



TRANSCRIPT IN CONFIDENCE

NSW FLOOD INQUIRY

HAWKESBURY NEPEAN MEETING

AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY BEING LED BY

PROFESSOR MARY O'KANE AC AND
MICHAEL FULLER APM

HELD VIA ONLINE

ON THURSDAY, 16 JUNE, 2022.

TRANSCRIBED BUT NOT RECORDED BY APT TRANSCRIPTIONS

MICHAEL: *Michael opened the meeting by introducing himself and welcoming everyone to the town hall. He did an acknowledgement of Country, introduced present Inquiry members and stated the purpose of the town hall. This section of the meeting was not recorded or subsequently transcribed.*

PROF. O'KANE: Now you can hear that the recording has started. If you have chosen not to speak tonight or we run out of time there is still time to put in a submission to the inquiry up until the 24th of June. If you've been affected by the floods, we'll happily accept submissions from you right up to the end of the actual
10 inquiry because we do realise it's been very hard for people who have lost homes, lost computers and lost access. We do say that if you are putting in a submission please don't spend loads of time trying to make it beautiful, send whatever you have at hand. Maybe a few dot points, maybe a photo, maybe a video, maybe a short audio recording or maybe you need to go into Service New South Wales and they will help you with making the submission.

We look forward to those as well as looking forward to what we hear from you tonight and I'd like to just do a special shout-out to Peter Saville who's our Moderator tonight. Peter was our Moderator through all Bushfires inquiry special hearings and he's very
20 kindly come back to do virtual hearings for the flood inquiry. He's very experienced in hearing about Disaster Inquiries and does a great job of keeping us all on track in these hearings. Thank you, Peter. Thank you, Michael.

MICHAEL: Thanks, Mary. Just in terms of the run order for tonight, we're going to message each person who would like to speak so please keep an eye on the chat function, we'll be doing that via the chat function. If you can, please find a quiet place to speak. I know sometimes it's difficult with pets and other things but if you can, a quiet place to speak please. Each person will be allocated up to three minutes to give

their story. At the two and a half minute mark we'll sound a bell to indicate you've got 30 seconds left. Then there will be another bell at three minutes and then I'll ask you to wrap up so the next person has an opportunity to speak.

If you haven't registered to speak but would still like to contribute to this Town Hall session, please provide any comment you might like to leave in the chat function or as Mary's indicated already, make a formal submission to the inquiry. As Mary's indicated and as you heard, this session is being recorded and it will then be transcribed so that the team can use it as a reference to inform the wider report. Thank
10 you very much. Peter, our first speaker. I think you're on mute, Peter, if you're talking.

MR SAVILLE: Sorry, my apologies. We did have a person who was willing to go straight-up and I've just got to

██████████: That was me, ██████████

MR SAVILLE: You're ready to roll.

20 ██████████: Okay. All right. Thank you. Look, thank you to the members of the committee who are participating tonight. My name's ██████████, my wife and I live in Pitt Town, have done for 11 years. I'm the ██████████ of the Pitt Town Progress Association. The recent flood events of February 2020, March '21 and more recently, March '22 have highlighted the need for the Pitt Town flood evacuation route to be substantially upgraded and maintained to a much higher standard than it is at present.

30 During high rainfall events all other local access roads in and out of Pitt Town can be cut either by local runoff, by rising river water or a combination of both leaving the flood evacuation route as the only access in and out of Pitt Town. So, it's important to appreciate that it's not just an evacuation route during an extremely rare emergency, it's the only access route during even minor flood events. In these circumstances the

volume of traffic along the evacuation route increases severalfold including large vehicles for services such as food, fuel delivery, waste water cartage, garbage and other services plus emergency vehicles.

This has happened on multiple occasions during the last three flood events, usually long before the river level rises to flood levels and the situation can exist for weeks at a time with the flood evacuation route continually deteriorating during that event. The current evacuation road system is grossly inadequate, it rapidly deteriorates with potholes and damage from a combination of increased vehicle traffic, increased large
10 vehicles that normally would not use that route at all. It's far too narrow and it's poorly maintained.

In the event of a major flood event that is, over 17.3 metres AHD at Windsor Bridge, Pitt Town becomes a flood island. It's completely separated from the surrounding higher ground. If that situation becomes imminent, the State Emergency Services (SES) would order an evacuation of the entire community and we would have only a very few hours to evacuate all 3,000 residents. Now, this has not happened to date, although we've come very close on multiple occasions. Should this event become necessary it's potentially a life-threatening situation and the success of which would
20 largely depend on a suitably-maintained roadway.

The Pitt Town residential development was undertaken as a part 3A state government approval and, as such the state government has both a duty of care and a moral obligation to provide the community with a safe and functional road access and evacuation route during flood events. So, the evacuation route at the moment, and there's no reason for it to change, it follows the logical high ground to and from - in and out of Pitt Town from a local street, Bathurst Street via Bootles Lane, Redfern Place, Mitchell Road, Pitt Town Dural Road, Airstrip Road, Old Stock Route Road, Old Pitt Town Road to Nelson Road at Box Hill and then onto Windsor Road. Now,
30 this is a distance of about 15 kilometres.

MICHAEL: If you can bring it to a close, thanks.

██████████: Okay. Closing now. So, the whole length of that entire route needs to be upgraded to a minimum eight metres wide and including two three-metre traffic lanes and shoulders plus line-marking. That needs to be done immediately. Thank you.

MICHAEL: Thank you very much, ██████████. Our next speaker is ██████████
██████████

10 ██████████ Hi. So I have been a resident of Londonderry for all bar 18 months of my life so I'm very familiar with flooding in this community and what that looks like. My main concerns from the recent flood events have been council's neglect and dereliction of their duties, particularly when it comes to maintaining the drain and their responsibilities when it comes to maintaining our creek.

We live on a flood-free property, we are completely out of flood reach. Yet, in the most recent flood events, I found myself dragging five small children around town to take sandbags to protect my property from council drains. The council drains are not maintained and so all of the water from hundreds of metres down our streets in both
20 directions flood to a culvert and our house, out the front of our house and these were overflowing onto our property. We had to protect our property not from floodwaters but from drains.

Secondly, council does not maintain the creeks so that means there's not as much room in the creek as there ought to be for the water to actually flow and get away from homes. Thirdly, my significant issue with this flood event has been both Hawkesbury and Penrith Council neglect of the roads post-flood. We are now several months after the floods and we are still facing massive potholes and damage to roads that were closed because they were covered in water for days and week. Council closed the
30 roads and yet, have not done anything to check and maintain that those roads are actually safe.

What comes to mind is the corner of Macquarie and Brabyn Street in Windsor, a major intersection that has a pothole that is at least one metre in diameter. Londonderry is the same. Specifically, roads that were closed by floods. It's not difficult for them to go and check those roads. It's just unacceptable and it's dangerous for the community. That's all. Thank you.

MICHAEL: Thank you very much, [REDACTED]. Our next speaker is [REDACTED] from Hawkesbury Helping Hands. [REDACTED], if you're there.

10 [REDACTED]: Yeah, hi. Hello everybody. I know many people on this screen. My name is [REDACTED] this is [REDACTED], we're from the Hawkesbury Helping Hands. We want to discuss two things. First, we're the largest food distributor in the Hawkesbury, perhaps out of Western Sydney, we're currently unfunded and volunteer only. I'd like to know where all the bigger funded organisations are during a disaster. Two examples. I'll discuss the evacuation centres and [REDACTED] will follow through with food.

20 Since the bushfires, we were called out in the middle of the night to set up. The Richmond Club was an evacuation centre with nothing in plan. Middle of the night, we're pulling airbeds from wherever we can, taking pet food, snacks, anything we could bring up to the people there that were just sitting in chairs. This happened then, during the last flood and midnight this year we were called out again. There should be more preparedness if you're going to make somewhere an evacuation centre. Secondly, the issue of food. We found that this year particularly there was a lot of miscommunication and most organisations, all emergency services, and most charities relied on us to get the roof while we remain unfunded and volunteer on. [REDACTED], food.

30 [REDACTED]: We had the main distribution centre at South Windsor which we have as a permanent or semi-permanent premises but we had to temporarily pop up distribution centres on the west side of the river during the floods. We knew and were prepared to get food across. During that time that the flood was extended we actually had a total of over 50 pallets of food including nappies and anything that people may

have needed. We had in excess of 50 pallets of supplies west of the river that were distributed. Not only were there regular patrons that came to visit us, they were flood victims and we also had eight government agencies such as the SES, multiple SES units and Resilience NSW coming to us to help with that food. What I noticed is that there was another organisation or maybe two other groups, not organisations, they're not registered, but actually helping with supplies. There were a lot of people that were either doubling up on food amounts, our supply amounts and there were others that were actually forgotten about. So, there was an issue with the SES and people trying to contact the SES. I noticed it on the west side of the river. My phone reception went
10 down when I was at home and it only came back on when I went over to Wilberforce area. I'm in town so it just shows that those that are more remote than town residents actually had no service on phones to contact SES. SES weren't able to identify them, and they weren't able to visit them on some points.

██████████: We actually had residents from remote areas contacting us directly or just knowing that we had distribution centre, checking on the neighbours, bringing tinnies in. One of our biggest concerns is there isn't a database for this. Where are the big funded charities in these circumstances because I had to tell you something, food-wise we got our 50 pallets. I don't know how much - the SES,
20 everybody used us. So that's one of our biggest things. How can we get funding because there's going to be another disaster? It's not one on 100 anymore. We had two in one hundred in the last 12 months. So, we need to be prepared and we'll step up again but we just need to know. We need to get more support from out there.

██████████: There needs to be more transparency. There needs to be a lot more communication between agencies, councils, residents. I think that we just need to have a shared resource. A live document that we can update regularly that we can access who has been reached out to, who has been affected and so that those homes and those residents then go down the list. We can make sure that everybody is taken care of and
30 not just a certain few that are repeatedly engaged with multiple different ways to get food and support.

MICHAEL: Right. [REDACTED] and Erin, thank you very much for that. Can we move now to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Hi everyone and thanks for this opportunity. I wanted to talk about another effect of the floods and the heavy rain. Now, since the drought ended in the end of 2019, 2020, of course, a lot of the acreages in the Hawkesbury have lost most of their ground cover of grass and holding soil together and so on. The various floods we've had since then and that constant rain has meant that we've ended up with massive erosion on a lot of these small acreages. I'm really concerned that we need
10 some expert help to manage that erosion control. We need some funding to help with those projects because otherwise it's just going to be left and that erosion will continue to get worse.

The consequences of that on the property where I live in Wilberforce have been trees coming down, massive erosion through paddocks, rivers that were never running before are now constantly running through the paddocks, erosion tracks that are more than a metre wide and travel for the length of the property which is over 300 metres to 500 metres. I'd like to see some way that we can get some help to avoid that erosion getting worse and causing other consequences to roads, tree coverage, climate,
20 temperate and all of those things that are going to be impacted by the loss of trees as well. Thank you, that's all I wanted to bring up.

MICHAEL: Thank you, [REDACTED]. Next we have [REDACTED]. If you're ready, [REDACTED].

MR SAVILLE: Just got to unmute, [REDACTED]. She's there. There you go, she's unmuted now.

[REDACTED]: Okay. Yes, my husband has already found the best way to stop me talking is to mute me. Really helps on radio. I'm a tenant. I've been around for seven
30 or eight decades. I've seen a fair few floods. One of the things now is that I'm in a wheelchair. I'm in an extra wide wheelchair which doesn't always go through doors but I realise one of the problems that is not being assessed as far as I'm concerned is

how do we move disabled people before everyone else is evacuated? Do we have lists of people who have had heart attacks and various other things? They really need assistance in moving anywhere. What happens when the designated assistant is also affected by floods and cannot go to help the person that they're designated to help?

Is there a need for Penrith City Council and others to have a list of people who need help evacuating now? Not sort of half an hour's time. They need to be gone now so that they're not holding up whatever else. I don't know if that's what you really want to hear but that's my feeling at the moment. I think we need to look at how to safely
10 evacuate people who can't help themselves. Those who need support.

MICHAEL: Thank you for those comments, [REDACTED]. Yeah, thank you. Look, I know we have some councillors and MPs who wish to speak but before we move to councillors and MPs, can I just ask whether there's anybody else on the meeting here who would like to make a statement or talk? Is anybody - I can see [REDACTED] putting his hand up. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]: Yeah, thank you. Yeah, I've lived out at Glossodia, been out here about 40 years now. Just a few quick little things I'd like to mention. Kurmond Road
20 goes between Wilberforce and North Richmond. It's a major highway during flood events with traffic going in both directions. Two trucks can hardly pass on that road. It's a very, very busy road and quite dangerous. Some consideration should be thought about what should be done to help move the traffic backwards and forwards between North Richmond and Wilberforce. That's one thing.

The other thing is medical. I had a person with me who had some medical issues and the only answer I could get from Windsor Hospital or from anybody was just ring the ambulance and they'll take you all the way to Katoomba. That's an hours drive if you can get to Katoomba or Lithgow. There needs to be some thought about some medical
30 support on this side of the river or just letting people know where to go to get medical support. The other thing, the local chemist this side of the river was closed because the owners or workers in the chemist were on the other side of the river. That's just

another thing that needs some thought. I also saw people sandbagging by hand at the council chambers.

I know the SES have got a real modern sandbagging machine. I'm just wondering, why that couldn't be utilised? Maybe it was on the other side of the river - sorry, council depot, not council chambers. So people were just using shovels and putting sand in bags. Pretty uneconomical these days. SES have got, you know, a sandbagging machine that could've up there doing 60 - 80 sandbags an hour for people to come and pick up. So, they're just a few things I wanted to point out.

10

MICHAEL: Thank you very much, [REDACTED]. Thanks. Would anybody else like to talk before we move to MPs and councillors?

MR SAVILLE: I note we've got someone on the phone. I can just go and unmute them and check that they're just not observing. Just one second. Okay. I can't unmute them, we're good.

MICHAEL: Okay. I think Glen Gardiner - Councillor Glenn Gardiner.

20 MR SAVILLE: Just got to unmute Glenn, sorry, I clicked the button.

MR GARDINER: My comments relate to preparedness and management of emergencies to particular parts of the flood area of the Hawkesbury. Quite a common factor within the Hawkesbury River and quite a common scenario is back water that flows up Rickabys Creek, South Creek and Eastern Creek among some others and the preparedness, or my observation is, the preparation and the emergency response along those creek areas was, to put politely, non-existent. On the 2nd of March this year it was quite obvious to me that with the Bureau and SES declarations of where were flood, by roughly much and the various warnings, it was quite obvious that Rickabys
30 Creek, South Creek and Eastern Creek would also be inundated by floodwater. There were no warnings for those areas. Warnings came after the water came. There was a lady in Werrington that required to be rescued from a house. Now, Werrington, if

you're not familiar with the area, is some 15 kilometres away but is along South Creek and it was flooded by the Hawkesbury River. A lady had to be rescued by military helicopter.

Now, interestingly this is not new information. There's a very well-documented rescue. Charles Dacker in 1912 from almost the precise location, was required to be rescued from a Hawkesbury River flood in Werrington way back then. On the night of the 2nd of March, I saw that this was happening so I used social media to warn people around Londonderry area. I then jumped in my car and drove around to make sure
10 that people were preparing. As a result within Londonderry and Llandilo there were no rescues but there were rescues in Shanes Park what sits within Blacktown Council. I didn't consider Shanes Park but there's a thousand other people that should've considered Shanes Park.

So Shanes Park rescues in Werrington. I assumed that there's some disconnect somewhere in the system. Somewhere that doesn't include that backwash or back water flowing up those creeks. It's caused enormous pain this year but particularly last year. I know this inquiry doesn't consider last year but the situation last year was significantly worse. There were 14 rescues that were required in and around Rickabys
20 Creek. That included a five-month-old baby at 2.00am in the morning. That's disheartening for me. It breaks my heart. It's also disheartening for me that other agencies, other organisations can't get involved, can't help in the absence of SES being there because of the various components of the legislation that prevent that from occurring. At the moment, when Commissioners are in charge of an emergency, no one else is permitted to help unless they're requested by the Commissioner.

In the situation of Londonderry, there was an absence of help. Then there was denial. Penrith Council were trying to offer help. Penrith Council wanted to offer help but we couldn't even help. I wasn't a councillor at that time. I've only been a councillor for
30 this year but last year, I wasn't a councillor. I was trying to open the community hall for some disaster relief, a place for people to get warm and to have a coffee and, you

know, exchange some feed for their animals or whatnot. We couldn't do that because we were instructed not to by the Commissioner and it was really disheartening for me.

I made quite a lot of noise about that at the time. I sent letters to many people and then 12 months later, here we are again, same story, same thing happened. The difference this year was the warning. It came one hour after the waters where last year, it came 16 hours after the water. I've seen these events occur within 12 months so I'm assuming the issue is that there is disconnect when it comes to that back water issue of those tributaries.

10

MICHAEL: Thank you, Councillor Gardiner. Councillor Nathan next please.

MR ZAMPROGNO: Thank you very much and good evening everybody. Look, I've tuned in this evening because my primary goal is to just listen to other people's stories and it's been really educational. As a member of Hawkesbury Council, I'd like to say I represent a good chunk of the 150,000-odd people who live and trade on the floodplain and who are at the greatest risk of damage to life and property in the event of flooding events.

20 I do have some feedback. In the aftermath of this recent or multiple recent floods, I think there needs to be a greater degree of coordination between various agencies to monitor and restore the state of our drains. We simply don't know what the degree of dilapidation is for many of those drains. They sit on a mix of private land, Crown land, council land and it would appear that in many cases many years have elapsed since anybody's taken any interest in their state.

I remember going out and inspecting flood damage after the flood last year, stood beside the then Deputy Premier John Barilaro and Andrew Constance and heard them speak words that they would promise to expedite guidelines for the restoration of
30 riverbanks. In other words, Council, our Council at the moment has to engage in a very onerous DA-based process. If somebody wants to do urgent riverbank works they have to go through this process. In some cases they have to commission onerous

reports that are in excess of the value of the works themselves before they can be given permission to do so. We were promised or expedited or streamlined guidelines to allow them to do that more easily and they still haven't arrived. That's disappointing to me.

Many landowners that I spoke to at a meeting of Cornwallis landowners only a couple of months ago said that it would be both cheaper and easier for them to just muck in, get the works done illegally, then cop the relevant fine. That isn't how we should be operating at all. I think there were deficiencies with the RMS, especially in terms of
10 the management of our two major bridges. We've now had several floods where the railings were not laid down in the lead-up to those bridge closures. Without being able to lay those railings down, the debris accumulates against those bridges, raises the risk of serious damage and, of course, lengthens the time that it takes once the water subside to re-open those roads to the public.

My remaining remarks relate to the job that other tiers of government are doing to use the fact that flood is front of mind and really sell the necessity of capital works for flood mitigation. The resilient value, resilient study of 2017 laid out a multipronged strategy involving planning height controls, public education and crucially capital
20 works for flood mitigation. Although we now have an EIS we still don't have a finished business case from the state government to really drive home the necessity of raising Warragamba Dam.

I accept the evidence that it will reduce the frequency and severity of flooding by 75 per cent. Now, to put that into context in the event of a one in one hundred flood. That means that only 1,000 houses, only 1,000 houses would be flooded instead of 5,000 houses. The recent flood that we had which was a one in 10-type flood, I think showed in the same proportion the degree of saving. If these mitigation works had occurred years ago instead, I think it was 800 houses that were flooded, we might've only had
30 about 300 houses flooded. Those who tend to oppose to the raising of Warragamba Dam, in my opinion, tend to do it from place of relative safety, high and dry and out of harm's way. Pontificate to my community who physically bear that existential risk

every year, and tell them that they shouldn't have flood mitigation because of species fringing Lake Burragorang or sensitive Aboriginal sites. It's not that I'm unsympathetic to that, I just wish that we conducted that analysis in a more compassionate way to the people whose life and property are at the greatest risk.

I also wish that the state government would do a better job in countering various misinformation. It is not about Sydney's drinking water supply, it is not about dewatering land to permit unfettered development on the floodplain, it is about improving the safety of the community that I represent. I really wish that the
10 government would commit to this because if they let this opportunity pass, multiple generations will slip by and a potentially really bad flood will visit. I don't like to be the Cassandra in the room but I don't want to have that on my conscience so, I'm going to advocate for flood mitigation to my last breath. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL: Thank you, Councillors. Next, we have MP Robyn Preston. Robyn, yes.

MS PRESTON: Thank you everyone and can I just say I agree with everyone's comments, I think you're making great sense. A lot of it I had in my recommendations so, I'll just work through those if I can. Look, after three years of
20 floods, the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019, 2020, a drought, the Covid-19 pandemic - the Hawkesbury community and around Penrith is exhausted. There's still a lot of work to be done as we recover from this year's floods.

While the water has subsided, it hasn't flowed away. It sits in ponds that were once fields of grass and bushland. Mould is all through our homes, businesses and schools. We had to close Colo High School because of the mould there. This is a legacy of the dampness and moisture that still prevails. I know we live in a floodplain, and those that weren't new to the Hawkesbury have never seen the river misbehave in such a way. We were quite overtaken by this. Our community were anxious in last year's
30 floods, especially with the collapse of Bells Line of Road in 2021 and that exacerbated their anxiety.

I think the response to the floods this year was a little different. People prepared, they evacuated well in advance. I know there were still people that were stranded but they made plans to stay with friends and family on higher ground or relocated close to their workplace. When I went out to the evacuation centres there weren't nearly as many people sleeping overnight at those evacuation centres. Some of them had - you know, when I'd see people there, they'd say 'I'm going to my mate's place' or 'I've got a friend who's got higher ground', 'I've got my dog with me so I've made plans, I won't be sleeping here'.

10 So while we did see people coming and going from there, I went to all the evacuation centres on this side of the river, on the Richmond side and down at Castle Hill as well we had some livestock being looked after with folk. There were a lot of people that chose to either take in accommodation. We were providing motel accommodation as well or with friends, but we didn't lose one life in Hawkesbury. Thank goodness, this time. Charities worked out systems with the SES to ensure food hampers and supplies were dispatched to those in need.

I've got to support [REDACTED] from Hawkesbury Helping Hands. Her comments and her recommendation for a live document that the helpers could all contribute to, 20 whether you can do that on a Google spreadsheet and everyone's live, they're all looking at where the help is going to, where food hampers are going to. I think that's a great idea, [REDACTED], and I fully support that as well.

The caravan park, we had anticipated the worst. They moved 50 boats and 120 caravans to high ground. They saved them all so that when I went out there afterwards, they were cleaning up the premises. The ablution blocks. The grounds themselves but all those were accommodated for. Now, that's fine if you've got high ground in a caravan park but a lot of them, particularly on the west side around Wilberforce, they were quite badly hit and very badly tarnished. So there's different scenarios for 30 different topography.

The new Windsor bridge. It did go under. It also recovered very quickly after the peak of 13.8 metres on the 9th of March 2022 although approaching roads were early to flood. Even if the bridge was higher we couldn't get to it or you'd be stranded on top of the bridge because the approaching roads are in a floodplain there. I've got to compliment the NSW Government who conducted the clean-up of household waste afterwards, particularly around South Windsor where they didn't have the flooding last year, around Cox Street and James Streets. I saw crews of SES coming in on the ground. We had Rural Fire Service, Police, Fire and Rescue, Surf Lifesaving, Marine Rescue, the Volunteer Rescue Association, NSW Ambulance, St Johns Ambulance
10 and countless members of the community helping. All should be commended and appreciated for their efforts.

I know there were people really struggling. There were elderly people trying to get old bits of carpet, furniture out of their houses then along came the SES. They all came in en masse. I watched them as they helped put everything out. The other thing was, it got cleaned up quicker from last year because it's very distressing for you to see what you've lost that's sitting out on that footpath day, after day, after day. So, it was important for that loss of personal items to be removed fairly quickly so it wasn't there for them to see on a continual basis.
20

MICHAEL: Okay. Robyn, thanks.

MS PRESTON: Ok. Recommendations that I wanted to put forward. Pardon.

MICHAEL: Can you wrap up a little.

MS PRESTON: Yes, quick, recommendations. The riverbank restoration needs immediate action. Property owners want to be able to complete work but recruitment of compliance officers to eliminate red tape has been really slow. I know Nathan
30 Zamprogno did add to that and others. More public works support to Hawkesbury City Council to resolve massive infrastructure road repairs like at Cornwallis, Pitt

Town Bottoms Road, River Road etc. Telecommunications in the St Albans and Lower McDonald area also needs to be addressed.

They were stranded there. They relied on Facebook posts because sometimes there's not proper readings available for flood warning and to evacuate. The Bureau of Meteorology needs to have water level gauges in McDonald Valley for accuracy and establishing when to evacuate. Establish an SES kiosk in McDonald Valley, St Albans territory. I've got volunteers ready to go there. They want to be trained by the SES. We have brought this to the attention of the Minister as well.

10

Invite the Insurance Council of Australia to establish an affordable home or business insurance policy that covers the flood amount of say, \$50,000 to come in and clean up and rehabilitate their site. Currently premiums cost around \$25,000 a year for household insurance and most of them won't do that. So, this is a different policy that I'm suggesting. The evacuation route that [REDACTED] had talked a lot about, that needs to be upgraded too. I've walked that route, I've taken Ministers there, I agree with you on that as well, [REDACTED].

20

Drainage systems. We've had that mentioned, it needs a massive overhaul. The drains work on Crown land, council land and private property. I know Hawkesbury Council is doing an audit for the drains. They've employed an outside consultant to do that. I think Penrith should do that as well so that we get an audit of what is out there that's blocked and not blocked and then we need to put a levy placed on new subdivisions upstream of the Hawkesbury River. This levy should contribute to the drainage construction and the rehabilitation of the drains.

We've got all these new hard surfaces in Marsden Park, in Box Hill. They're on high ground so where does it all flow to? Down to the Hawkesbury Valley and that's why we're copping it.

30

MICHAEL: Thanks, Robyn, that's great. Thank you very much for that.

MS PRESTON: Thank you.

MICHAEL: I think [REDACTED] had her hand up. [REDACTED], do you want to say something?

[REDACTED]: Yes, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to this inquiry. I'd like to just suggest that we were all in a room in Windsor on the 10th of June and we've all put in submissions to the Parliamentary hearing. I'd like to suggest that perhaps this panel go back and review that transcript so we don't have to repeat
10 ourselves here tonight. Listening to Councillor Zamprogno's assessment of raising the dam wall, [REDACTED] on the 10th of June spoke against raising the Warragamba Dam. It was received by the community in that room on that afternoon with a round of applause.

There are a lot of people here who are flood-affected, myself, in Windsor who have read all of the documentation. The EIS, everything that has come before and after, and we feel that we are going to be left in a worse situation than we would've been in this year or the previous year. We also, if Councillor Zamprogno is correct in saying that
20 the dam wall raising has got nothing to do with Sydney's drinking water. We don't understand why flood mitigation cannot take place right now by adding 14 metres of bare space to the dam. Considering that we are in El Nina still and there are further weather projections for the rest of the year. Let's say the east coast of Australia will be possibly inundated with massive amounts of water.

MICHAEL: Okay. [REDACTED], thank you for that. Peter, I'm just going to check in with Peter. Do we have any other people?

MR SAVILLE: I don't see anyone else that's raised - [REDACTED] was observing but has made a comment in the chat. Unless he wishes to have a chat to us? Councillor
30 Nathan would like to respond back to [REDACTED], if possible, but that's up to you guys.

MR ZAMPROGNO: I just wanted to emphasise only if everybody else has had a go. I don't want to hog the time.

MICHAEL: Just one second, Councillor Zamprogno. Can we make sure that nobody else wants to talk?

MR SAVILLE: Yeah, there's someone on the telephone. I just don't have an identification for them. I'm trying to get them to unmute so that they can actually let us know. Yes, now, [REDACTED] would like to speak.

10

MICHAEL: Yes, [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]: Hello everyone. I'm on [REDACTED] Greens Road and I have a holiday home there and we were flood-affected for the first time. The holiday home was built to one in one hundred and had never had water in but we did in the last flood. The issues that we are encountering is that we're still waiting on the NRMA to deal with our claim so the place is sitting there rotting. It's exacerbated also by bank erosion and I think it's been raised a couple of times today, you know, the banks have been incredibly destroyed over the past three floods.

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We'd lost about two metres of land and to do anything requires numerous approvals at an extensive cost. It's just not feasible and in the meantime the problem just continues. So, I would like to see the government provide that solution that was referenced earlier - after the second flood that we had, not the third, to prioritise flood bank erosion along the Hawkesbury and provide more simpler solutions and more cost-effective ones for owners. If there's anything that the government or this inquiry can do to get the insurers to act far more promptly. Yes, for me it's a holiday home so I'm very mindful of that. It's a holiday home that I go to every weekend and have had for many years. If anything can be done to bring the insurance companies to the party in expediting these claims I would be very grateful.

30

MICHAEL: Thanks, [REDACTED]. Okay. If there's no one else who wants to speak, Councillor Zamprogno, just be aware we obviously don't want this to be a debate so please.

MR ZAMPROGNO: No and thank you very much. I used the word misinformation but I recognised immediately that that's also a very emotionally-laden term. This is also as much a case of public education. I've heard this argument from [REDACTED] very frequently about why don't we just lower the current water storage level. We're in a La Nina so it will top back up very, very quickly. What degree of flood immunity
10 might that confer?

I was aware through a briefing that we received on council that after the flood last year they did precisely that kind of analysis. Now, you have to understand that Warragamba Dam is shaped like a wine glass. So, the amount of water stored, if you lowered it by 10 metres, it is a small fraction of the water that you could store by raising it 10 metres because you're raising that, and it covers a progressively broader and broader area.

We were told that if the water had been drawn down from 100 per cent to as much
20 they could bring it down in to in let's say 10 days notice, then the absolute outside limit that our forecasting would permit, such as a huge rainfall event was underway and you started to draw down the water level. The amount of water that you could get out of the dam and into the floodplain before that rainfall event arrived would ultimately affect the resulting flood by between 10 and 20 centimetres. Furthermore, if you permanently lowered the water level of Warragamba Dam to a much lower level than is currently there today, then you are very directly impacting Sydney's drinking water and you have to find replacements for that drinking water. Running a desalination plant can cost upwards of \$140 million a year even when it's idle.

30 So, there's obviously a vexed question about Sydney's drinking water if you were to lower the level of the dam. That isn't the solution. It isn't the magic bullet. The best bang for buck is manifestly raising Warragamba Dam and the resilient value, resilient

and community study. The EIS did canvas every other conceivable option, dredging the river, blasting the choke points at Sackville, building levies, building dams elsewhere on other catchments. It remains the case that two-thirds or more of the water that comes in any statistical flood event tends to come from behind Warragamba Dam. It's a misnomer to say that a particular flood came from a different part of the catchment. Statistically that's possible but generally it doesn't.

10 MICHAEL: Councillor, I'm going to have to wrap you up there, thank you. I know we've got one other speaker [REDACTED]. I don't want this to be a debate but I'm going to let [REDACTED] just have another minute to so to talk in response and then we're going to move to [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]: Thank you. I disagree with everything Councillor Zamprogno said. There are purple pipes across every new development in north-west Sydney who could easily collect stormwater and put it back behind the catchment if we were in a drought. If it was about water and I disagree with the fact that it would've been 20 centimetres this year, if we'd had 14 metres. You're talking 10 metres, 14 metres. We're talking 14 metres, Nathan. Is that report public? If so, make it public and let us all read it. Anyway, thank you everybody.

20 MICHAEL: Thanks, [REDACTED]. We're going to move to [REDACTED], if you're ready.

[REDACTED]: Hi, [REDACTED]. Thanks for hosting this inquiry and for listening to me this evening. I live on the Hawkesbury River at Richmond, just near the Richmond Bridge. I've been through three floods in a year so I think that I speak with some authority on what has happened recently. I'd like to just firstly echo [REDACTED] comments. I was at that meeting at Windsor a few weeks ago and there was not a person in the room in the community that spoke up in favour of raising the dam wall.

30

What they wanted and what I think almost unanimously were asking for was for the state government to consider immediately action that will help us in the next year should we, there's a high likelihood that we will have another major flood event within a year. We are asking you to use the current dam as a mitigation dam. It can be done quite simply, they did it in Queensland on the recommendations from the Royal Commission. It is absolutely critical. The damage we're talking about that happened in the last year in the Hawkesbury, the issues that, everyone who's been to Cornwallis and has seen the millions and millions of dollars damage to businesses, the riverbank and residences that will increase tenfold in the next flood if we can't do something to mitigate the current dam.

It is the elephant in the room, I said that at Windsor. It's almost like we're not allowed to talk about it. The fact that our local representative is not listening to the community and advocating this to a ministerial level at State Parliament is disgraceful. We need this now, we can't wait anymore. This is going to happen again. It is going to happen within months and if you don't do something to change the current laws around using the current dam as a mitigation dam. What we're looking at now is going to be kids play compared to what we're going to be in 12 months time. Thanks.

20 MICHAEL: Thanks, [REDACTED]. And I think Councillor Gardiner wanted to make some comment as well.

MR GARDINER: Thank you. Just some small comments about the dam. It's my opinion that it's not a silver bullet. That 14 metres would hold back 950 gigalitres and a typical flood that we've had in the last couple of years. This one in ten, one in fifteen year floods are realistically about 900 gigalitres. A maximum probable flood is 6,000 gigalitres. You would have to raise that wall over 100 metres for it to stop a flood in the Hawkesbury.

30 MICHAEL: Thanks, Councillor Gardiner. If there is no one else who wants to talk, say anything we might wrap the meeting. Peter, can you see anyone else who wants to speak?

MR SAVILLE: No, we're pretty right. I'm just going to share a screen at the moment to give everyone addresses for submitting submissions. You've seen, it's also in the chat box at the moment but I'll just share my screen.

MICHAEL: Thanks. And we'll hand back to Mary to make some closing remarks. Mary.

10 PROF. O'KANE: Thank you, Michael. And thank you all. That was a truly wonderful session, very articulate comments, very useful comments. Hearing the debate on the dam wall issue is useful. I'm trying to find my words here because it is an incredibly difficult and emotive issue but thank you. There's a lot of very concrete description of various areas in the Hawkesbury of various issues and we've heard that very clearly and we've got the notes and we've got the transcript. So, thank you for taking part and you can be sure we'll take on board what you said and good night.

MICHAEL: Thank you, Mary, and thank you everybody. Good night.

20 MR SEVILLE: Thank you everyone. We're just stopping the recording. Then we shall disconnect.

MEETING CONCLUDED