Social housing and Flood Risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley:

A place-based community engagement and action research approach

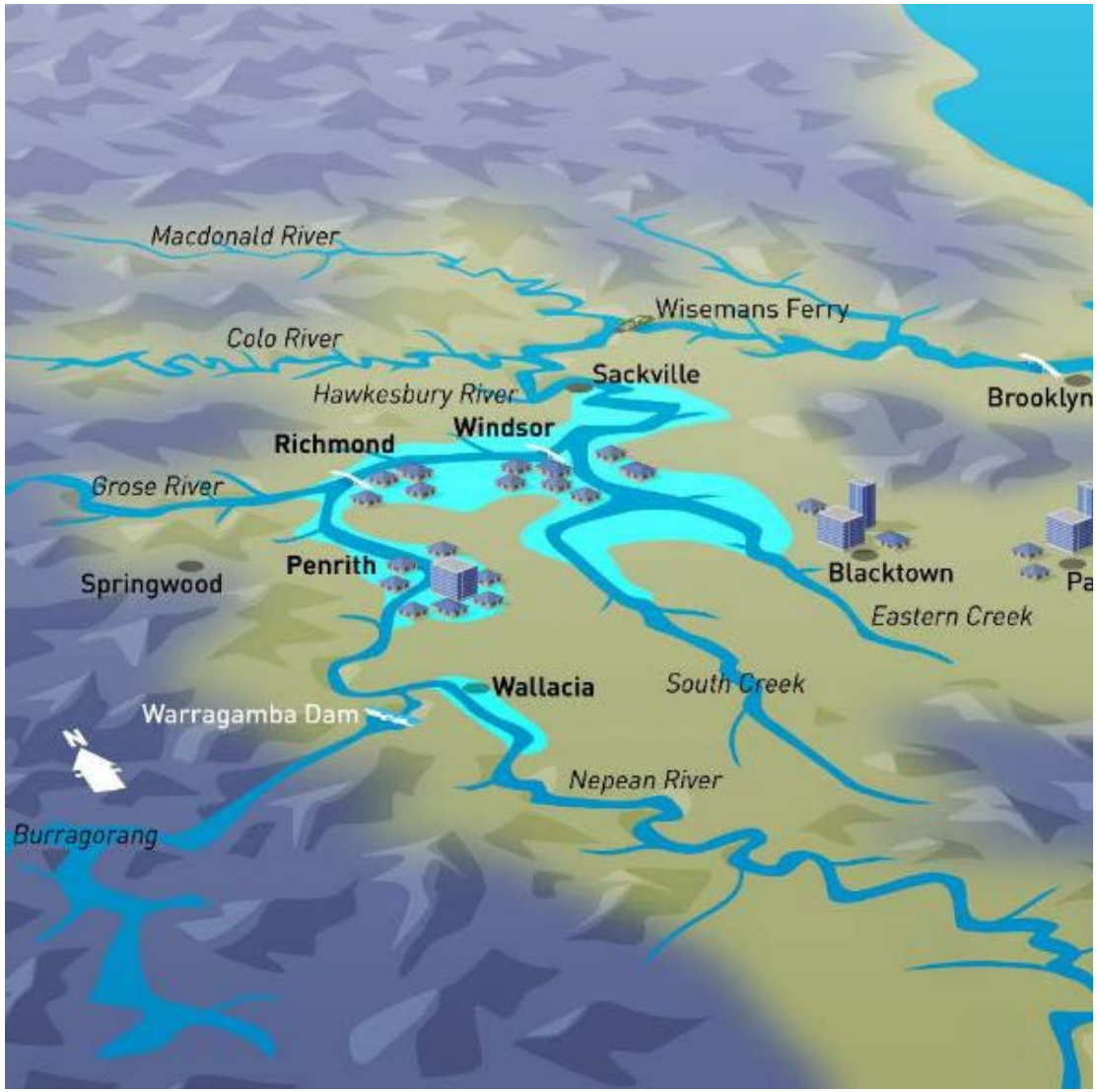
BACKGROUND FOR THIS WORK

- Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain has the most significant and unmitigated community flood exposure in Australia.

- 140,000 people living or working in the floodplain (2018)

- The Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Risk Management Strategy:

Aims to reduce flood risk to life, property and social amenity from regional floods in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley



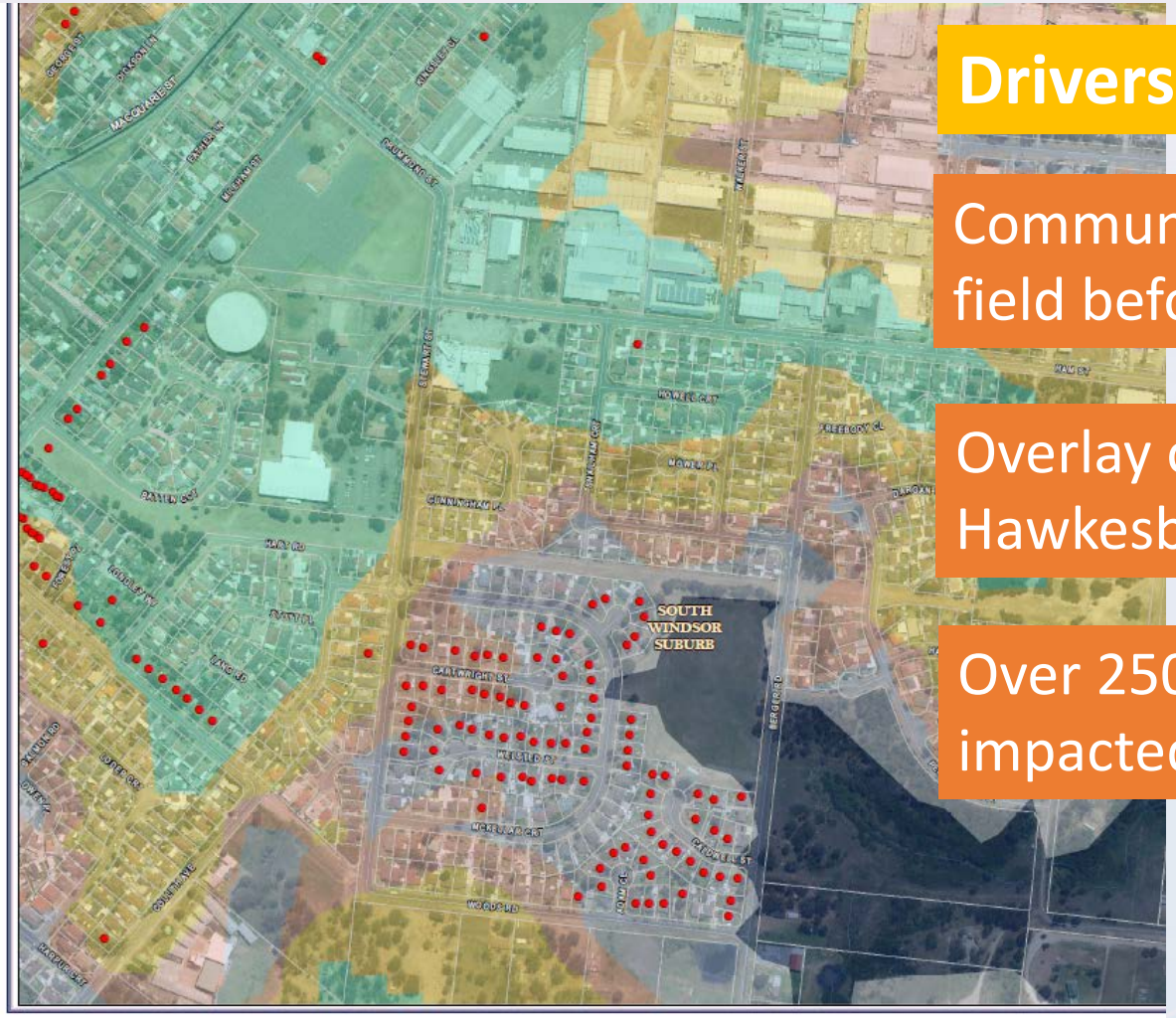
The Flood Strategy comprises a suite of integrated measures to mitigate flood risk.

Community Resilience Program

Aim: raised awareness of flood risk and readiness to respond to a flood, through a multi-faceted approach.

Outcome 5

Aware, prepared and responsive community



Drivers for a focus on social housing tenants

Communities and individuals don’t exist on a level playing field before a natural disaster

Overlay of geographic and social vulnerability in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley

Over 2500+ social housing properties which could be impacted by flooding in the valley

Get Ready for Flood Social Housing

Government	Emergency Services	Community	Academics
Infrastructure NSW Flood Strategy	NSW SES	Inner Sydney Voice	USYD Action Research team

SOCIAL HOUSING

How do existing vulnerabilities and support needs intersect with flood risk?

They may affect my awareness of the flood risk

They can affect my capacity to prepare for floods

They can make evacuation more complex

They can add additional barriers to recovery

Low levels of community awareness of flood risk

Low levels of preparedness

Long periods with no flooding

High number of aged residents/those living with a disability

Issues of social isolation/limited internet/lack of transport

High levels of existing disadvantage

GOAL:
To build flood resilience in the social housing sector in the Hawkesbury Nepean Valley

Large case loads for social housing client service officers

No requirement/funding for DRR with tenants

No existing disaster management or evacuation planning in place in the sector

Limited existing work engaging on flood preparedness for communities with additional support needs

Social Housing Tenants

Social Housing Providers (CHP's and DCJ)

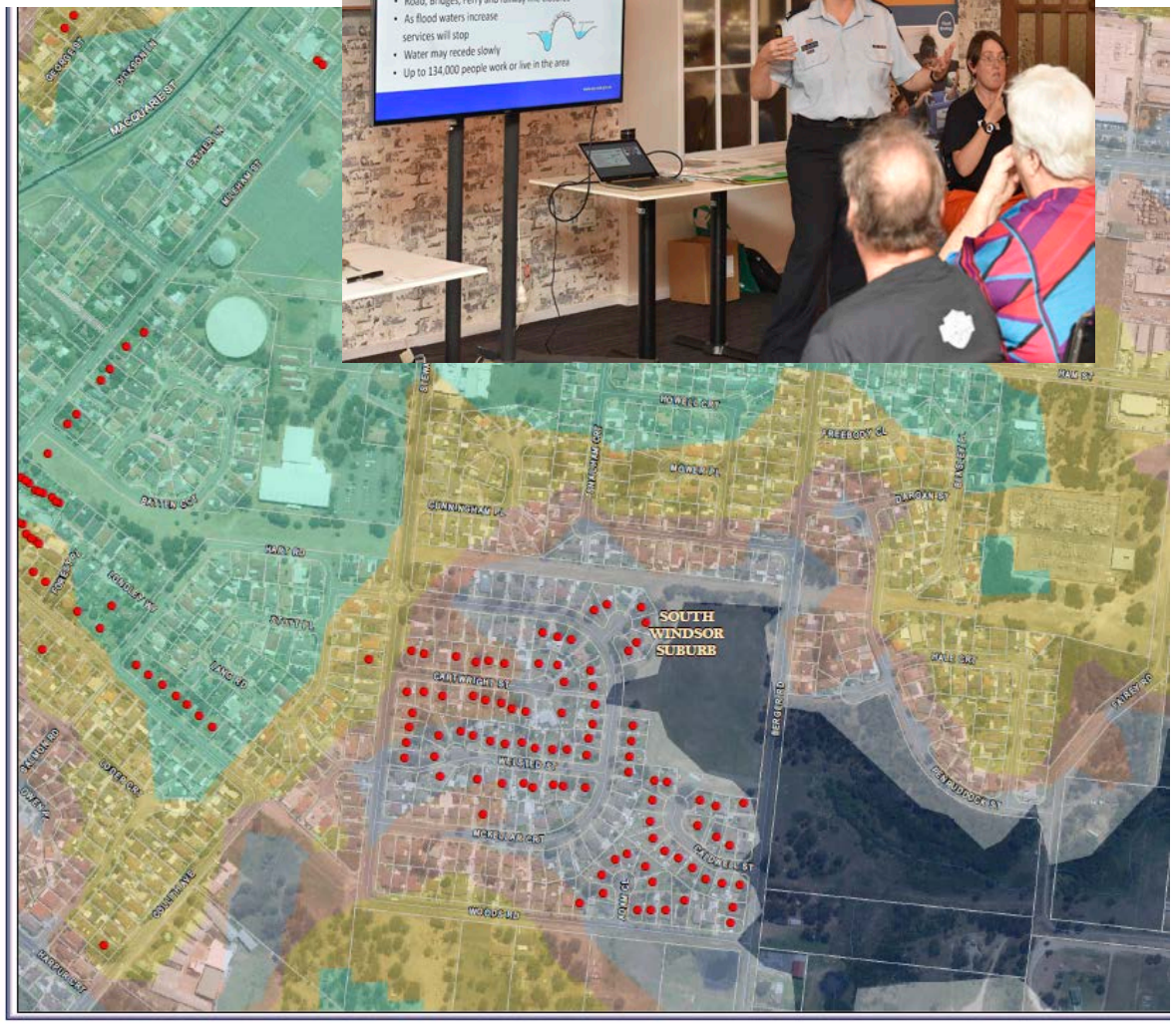
PROJECT **FOCUS AREAS**

Community Sector

Emergency Services & Government agencies

PROJECT **APPROACH**

- Utilise a partnership approach
- Build flood awareness and preparedness capacity of housing provider staff
- Identify existing strengths and assets within the community
- Develop simplified communication and information materials in partnership with tenant reps
- Work with existing and trusted community organisations
- Share learnings with emergency service planners and challenge existing assumptions



Phase 1: June 2019 –Jan 2020

- The Social Housing Community Resilience Network (SHCRN) established
- Mapped social housing to flood risk in the valley
- Built relationships with housing providers (multiple providers)
- Identified pathways for engaging tenants
- Delivered a small number of PCEP workshops to tenants

Phase 2: March 2020- March 2021

Undertook place-based work in the areas of highest risk

Flood Awareness and Preparedness Training for social housing providers across Hawkesbury-Nepean

Flood Awareness and Preparedness training for community organisations and tenant representatives across Hawkesbury-Nepean

Flood Information Packs – developed with tenants and social housing providers for every tenant at flood risk in HNV

HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN FACT SHEET

Get Prepared for Flood

SOME SIMPLE ACTIONS CAN SAVE LIVES

Your local flood risk

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has a long history of flooding.

When there is heavy rainfall, water flows down five major rivers into the floodplain. It is slowed from reaching the ocean by around 80 kilometres of narrow gorges from Ebenezer to Spencer. This means that floodwater can back up and rise quickly, causing wide, deep and dangerous floods.

There are hidden dangers in floodwater like debris, electrical wires, pollutants and sewage. In a flood, bridges can be cut, roads closed, public transport routes interrupted, power lost and mobile phone and internet connections disrupted.

It is important for everyone who lives in the floodplain to be prepared. For more information see www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au

How to prepare before a flood

Know where to get updates and warnings
- Bureau of Meteorology for local weather updates
- NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) for information on floods and storms
- ABC Radio as the official emergency broadcaster

Prepare a 'Get Ready to Go' Kit

What to pack:
1. Health care items like medications and prescriptions
2. Copies of your important documents (hard copies or stored digitally)
3. Important valuables and momentos
4. Important phone numbers
5. Radio, torch, phone chargers and batteries
6. Clothing and personal items

Make a plan for evacuation

Know where you will go, how you will get there, what evacuation routes you can use, what you will do with your animals, and how you will manage your health

Share your plan

Talk with your relatives, friends, and neighbours about what you will do if you need to evacuate

What to do during a flood

Follow NSW SES Flood Advice and Emergency Warnings
- Listen to your local ABC radio station for up to date flood

Get Prepared for Flood | Factsheet

August 2021

Where to find information

Useful websites to visit and phone apps to download
- Local weather updates: www.bom.gov.au and Bureau of Meteorology app
- Local ABC Radio frequency: https://reception.abc.net.au and ABC Listen app
- Flood and storm updates: www.ses.nsw.gov.au www.facebook.com.au/NSW.SES
- Plan for your animals: www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au
- Live traffic information: www.livetraffic.com and Live Traffic app

Need help?

For emergency help in floods call NSW SES on 132 500

For all life threatening emergencies call 000
- Hearing/speech impaired SMS NRS: 0423 677 767
- Internet Relay: https://internet-relay.nrscall.gov.au
- If you are homeless call Link2Home on 1800 152 152
- If an interpreter is required, emergency services can access translation services

My important contacts

Who will you need to contact in an emergency?

(e.g. emergency contact, relatives, friends, doctor, pharmacist, carer, support worker, Link2Home)

Name: Phone:

My checklist

I am prepared because:

- I know where to find information like weather updates, warnings and advice
- I know where I will go in an evacuation and how I will get there
- I know what I will take with me
- I have talked with my household about what we will do if we need to evacuate
- I have a plan for keeping my animals safe
- I know how I will manage my health
- I have talked through my plan with relatives, friends and neighbours
- I have a list of my important numbers ready

Community Engagement

- Regular meetings and input from tenants representatives
- Advocating for community representation on LEMC structures
- Identifying community organisations who worked closely with tenants
- Finding champions within the social housing sector
- Utilising multi-sector partners knowledge and expertise
- Identifying planning gaps for vulnerable communities
- Utilising Local Council connections and local knowledge
- Bridging the cultural divide between community organisations and emergency services
- Looking for opportunities to apply principles of genuine 'shared responsibility'

BENEFITS & LEARNINGS

Focused on an area of high flood risk and high concentration of social housing tenants/properties

Worked with key community organisations already established in their local area/ with existing relationships and trust with tenants

Worked with local Client Service Officers from local Community Housing Providers – who could make practical applications of this work for their clients

Allowed a practical application of how additional support needs and disadvantage could effect preparedness and evacuation for their tenants

Brought emergency services, housing providers and community orgs together to discuss practical applications of 'shared responsibility' at a local level.

BLIGH PARK & SOUTH WINDSOR

Place Based

Phase 3: June 2021 - June 2022

Support CHP's to build flood awareness/ preparedness practices and procedures into BAU in Hawkesbury-Nepean

Ongoing Flood Training for social housing providers, community organisations and tenant representatives across Hawkesbury-Nepean

Workshops with emergency services/local council, community organisations and tenant reps to identify gaps in planning and evacuation procedures for communities with additional support needs

Work in partnership with CHP's on delivery of Flood Information Packs and engagement on preparedness - for every tenant at flood risk in HNV

NSW GOVERNMENT | Resilience NSW

Get Ready for Flood Social Housing

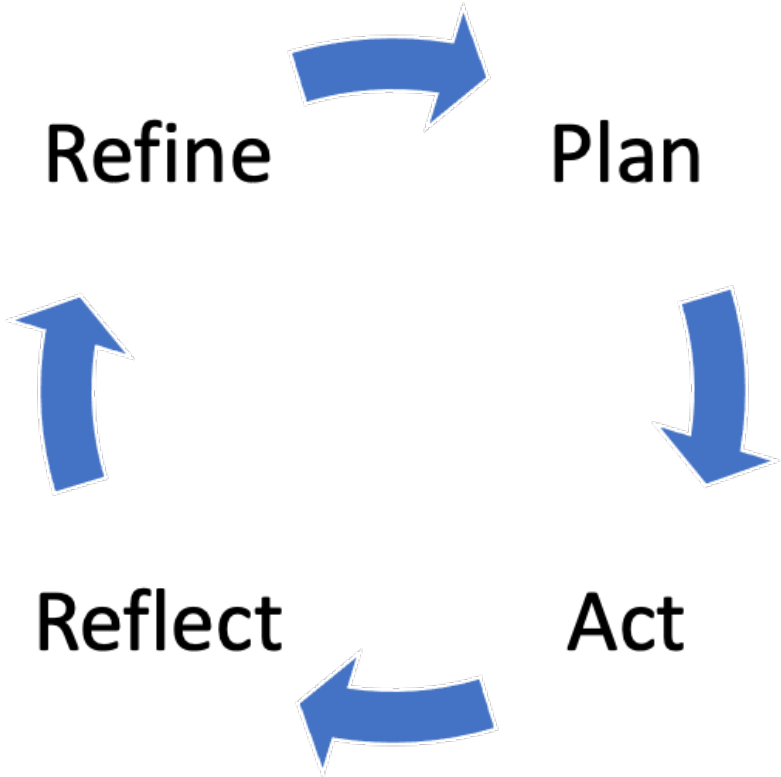
Action Research

14 cycles walking along with the project.

Learning and new data informs project progress in real time.

Enabled responsive and adaptable project refinement adding rigor and depth.

Detailed, rich research evidence to inform future projects and to underpin recommendations



Key Learning and Recommendations

Project leaders

- Partnership development and collaboration takes time and careful consideration of local context.
- Networks and social infrastructure for inclusion of marginalised groups in disaster resilience building are largely still to be developed.

Key Learning and Recommendations

Emergency Management Agencies

- There is genuine goodwill amongst EM staff and volunteers to develop deeper engagement with NGOs and community but competing priorities and limited resources impact on allocating enough time for this work
- Command and control structures are at odds with collaborative partnerships required to include marginalized community members.
- Further work in EM agencies to develop collaborative partnerships outside disaster response periods is a priority.

Key Learning and Recommendations

Community Housing Providers and NGOs

- CHPs are one vital part of a broader ecosystem supporting disaster resilience with tenants and the need for support from other parts of that system was highlighted throughout the Project.
- We recommend the development of stronger collaborative networks between CHPs, local community organisations (NGOs) and local government.
- We recommend follow up training and support for CHP staff in building on confidence and skill levels in disaster preparedness with tenants which was started in the initial training.

Key Learning and Recommendations

Community Housing Providers and NGOs

- Community resilience networks and formal disaster planning should include representation from NGOs, to ensure effective two-way communication of information, constraints, and resources.
- Expectations placed up on NGOs around service delivery, accountability and compliance, particularly in times of crisis response and recovery, should as far as possible be commensurate with their level of resourcing.

Key Learning and Recommendations

Local Government

- Representation of community sector organisations and community members in local emergency management planning is a priority to ensure the context of marginalized groups most impacted by disasters is accurately included in decision making.
- LG community development work must include disaster resilience as core with a priority focus on those experiencing disadvantage and with limited resources to prepare, respond and recover from disasters.

Key Learning and Recommendations

Information and Training

- Information development and delivery is a multi way process.
- Co-design of locally appropriate and accessible information with those receiving and using that information at all stages of the disaster cycle is a priority.

Key Learning and Recommendations

Information and Training

- Face to face training can provide an important first experience for workers in awareness raising and linking disaster preparedness with their day-to-day core business.
- Training design and delivery options need to be further developed for a range of stakeholders working with social housing tenants.