsible for, and the funding they receive to maintain it:

Councils look after one-third of all public assets in Australia, around \$530 billion including roads, bridges, buildings, land, machinery and equipment, but collect but about 3.5 per cent of total Australian tax revenue via rates. The remaining 96.5 per cent of all taxes are collected by state and federal governments.⁴⁶

Local councils

1.63 On the question of local councils, the Moreton Bay Council (QLD) provided some more detailed comment:

There is currently no accepted baseline or standard for funding Local Government response, relief and recovery disaster operations across Australia. To support climate adaptation, a baseline level of funding must be established to support permanent local government staff positions to deliver specific resilience, response and recovery actions...

Establishing a well-resourced and sustainable national network of training colleges for delivering nationally accredited vocational and tertiary training for the Emergency Management sector should be the first step for any government wishing to build national resilience and improve community outcomes.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Rural Aid, *Submission 91*, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Australian Council of Social Service, *Submission 31*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Australian Local Government Association, *Submission 49*, Attachment 1, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Moreton Bay Council, *Submission 7*, p. 1, & p. 2.

Further work

- 1.64 The committee intends conducting further public hearings in areas around Australia affected by natural disasters such as the south-east coast of New South Wales, and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and other regional areas.
- 1.65 Submissions to the inquiry remain open, and the committee looks forward to receiving further community input from individuals and organisations alike—particularly from those areas directly affected by recent natural disasters.
- 1.66 The committee received a number of submissions discussing insurance payouts and from the insurance companies themselves. The committee considered this issue and agreed that it was beyond the scope of this inquiry.
- 1.67 Given this, the committee noted and commended the government’s establishment of an inquiry into the issue of insurance in the House of Representative Economics committee. This committee would like to see this inquiry address the issue of insurance companies’ handling of flood payouts across Australia.

Recommendation 1

- 1.68 The Senate Select Committee on Australia’s Disaster Resilience recommends that the House of Representatives Economics Committee examine insurance companies’ handling of flood payouts.**
- 1.69 Similarly, the issue of land planning was also one which this committee considered to be beyond its scope and would recommend that it be referred to a suitable committee—possibly to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs—for review.

Recommendation 2

- 1.70 The Senate Select Committee on Australia’s Disaster Resilience recommends that a parliamentary inquiry be established into land planning with respect to natural disaster resilience.**
- 1.71 The committee also notes the existing reviews that are currently underway with regard to natural disaster responses. Namely, the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (Colvin Review),⁴⁸ and the Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements (Glasser Review).⁴⁹ The committee believes that the information we have

⁴⁸ ‘Ensuring targeted disaster funding – Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding’, *National Emergency Management Agency* webpage, <https://nema.gov.au/about-us/governance-and-reporting/reviews/Independent-Review-Disaster-Funding>, (accessed 12 September 2023).

⁴⁹ ‘Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements’, *National Emergency Management Agency* webpage, <https://nema.gov.au/about-us/governance-and-reporting/reviews/Independent-Review-Disaster-Governance>, (accessed 12 September 2023).

received would be of benefit to those processes. Accordingly, the committee would further recommend the following:

Recommendation 3

1.72 The Senate Select Committee on Australia’s Disaster Resilience recommends that, in light of the current Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (Colvin Review), the Review considers evidence provided to the Select Committee around the need to use funds to build back better and standardise a regime across the States and Territories.

Recommendation 4

1.73 The Senate Select Committee on Australia’s Disaster Resilience recommends that the Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements (Glasser Review) look at the current COMDISPLAN and the triaging of emergencies in light of its impact on the Australian Defence Force.

Committee comment

1.74 The committee would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who have assisted us up to this date with written submissions and who have participated in the public hearings.

1.75 In particular, the committee wishes to thank those individuals who—having themselves gone through the trauma of fires and floods—were willing to recount to us their still painful experiences. We admire both your honesty and your courage.

1.76 The committee notes the findings of the 2020 Royal Commission into Natural Disasters arrangements and supports the full adoption and implementation of the commissioner’s findings. The committee also notes that many of the issues that this committee is uncovering have already been identified by the Royal Commission but are yet to be addressed.

1.77 However, the committee does note with some satisfaction that our work appears to have been a catalyst for the recent initiatives of the Albanese Government in the area of natural disaster response. In early August 2023, the government released a discussion paper on *Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response*. This consultation process specifically notes:

...the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is the Government’s primary non-financial means to assist State and Territory-led crisis responses, should it be requested. The Defence Strategic Review recommended that the ADF should only be used as the last resort for domestic aid to the civil community. While the ADF will always be available for specialist capabilities, the Government needs viable crisis response alternatives to the

ADF and an ability to draw on enhanced latent industrial capacity to uplift its capability when needed.⁵⁰

- 1.78 There appears to be a clear link between this process and the evidence this committee has received since its inception in December 2022.
- 1.79 The committee has resolved to close the inquiry and table its final report on 24 April 2024. We look forward to sharing our findings and recommendations with the Parliament and the Australian people at that time.

Senator Jacqui Lambie
Chair
JLN Senator for Tasmania

⁵⁰ 'Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper', *Department of Home Affairs* webpage, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-publications/submissions-and-discussion-papers/alternative-commonwealth-capabilities-for-crisis-response-discussion-paper>, (accessed 24 August 2023).

Appendix 1

Submissions

- 1 LtCol (Retd) Brian C Kay
- 2 Centre for Disaster Studies
- 3 FNQ Growers
- 4 Regional Development Australia NT
- 5 The Good Ancestors Project
- 6 Australian National Audit Office
- 7 Moreton Bay Regional Council
- 8 Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman
 - Attachment 1
- 9 WA Government
- 10 Australian Consumers Insurance Lobby
- 11 The Police Association Victoria
- 12 Museums & Galleries of NSW
- 13 Geoscience Australia
- 14 Trust for Nature
- 15 Lifeline Australia
- 16 Department of Health and Aged Care
- 17 Local & Independent News Association (LINA)
- 18 National Farmers Federation
- 19 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)
- 20 Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)
- 21 Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund Inc
- 22 Dr Adrian d'Hagé
- 23 Townsville Lot Owners Group
 - Attachment 1
- 24 Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre Inc (NNIC)
- 25 Department of Defence
- 26 Caravan Industry Association of Australia
- 27 Disaster Relief Australia
- 28 Mr James Milligan MLA
- 29 Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
- 30 Strata Community Association Queensland
- 31 Australian Council of Social Service
- 32 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- 33 Miss Miranda Booth
- 34 Attorney-General's Department
- 35 Housing Industry Association
- 36 Natural Hazards Research Australia

- 37 St Vincent de Paul Society National Council
- 38 Greenpeace Australia Pacific
- 39 NSW Rural Doctors Network
- 40 Phoenix Australia - Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health
- 41 Hon Martin Aldridge
- 42 The Salvation Army Australia
- 43 Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS)
- 44 Habitat for Humanity Australia
- 45 National Disaster Recovery Organisation
- 46 RSPCA Australia
- 47 Isolated Children's Parents' Association Australia
- 48 Australian Banking Association
- 49 Australian Local Government Association
- 50 Surf Life Saving Australia
- 51 GIVIT
- 52 UNICEF Australia
- 53 Volunteering Australia
- 54 Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
- 55 Townsville City Council & Townsville Local Disaster Management Group
- 56 Australian Red Cross
- 57 The Xfactor Collective Foundation
 - 57.1 Supplementary to submission 57
- 58 Kyogle Council
- 59 The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
- 60 National Insurance Brokers Association
- 61 National Association for the Visual Arts
- 62 NRMA
- 63 Deloitte
- 64 Australian Climate Service
- 65 Mr Mark Coulton MP
- 66 Friends of the Earth Australia
- 67 South Australian Country Fire Service
- 68 Australian Automobile Association
- 69 Minderoo Foundation
 - Attachment 1
- 70 ACT Government
- 71 BMT
- 72 Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council Ltd (AFAC)
- 73 Anglicare Australia
- 74 United Firefighters Union of Australia
 - Attachment 1

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- 75 IAG
- Attachment 1
- 76 Rural Doctors Association of Australia
- 76.1 Supplementary to submission 76
- 77 Northern Land Council
- 78 Ms Caroline Dawson
- 79 Suncorp Group
- 79.1 Supplementary to submission 79
- 80 Department of Home Affairs
- 81 NSW State Emergency Service
- 82 National Emergency Management Agency
- 83 Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE)
- Attachment 1
- 84 National Indigenous Australians Agency
- 85 Business Council of Australia
- 86 Foodbank Australia
- 87 Save the Children and 54 reasons
- Attachment 1
 - Attachment 2
 - Attachment 3
 - Attachment 4
- 88 Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) WA
- 89 The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Australia
- 90 Mr Ray Bange OAM
- Attachment 1
- 91 Rural Aid
- 92 Shipping Australia Limited
- 93 United Professional Firefighters Union of WA
- 94 Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- 95 Margaret Shaw OAM
- 96 The ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes
- 97 Northern Territory Government
- 98 Mr Chris Ainsworth
- 99 QLD Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management (IGEM)
- Attachment 1
- 100 National Waste Recycling Industry Association
- Attachment 1
- 101 Tasmanian Government
- 102 Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- 103 University Centre for Rural Health

- 104 Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law
- 105 PHN Cooperative
 - Attachment 1
- 106 Fortem Australia
 - 106.1 Supplementary to submission 106
- 107 Shire of Carnarvon
- 108 City of Hobart
- 109 International Association of Emergency Managers
- 110 Sydney Environment Institute
- 111 National Legal Aid
- 112 Shire of Wyndham and East Kimberley
- 113 Public Safety Training & Response Group
- 114 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Australia
- 115 Southern Cross University
- 116 Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group
- 117 Christian Venues Association
- 118 Mr Ian Symons
- 119 Dr Taha Chaiechi
- 120 Lismore a Way Forward
- 121 NSW Reconstruction Authority
- 122 St John Ambulance Australia
- 123 Byron Shire Council
- 124 Our Future Northern Rivers & Lismore Citizens Flood Review Group
 - 124.1 Supplementary to submission 124
- 125 Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Ltd
- 126 Northern Rivers Autism Association Limited
 - Attachment 1
- 127 Oliver Costello
- 128 Tweed Shire Council
- 129 Clubs Australia
- 130 *Name Withheld*
- 131 Australian National Veterans Arts Museum
- 132 Crisis Resilience in MS (Murdoch University Research)
- 133 Delegation of the European Union to Australia
- 134 Ms Wendy Harper
- 135 National Transport Research Organisation
- 136 Mr Neil Smail
- 137 CREST NSW
- 138 Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

Appendix 2

Public hearings

Tuesday, 14 March 2023

Committee Room 2S3
Parliament House
Canberra

National Emergency Management Agency

- Mr Joe Buffone, Deputy Coordinator General of Emergency Management and Response

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

- Dr Margaret Moreton, Executive Director (via videoconference)

National Resilience Taskforce

- Ms Kendra Morony, First Assistant Secretary National Resilience Taskforce

CSIRO

- Dr Jaclyn Brown, Research Director, Climate Intelligence Program (via videoconference)
- Dr Daniel Metcalfe, Director-Environment

Bureau of Meteorology

- Dr Peter Stone, Group Executive, Business Solutions

National Indigenous Australians Agency

- Ms Lauren Gray, Branch Manager, Environment
- Ms Yvonne Uren, Branch Manager, Health and Wellbeing
- Mr Kevin Brahim, Group Manager, West and South Group (via videoconference)
- Ms Bec Smith, Branch Manager, Kimberley (via videoconference)
- Mr Tom Dyer, Branch Manager, NT Policy (via videoconference)

Disaster Relief Australia

- Mr Geoffrey Evans, Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Anastasia Bougesis, Government Relations

Department of Defence

- Air Vice Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM, Head of Military Strategic Commitments
- Ms Amanda Toms, Acting First Assistant Secretary Strategic Policy

Wednesday, 12 April 2023

Leichardt Room
Hotel Grand Chancellor
Brisbane

Local Government Association of Queensland

- Ms Alison Smith, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Michael Lollback (via teleconference)

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

- Ms Joanne Greenfield, Deputy Commissioner
- Mr Stephen Smith, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Service

QLD Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management

- Mr Alistair Dawson, Inspector-General of Emergency Management
Queensland

National Disaster Recovery Organisation

- Mr Wayne Smith, Chief Executive Officer

Thursday, 13 April 2023

Sydney Masonic Centre
Sydney

NSW State Emergency Service

- Mr Daniel Austin, Deputy Commissioner

NSW Rural Fire Service

- Commissioner Rob Rogers AF SM, Commissioner

Australian Local Government Association

- Cr Linda Scott, President

Wednesday, 19 April 2023

Collins Room
The Savoy Hotel
630 Little Collins Street
Melbourne

Natural Hazards Research Australia

- Mr Andrew Gissing, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Iain MacKenzie AFSM, Chairperson

Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council Ltd

- Mr Rob Webb, Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Carlene York, Board President

Business Council of Australia (via teleconference)

- Ms Jennifer Westacott, Chief Executive Officer

Thursday, 20 April 2023

Chancellor Room 6
Hotel Grand Chancellor
Davey Street
Hobart

Hobart City Council

- Mr Geoff Land, Manager City Infrastructure
- Mr Christopher Kuchinke, Manager City Resilience

Communications Electrical Plumbing Union (Tasmania)

- Mr Michael Anderson, Secretary

Tasmanian Government

- Mr Todd Crawford, Acting Deputy Secretary Policy and Delivery,
Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Mr Jonathan Higgins, Deputy State Controller

Friday, 21 April 2023

Crystal Room
Stanford Plaza
150 North Terrace
Adelaide

South Australian Country Fire Service

- Mr Brett Loughlin, Chief Officer
- Mr Shane Richardson, Advisor

South Australian State Emergency Service

- Mr Chris Beattie, Chief Officer

Monday, 15 May 2023

Kimberley Grande Resort
20 Victoria Highway
Kununurra

the Hon. Neil Thomson MLC, Private capacity

Shire of Wyndam and East Kimberley

- Mr Tony Chaffer, Deputy President
- Mr David Menzel, President
- Mr Alfred Nagaiya, Senior Economic Development Officer

Wunan Foundation

- Ms Prue Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Kimberley Development Commission

- Mr Chuck Berger, Chief Executive Officer

Ord River Co Operative

- Mr Daniel Raymond, Chief Executive Officer

East Kimberley Chamber of Commerce

- Ms Clare Smith, Chief Executive Officer

MC Corporation

- Mr Matt Smith, Chief Executive Officer

Aviair/Helispirit

- Mr Michael McConachy, Managing Director

Tuesday, 16 May 2023

Fitzroy River Lodge

277 Great Northern Highway

Fitzroy Crossing

Shire of Derby and West Kimberley

- Mr Geoff Haerewa, President
- Ms Amanda Dexter, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Wayne Neate, Director, Technical and Development Services
- Mr Geoff Davis, Councillor

Shire of Halls Creek

- Mr Malcolm Edwards, President

Kaluwan

- Mr Joe Ross, Director, Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation

Fitzroy Womens' Centre

- Ms Emily Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre
- Ms Sue Thomas, Strategic Policy Lead, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre (via teleconference)

Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service

- Ms Maureen Carter, Chief Executive Officer

Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation

- Mr Antonio Giometti, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Peter Murray, Chairperson

Leedal Pty Ltd

- Mr Patrick Green, Chairman
- Mr Wayne Bergmann
- Mr Phillip Hams

Wednesday, 17 May 2023

Oaks Broome Hotel
99 Robinson Street
Broome

Shire of Broome

- Mr Christopher Mitchell, Deputy Shire President
- Mr Keith Williams, Acting Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Stephen Kipkurgat, Manager, Health, Emergency and Rangers

Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services

- Mrs Vicki O'Donnell, Chief Executive Officer

Kimberley Land Council

- Ms Sarah Parriman, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Thursday, 18 May 2023

Doubletree Hilton Northbridge
100 James Street
Perth

Minderoo Foundation

- Mr Adrian Turner, Director

Western Roads Federation

- Mr Campbell Dumesny, Chief Executive Officer

13 Brigade (Army)

- Colonel Craig Madden, Deputy Commander

Department of Defence

- Air Vice Marshal Stephen Chappell, Head, Military Strategic Commitments

RAAF Curtin/Derby Base

- Wing Commander James Collisson, Senior Australian Defence Force Officer

Department of Fire and Emergency Services

- Mrs Melissa Pexton, Deputy Commissioner
- Mr Rick Curtis, Executive Officer
- Mr William Blackshaw, Superintendent

Tuesday, 27 June 2023

Gawandii Room

Ballina Surf Club

Lighthouse Parade

Ballina

Social Futures

- Mr Tony Davies, Chief Executive Officer

Byron Shire Council

- Mr Michael Lyon, Byron Shire Mayor
- Mr Mark Arnold, General Manager
- Ms Sarah Boule, Recovery Coordinator

Richmond Valley Council

- Ms Angela Jones, Director Community Service Delivery

Resilient Lismore

- Ms Elly Bird, Director

Wardell Core

- Mr Joel Orchard, Executive Director

Young Change Agents

- Ms Margaret O'Brien, Co-Founder and Chief Executive
- Ms Emma Wilson

Holding Hands Under Ground Inc (HHUG)

- Ms Ella Rose Goninan, Co-Director

*Ms Arrabella Doublas, Private capacity**Southern Cross University/Living Lab*

- Mr Benjamin Roche, Vice-President, Engagement

Rotary Club of Ballina

- Mr Colin Lee, Flood Coordinator
- Ms Donella Kinnish, Flood Recovery Housing Project Manager

Xfactor Collective Foundation Ltd

- Ms Julia Keady, Executive Director
- Ms Annette Herschtal, Resources and Advocacy

Wednesday, 28 June 2023

Invercauld House
163 Invercauld Road
Goonellabah

Lismore City Council

- Councillor Peter Colby
- Councillor Electra Jensen
- Councillor Steve Krieg
- Mr Eber Butron, Chief Community Officer

Ms Janelle Saffin MP (via teleconference), Private capacity

United Services Union

- Mr Graeme Kelly, General Secretary
- Mr Ross Crawford, Delegate

Mr Kevin Hogan MP (via teleconference), Private capacity

Ms Tamara Smith MP (via teleconference), Private capacity

Healthy North Coast

- Ms Monika Wheeler, Chief Executive

A Way Forward

- Mr David Tomlinson, Convenor
- Ms Hannah Bethwick, Member
- Ms Annie Kia, Member
- Dr Hanabeth Luke, Member
- Prof Jerry Vanclay, Member

Thursday, 29 June 2023

Twin Towers Conference Centre
2 Wharf Street
Tweed Heads

Tweed Shire Council

- Councillor Meredith Dennis, Deputy Mayor
- Mr Troy Green, General Manager
- Mr Danny Rose, Acting Director, Engineering, and Manager, Roads and Stormwater

- Ms Doreen Harwood, Enterprise Risk and Emergency Management Officer and Local Emergency Management Officer
- Ms Charlotte Neilson, Coordinator Flood Restoration

Kyogle Council

- Mr Graham Kennett, General Manager
- Mr Peter Kelly, Community Recovery Officer

NSW State Emergency Service

- Mr Gregory Swindells, Acting Assistant Commissioner and Director

Murwillumbah Community Centre

- Ms Wendy Constantine, Manager
- Ms Eva Sans Orio, Community Services Coordinator
- Ms Evelyn To, Flood Recovery Worker

Murwillumbah CORE and Hub 2484

- Ms Kerry Pritchard, Operations Manager

Tweed Residential Park Homeowners Association

- Mrs Sandy Gilbert, Advocate

Ms Sylvia Roylance, Private capacity

NSW Farmers' Far North Coast Branch

- Mr Craig Huf, Chair

Tweed Chamber of Commerce

- Mr Warren Polglase, President

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre

- Ms Natalie Meyer, Manager

Ocean Shores Community Association

- Mrs Jan Mangleson, President