



Nathan Rees MP

Minister for Emergency Services

Minister for Water

NEWS RELEASE

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MINISTER REMEMBERS - ONE YEAR ON FROM JUNE LONG WEEKEND FLOODS

Emergency Services Minister, Nathan Rees today paid tribute to our emergency services on the first anniversary of the June Long Weekend floods and storms that devastated the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Mr Rees said the disaster had left a profound impact on him, which had played a significant role in ensuring local emergency services had the equipment they needed for any future natural disasters.

“I had only been in the NSW Ministry two months when the June Long Weekend storms hit the Hunter and Central Coast,” Mr Rees said.

“I arrived in Newcastle with Premier Iemma on the Saturday morning to extraordinary scenes – roofs torn off, homes smashed, huge trees lying across suburban streets.

“We saw scores of cars overturned, washed down stormwater channels, wrapped around poles – everywhere there was wreckage from a storm of terrifying power.

“I also toured the Central Coast, where I door knocked residents at Chittaway Point, Tacoma and Rocky Point whose homes were underwater.

“I had no hesitation in declaring a natural disaster, which triggers a range of funding assistance to those affected by the event.”

Mr Rees said one of the indelible memories that has stayed with him since that weekend was the amazing efforts of our volunteers and the tremendous resilience of the people of Newcastle and the Central Coast.

“Six thousand volunteers from all over NSW descended on the Hunter for the emergency response operations. They dealt with 20,000 calls for assistance,” Mr Rees said.

“I saw people right up and down the Hunter Valley and Central Coast helping each other – neighbours, friends and strangers alike – with a generosity of spirit that made me proud to be Australian.

“My job as a Minister is to try to get our volunteers the resources they need and then stay out of their way.

“I was pleased to be able to deliver a new flood boat worth \$25,000 to the community of Hinton last week.

“The Premier and I visited the township during the floods – by boat, as it was cut off by flood waters for several days.

“We promised them their own flood boat, and I was delighted to make good on that promise. We recruited six new SES volunteers from Hinton too – a testament to the kind of community spirit evident in the area.

“This week’s State budget includes a 12 per cent increase for our SES – recognition of our magnificent emergency service workers, the best in the world.

“I want to thank Premier Iemma for his support in getting that increase – a shade over \$6 million extra – for more equipment, vehicles, buildings and training for our SES volunteers.

“But most importantly, I would like to thank all the volunteers and their families for supporting them in for the invaluable work they do. I don’t know how we would have coped through that June Long Weekend without you.”

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