



Environment Protection Authority

Program guidelines for the clean-up of flood debris on public and private land



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Published by:

NSW Environment Protection Authority

4 Parramatta Square

12 Darcy Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124

Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)

Phone: 131 555 (NSW only – environment information and publications requests)

Fax: +61 2 9995 5999

TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask
for 131 555

Speak and listen users:

phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 131 555

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

Report pollution and environmental incidents

Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@epa.nsw.gov.au

See also www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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The severe storm and flood events in March 2021 and February–March 2022 caused significant damage to properties and the environment along the NSW coast from the Hawkesbury River to the Queensland border.

The storm events and associated flooding generated a substantial amount of debris on public and private land that presents a risk to the environment and human health.

In response, the NSW EPA executed a Shoreline Clean-Up Program, engaging specialist water-based clean-up contractors to assess and remove eligible flood debris from public waterways, along shorelines and on beaches throughout NSW.

The clean-up of flood debris on public and private land program will remove eligible debris that was deposited beyond the shoreline on public and private land.

Program overview

Mission statement

The clean-up of flood debris on public and private land program will engage public land managers and private landowners of affected LGAs to quantify flood debris and support them to clean it up. Support will include:

- providing funding for clean-up in accordance with Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) rules
- procuring contractors to complete clean-up works when appropriate (i.e. if the land manager does not have capacity to undertake the works)
- reimbursement options for councils for clean-up works completed (see section 6 for details).

The outcome is to support locally led recovery by removing anthropogenic (man-made) flood debris from public land and large or hazardous man-made debris on private land to enhance human health and reduce degradation of the environment.

Program eligibility

The program will be available to public land managers and eligible private landholders within the declared local government disaster areas from the March 2021 Storms and Floods and February 2022 Severe Weather and Flooding. It will target eligible anthropogenic flood debris that poses a risk to public health and the environment.

Guidance documents for funding eligibility criteria for public land managers and private landholders will be developed and passed to the relevant stakeholders (section 2.3).

Program structure and administration

The NSW EPA has appointed MRA Consulting to project-manage this program for the clean-up of flood debris on public land and large or hazardous debris on private land across the affected LGAs.

MRA acknowledges that all staff working on this project will be conducting the work as contractors on behalf of the NSW EPA.

The EPA will report regularly on the project to the State Recovery Committee's Waste and Environment Subcommittee (WESC). The WESC will provide endorsement and direction on key milestones.

MRA's quality, environment, Work Health and Safety (WHS) and corporate and social responsibility management policies provide a framework to ensure this project is delivered to a high quality, in an environmentally friendly and safe manner.

Further details on the communications for the program will be set out in a separate communications plan.

Program execution

To achieve the objectives of the program, MRA will deliver the following outcomes:

- develop assessment guidelines for removal of flood debris to minimise the amount of ineligible waste (household waste rather than flood debris) managed
- develop steps for assessors to review flood debris claims (e.g. reviewing satellite and flyover imagery)

- develop and execute a clear communications plan with the NSW EPA to work with public land managers and private landowners to inform and implement the program
- use specialist contractors to remove the flood debris when appropriate, maximise resource recovery where possible and lawfully dispose of the remainder, all in accordance with the NSW Government Procurement Guidelines
- choose contractors based on industry experience, value for money, environmental outcomes of disposal, environmental and WHS compliance and, where possible, those local to the clean-up area
- engage experienced project managers to manage the team of assessors to review claims, assign a risk rating (based on material type, location etc.), prioritise claims for removal, coordinate the removal of flood debris with the relevant contractors and coordinate site access
- work with other relevant government agencies, including but not limited to, NSW Police (to process impacted vehicles) and Fire and Rescue NSW's HAZMAT teams (to advise on hazard identification and make-safe strategies).

Program rollout

The program began with implementation in the Port Macquarie Hastings Council (PMHC) region. PMHC was chosen because it is outside Greater Sydney, had a lower COVID risk and a high volume of known land-based flood debris.

Clean-up works initially targeted known sites in the region (see section 2.2).

Assessment of the works in the PMHC area was conducted before the program's further rollout to other LGAs (Table 1). MRA revised processes and procedures from the work in PMHC to the remaining LGAs. Stakeholder consultation revealed additional sites for clean-up in these LGAs.

Rollout will continue to other flood-impacted LGAs (see section 2.1) based on prioritisation and funding availability. This was changed based on the 2022 flooding events.

Rollout to eligible debris on private land will start from July 2022 across all disaster-declared areas.

1. Objectives

The objectives of the program are to:

- protect human health and the environment
- remove flood debris in accordance with the Environmental Guidance for Clean-up (Appendix A)
- remove eligible anthropogenic flood debris, caused by the March 2021 and February–March 2022 major flood events, from public and private land within the declared local government disaster areas
- target identified flood debris from the Shoreline Clean-Up Program listed in Table 1, below
- work collaboratively and communicate effectively with the public land managers, private landowners and relevant stakeholders about the project
- satisfy work health and safety (WHS) and environmental legislation.

2. Scope

2.1. Geographical coverage

The program will cover all local government areas (LGAs) affected by flooding and identified through the disaster declaration for:

- the NSW Storms and Floods 10 March 2021 onwards (Appendix B: AGRN 960)
- the NSW Severe Weather and Flooding from 22 February 2022 onwards (Appendix E: AGRN 1012).

The program is initially targeting removal of known flood debris identified from the 14 nominated program LGAs listed in Table 1.

Table 1 LGAs targeted by the program

14 nominated program LGAs	Additional LGAs in the EPA's Shoreline Clean-Up Program
Hawkesbury	Northern Beaches
Central Coast	Lake Macquarie
Port Stephens	Newcastle
MidCoast	Coffs Harbour
Port Macquarie Hastings	Clarence Valley
Kempsey	Richmond Valley
Nambucca Valley	
The Hills	
Penrith	
Bellingen	
Lismore	
Ballina	
Bryon	
Tweed	

Flood debris in areas outside the 14 nominated program LGAs identified in the Australian Government Reference Number (AGRN) 960 (Appendix B) and 1012 (Appendix E) may also be cleaned up in the program in consultation with the NSW EPA. The LGAs prioritised in the program were chosen because they were significantly impacted by the floods. Their reports of flood debris have been confirmed by intelligence from aerial surveillance. Rollouts to remaining LGAs identified by AGRN 960 and 1012 will be considered where funding is available.

2.2. Site identification

Based on intelligence from aerial surveillance and reports to the EPA’s Environment Line, MRA initially identified 318 locations where anthropogenic flood debris remains on public land and these were used to identify key areas for site investigations. This flood debris, which was in the local government areas listed in Table 1, included plastics, silage, metal, tyres, vehicles and boats.

MRA continues to engage with public land managers in the disaster-declared LGAs to assess how much other flood debris they may need help to remove.

Private landholders will be able to apply for clean-up activities on their residential properties through a designated Service NSW webpage. MRA will carry out a desktop review of sites identified by private landholders to assess their eligibility. For further details refer to section 7.

2.3. Eligibility

To be eligible for removal under the program, flood debris must have all of the in-scope characteristics outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Flood debris in-scope and out-of-scope characteristics for inclusion in the program

-	In-scope (eligible) characteristics	Out-of-scope (ineligible) characteristics
Debris origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generated/produced as a direct result of the NSW Storms and Floods 10 March 2021 onwards and NSW Severe Weather and Flooding from 22 February 2022 onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> flood debris produced not as a direct result of the NSW Storm and Floods 10 March 2021 onwards and NSW Severe Weather and Flooding from 22 February 2022 onwards (e.g. the result of prior events)
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within one of the declared disaster LGAs listed in Appendix B and Appendix E located on publicly owned or managed land (including Crown land managed by local government or Aboriginal community title land), or privately owned land most easily accessible by land (rather than waterways) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> flood debris, located on private land, that does not meet eligibility criteria flood debris on mangroves or other sensitive environmental areas including protected areas (i.e. RAMSAR sites) flood debris on publicly-owned land managed by Crown Lands or the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)

-	In-scope (eligible) characteristics	Out-of-scope (ineligible) characteristics
Debris type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> anthropogenic flood debris (i.e. produced by humans) including treated timber, fences, fencing wire, all plastic and all domestic and farm animals (see Appendix C for full list). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organic debris that would not cause harm to human health or the environment – including but not limited to driftwood, leaves, branches, food waste, soil, sand, rocks, dead wildlife (e.g. dead kangaroos in dams would not be removed despite the effect on water quality) a registered and insured vehicle (registered vehicles must be removed at insurer’s cost) any debris where the environmental damage that would be caused during its removal would outweigh the benefit achieved from its removal (e.g. if located in an ecologically sensitive area).

Funding under the program will be granted to councils only for the clean-up of eligible flood debris (Table 2). Further eligibility criteria for private land may apply (see section 7).

2.4. Prioritising clean-up sites

Before a clean-up is conducted, MRA will assign a priority rating per site/item of debris based on a priority and risk rating (Table 3).

Table 3 Site priority and risk rating categories

Rating	Description
Very high (priority/risk rating 1)	Imminent or occurring health risk to community or environment Imminent or occurring safety risk
High (priority/risk rating 2)	High potential health risk to community or environment
Medium (priority/risk rating 3)	Potential health risk to community or environment
Low (priority/risk rating 4)	Low risk to community or environment

The rating will also consider:

- accessibility and requirements for site access for clean-up crews
- risk of damage to cultural heritage and/or environmentally sensitive sites.

3. Program delivery

MRA has had several internal discussions about providing the most appropriate program delivery to make sure the program objectives are met, including delivery by local government through EPA-administered reimbursement funding.

3.1. Port Macquarie Hastings Council

The program began in the Port Macquarie Hastings Council (PMHC) area. This LGA was selected because it is a regional area significantly impacted by the March flood event, as shown by the large number of sites already identified through EPA data and the clean-up works now being completed.

Procedures and processes have been refined based on the work in PMHC and will continue to be assessed during the life of the project. The scope of the program could be reassessed, depending on the extent of unidentified eligible sites that are found to need clean-up.

3.2. Clean-up works

MRA will:

- record all flood debris locations
- carry out site assessments for public land and desktop reviews for private land
- assign priority ratings using a risk-based approach
- implement work, health and safety (WHS) measures in line with the MRA WHS Policy, including managing compliance, staff training (as per the MRA WHS Training Manual) and on-site risk assessments
- support land managers to clean up sites
- procure contractors for clean-up activities, when appropriate.

MRA will work with local councils to:

- support councils to carry out clean-up activities on the public land they manage, where they can do this within the financial principles for funding, have the capacity and are price-competitive with contractors
- provide details of the program to councils to help them inform community groups and the community about the program
- identify additional eligible locations within the LGA
- provide details about available funding options to councils for clean-up of public land (refer to section 6).

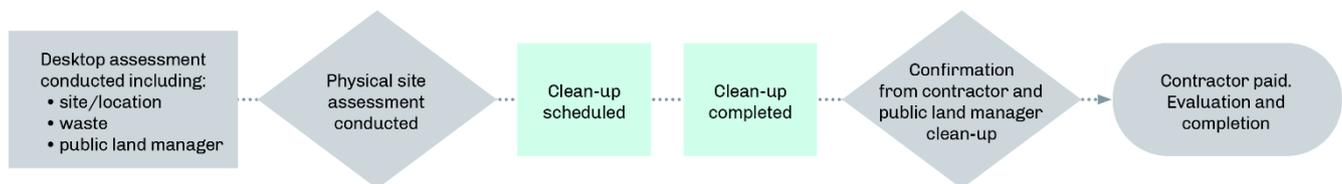


Figure 1 High-level process flow for the program

MRA will undertake the following activities as a minimum for private landholders:

- review and assess applications lodged through Services NSW
- determine eligibility of private property for clean-up activities
- coordinate with private landholders' clean-up activities, including procurement of contractors for clean-up.

3.3. Project milestones and timing

MRA will undertake the work for clean-up on public land in accordance with the stages outlined in Table 4. MRA will work with the NSW EPA and other stakeholders to address and manage the timing of the staged rollout. Applications for the clean-up of private land will open in July 2022 and run for 6 months. The program may be extended based on demand and available funding.

Table 4 Planning program stages and anticipated timeframes for delivery

Project stage	Milestone	Timeframe
Stage 1	Port Macquarie Hastings LGA	November 2021
Stage 2	Work complete in Hawkesbury, The Hills, Penrith, Ballina, Byron, Tweed, Lismore, Nambucca Valley, Clarence Valley	April–May 2022
Stage 3	Work completed in Port Stephens, Central Coast, Newcastle, Northern Beaches, Lake Macquarie, MidCoast, Kempsey, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Richmond Valley LGAs	June–July 2022
Stage 4	Rollout to remaining LGAs identified by Disaster Declaration number 960 (Appendix B) and 1012 (Appendix E)	July 2022 and beyond

4. Assessment process

MRA will take the following courses of action, based on the site information.

For data provided by the NSW EPA, via Environment Line and the National Parks and Wildlife Service Flyover, and applications received from Services NSW from private landholders MRA will:

1. create a case file for the incident
2. perform a desktop assessment (see section 4.1 below) and, if that meets the criteria, contact the land manager/private landholder
3. arrange an access agreement (see section 4.2 below) with the land manager/private landholder
4. check to see if any other clean-up program funding has already been applied
5. allocate the case, if the site is eligible, to an MRA assessor to organise a physical site assessment where appropriate (mostly for public land) (see 4.3 below)

For sites identified through local councils or other public land managers MRA will:

1. receive requests from land managers for debris removal via phone/email/online form (includes contact details and initial site access declaration)
2. have an MRA team member create a case file for the incident

3. perform the desktop assessment (see section 4.1 below)
4. check to see if any other program has already been applied
5. allocate the case file, if the site is eligible, to an MRA assessor to organise a physical site assessment (see 4.3 below).

4.1. Desktop assessment

A desktop site assessment will be conducted via the assessment proforma (Appendix D) and address fundamental questions including:

- location
- flood debris (or potential flood debris) material types
- eligibility criteria as per the Guidelines for Private Land.

If the criteria are not met, the site is not eligible for this program and the land manager/private landholder will be informed.

4.2. Contact details and initial site access declaration

Before organising a site assessment, contact details and an initial site access declaration will be confirmed with the public land manager and with private landholders (only when appropriate and necessary), including:

- site contact and land manager's/landholder's details
- site access declaration.

4.3. Physical site assessment

MRA will conduct site assessments for public land. Before attending each site the assessor will conduct a site risk assessment, which will be reviewed by the project manager or senior member of MRA's project team. Early contact with public land managers/landholders will help to make sure suitable access arrangements are in place, including the identification of site risks and unique access requirements.

MRA will attend each site and complete each site assessment according to the assessment proforma (Appendix D).

MRA may also complete physical site assessments for private land, based on the information provided by the applicant, to check the nature and volume of the flood debris. MRA will work with the NSW EPA to decide when site assessments are needed.

4.4. Clean-up

When appropriate, a clean-up will be arranged by MRA and the contractor. The collected material will then be taken to the appropriate disposal/resource recovery facility. To decide on the most appropriate disposal/resource recovery facility, flood debris will be classified in accordance with the Waste Classification Guidelines and the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (POEO Act). All subcontractors engaged in this program will be asked to apply the step-by-step waste classification process to identify the most appropriate disposal option.

Disposal of asbestos waste and tyres, which require tracking, will be undertaken using the NSW EPA Waste Locate platform.

4.5. Confirmation of clean-up

MRA will confirm that all planned clean-ups have been carried out. For public land this will be done by checking contractor receipts and by a phone call to the public land manager. Private landholders will be sent an email asking them to confirm the debris has been removed.

4.6. Dispute resolution

If a physical site assessment shows that a clean-up is not needed, or that the site does not meet the program's criteria, MRA will provide this feedback directly to the public land manager/private landholder. If the land manager/private landholder does not agree with this, a reassessment of the site will be carried out by the project manager and the information sent to the EPA.

A decision will be made by the project manager and the EPA to determine whether the collection should be carried out or not, based on reassessment of the site.

4.7. Priority rating 4 (low)

Sites that are assessed as priority rating 4 (low) will not initially be eligible for clean-up under this program (depending on uptake of the program).

5. Local-led recovery

MRA will work with the relevant local council to:

- identify potential areas for clean-up based on the data and local knowledge
- communicate information about the program to council
- provide information about other NSW EPA disaster-recovery programs to local groups and landholders
- coordinate activities deemed appropriate between the local council and the program.

Procurement would focus on the ability to use local councils and local contractors where they have the capacity and capability to carry out clean-up and disposal.

The program's procurement documentation shows the principles of local-led recovery in its outline of contract tendering. Tender applications will be encouraged from applicants who contribute to the relevant LGA in some way. This could mean the applicant:

- is locally owned and operated (primary office within the relevant LGA)
- offers diverse employment opportunities (e.g. Indigenous, long-term unemployed, people with a disability or mental illness, disengaged youth and the aged) within the community
- shows evidence of social contribution activities undertaken by the applicant (e.g. support or partnership with local community groups or not-for-profit organisations).

6. Claim-back for local councils

Councils may have already conducted clean-up activities from public land on behalf of their residents. Where the councils have not already received funding or reimbursement for these activities, MRA would provide information on funding options under the proposed program for eligible debris collected and disposed.

Councils that clean-up private land flood debris that meets the debris eligibility criteria on private land may be able to claim back the costs. MRA will provide further information to councils about funding options under the proposed program for eligible large and hazardous debris on private land.

6.1. The claim-back application process

Councils will need to provide documentation and evidence to satisfy MRA and the EPA that the clean-up activities fit within the scope of this program and that costs for reimbursement can be reasonably verified.

6.1.1. Eligibility and eligible activities

Applications for claim-back funding can be considered for, but not limited to, the removal, storage and disposal of the flood debris. This includes the cost of collection, transport to, and disposal of the debris at an appropriate waste facility (see Table 5).

The funds can only be used for additional costs incurred (outside of ordinary business) by council for engaging a contractor to do clean-up work, or arranging clean-up work carried out by council resources.

Funding cannot be used for operations normally carried out by the applicant or for activities that do not satisfy the criteria (see section 6.2), including:

- salaries/wages, capital equipment or infrastructure of public authorities, and
- clean-up actions that are used to assist an organisation or individual in fulfilling their general, day-to-day legal responsibilities in the management of waste.

Funding is only to be used for activities described in Table 5.

Table 5 Eligible and Ineligible activities to receive funding under the program

Eligible activities and costs	Ineligible activities and costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs associated with flood debris removal (including equipment hire) • Direct costs associated with flood debris transportation to disposal facilities • Direct costs associated with flood debris storage prior to appropriate disposal • Direct disposal costs (including landfill fees and levies) • Contractor invoices for clean-up works of eligible flood debris (submitted with receipts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs associated with clean-up works of wastes or flood debris not considered eligible as part of the program • Costs that have already received funding or reimbursement under a different program • Clean-up actions that are used to assist an organisation or individual in fulfilling their general, day-to-day legal responsibilities in the management of waste • Salaries and wages of council staff • Capital equipment expenditure • Infrastructure expenditure • Costs for works that are deemed by the EPA to not promote safe, environmentally sound and cost-effective outcomes

MRA will collect and assess applications from councils that have completed work that meets the financial criteria, providing they:

- demonstrate they completed the work or have engaged a contractor to complete the work
- supply evidence of the work (i.e. photographs before and after the work and disposal receipts)
- have not sought or were unsuccessful with other State, Federal or other funding for this work, and
- claim only for reimbursable activities under the guidelines.

MRA will submit eligible claim-back applications to the EPA for approval prior to council reimbursement.

For details regarding the proposed funding options please refer to section 6.3 of this document.

6.2. Assessment criteria

Councils will follow the steps detailed below when applying for funding for future clean-up works. Applications can be made by site, or by a grouping of sites nominated by the applicant.

1. Applicants identify flood debris located on public land, including its location, quantity and composition.
2. Applicants identify what action/s are required for clean-up, plan the clean-up and obtain a cost estimate for the clean-up action/s, consulting with the MRA if necessary.
3. Applicants assess the situation against the relevant assessment criteria below.
4. Before authorising the funds, the MRA project manager will ask for an explanation of how the situation satisfies the relevant assessment criteria and will ask for a cost estimate. Applicants must provide this information before the funds can be authorised. MRA may choose to review other claims made by the applicant for funding against the adequacy of delivering the program's objectives.
5. If the funding request is found eligible, an authorisation number will be issued by MRA which identifies the agreed funding category. The upper limit may be varied later in consultation with the MRA project manager. There will be one authorisation number per site/s nominated in the application. Once the authorisation number has been issued, MRA is obliged to pay for the agreed clean-up, provided the applicant abided by the conditions of eligibility.
6. Applicants proceed with and complete the clean-up, as agreed with the authorising MRA project manager. The applicant must pay for the clean-up at this stage.
7. Supporting documents (such as invoices showing the payment of clean-up costs and before and after images) are to be provided to MRA. Funds will be transferred directly to the applicant. Funds will not be paid directly to individual subcontractors.

Reimbursement will only be on an 'actual cost' basis and up to the specified upper limit of agreed funding.

Councils can also apply for funding reimbursement for past clean-up activities, in which case the applicant must provide supporting documents (such as invoices and receipts for the payment of clean-up costs and before and after images of the area where debris was located) which are assessed against the eligibility criteria. If the funding request is found eligible, funds will be transferred directly to the applicant.

In assessing the approval of claims, MRA and the EPA will consider whether:

- the proposed clean-up measures are safe, environmentally sound, achieve the best recovery outcome and are cost-effective
- the flood debris will pose a significant risk to the environment or public health if neglected
- the flood debris is on public land and is an included material category (Appendix C).

6.3. Funding and procurement model

Applications can be made for future works to be undertaken by council, or activities already completed where there is sufficient evidence of the works.

Several clean-up options are available to councils:

1. MRA/EPA to undertake clean-up activities
2. council submits funding application to undertake future clean-up activities
3. council requests reimbursement for already completed clean-up activities.

Funding under the PMHC stage was determined and allocated through specific claim-back applications made by council and approved by the NSW EPA.

All funding requests by land managers for public land reimbursements must be made before 30 September 2022. All funding requests for private land reimbursements must be made before 31 October 2022.

7. Private land clean-up requests

The EPA will consider applications from owners or occupiers of private land to remove eligible flood-generated debris on a case-by-case basis. MRA will use eligibility criteria to assess reports of debris on private land in disaster-declared LGAs (ARGN 960 or 1012) and clean-up of certain types of debris from private land under specific circumstances (i.e. where it is large, man-made or hazardous).

An application form is available on the Service NSW website. Additional information on eligibility criteria is available on the Service NSW landing page for the program and on the EPA's flood programs web page. Applications will be open for a period of up to six months. A flow process is provided in Figure 3.

Applications will be assessed against eligibility criteria developed as part of the program. Unsuccessful applicants will be able to ask for a second assessment if they feel they are within the established eligibility criteria.

Applicants will need to agree to give access to the impacted address to allow for MRA and contractors to access the premises, to assess eligibility and, if that is successful, to clean up and dispose of the debris at an appropriate disposal facility. The program will not reimburse private landholders for the costs of a debris clean-up that has already been completed.

The works to remove debris on private land is only for flood debris that meets the criteria.

The works will focus on larger or hazardous flood debris that was not initially collected as part of clean-up works conducted by Public Works Advisory (PWA) or the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The clean-up contractors will also consider the environmental impact of the clean-up (i.e. will it cause more damage removing the object, than leaving it there).

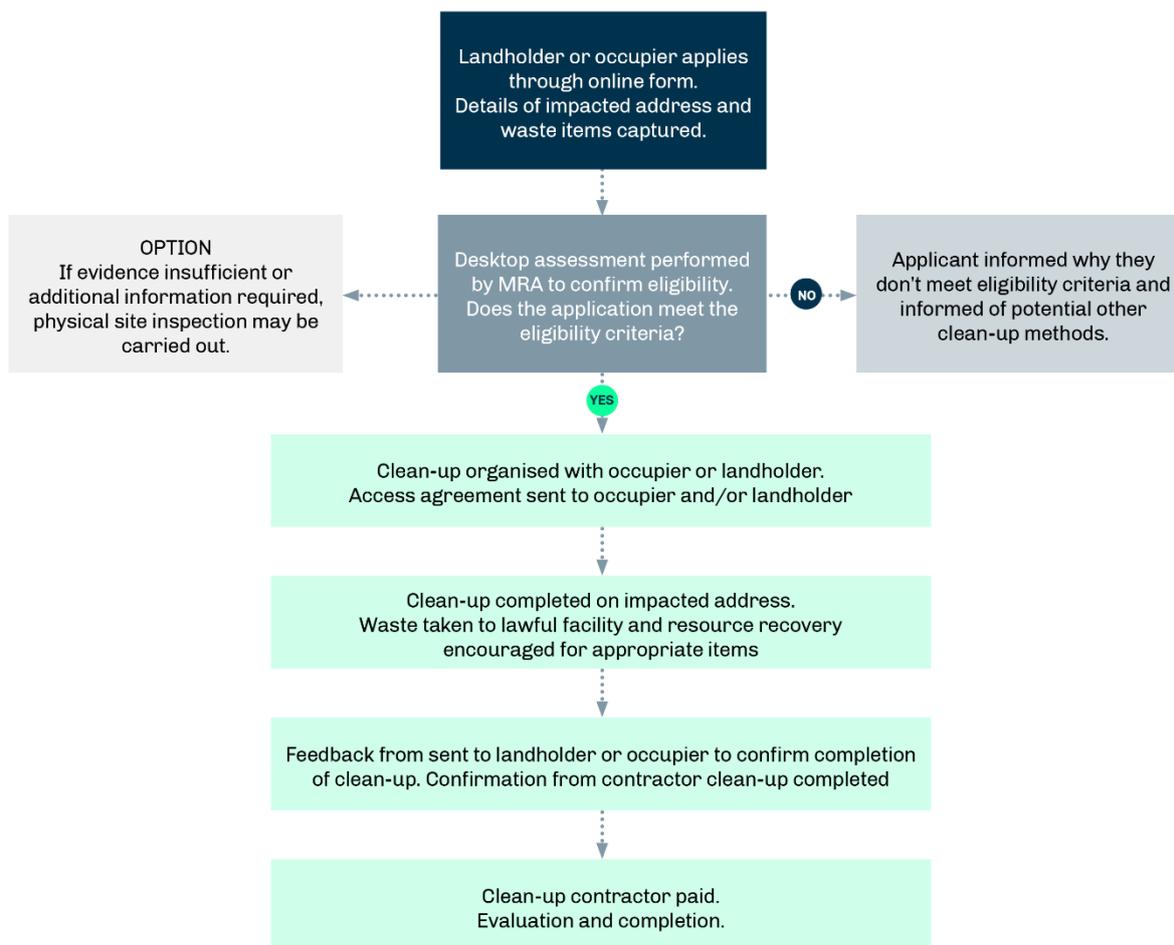


Figure 3 High-level process flow for the program

8. Project reporting

MRA will provide the EPA with a monthly update report that includes:

- a summary of disposal dockets
- an overview of the progress of the project implementation and success of clean-up activities across the State
- the tonnages and material types disposed of at each facility
- the LGA the flood debris was generated in
- the number of assessments completed from private land.

9. Contractor procurement plan

MRA will develop a guide to procure contractors for the removal and disposal of the flood debris. This procurement shall be in accordance with NSW Government Procurement Guidelines and support the objectives of best value for money, fair and open economic competition and ease of doing business. To achieve EPA goals, contractors will be judged on industry experience, environmental outcomes of disposal and environmental and WHS compliance.

The expected outcome of this plan is the preparation of a tender documentation package and evaluation framework based on NSW procurement templates and MRA contract model, the development of criteria and weightings for application assessment and strategies for ongoing contract management.

10. Communications plan and engagement strategy

10.1. Public land

MRA will develop a communication plan and engagement strategy to inform councils in the flood-impacted areas of the nature of the program. The plan will include how to register for clean-up services and the expected outcomes. MRA will collaborate with the EPA's Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Team to promote the program to local councils and engage with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the fast, efficient and satisfactory collection of NSW flood debris. All communication materials will be signed off by the NSW EPA.

The stakeholders include:

- local government
- community groups
- other State Government agencies.

10.2. Private land clean-up requests

MRA will develop a communication plan and engagement strategy to inform stakeholders in the flood-impacted areas of the nature of the program. The plan will include how to register for clean-up services and the expected outcomes. MRA will collaborate with the EPA's Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Team to promote the program to local councils and engage with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the fast, efficient and satisfactory collection of NSW flood debris. All communication materials will be signed off by the NSW EPA.

The stakeholders include:

- individuals
- local government (e.g. recovery officers)
- community groups
- other State Government agencies.

10.3. Monthly project meeting

A monthly project meeting will be held between MRA and EPA representatives to discuss the progress of the program, review timelines for delivery, identify project highlights and raise issues early for effective action. These meetings would be conducted via videoconferencing (Microsoft Teams or Zoom). MRA will prepare minutes after each meeting to record key discussion points and actions.

High-level or significant issues – including highly publicised negative media or program incidents – will be raised and discussions held between MRA and the EPA Executive.

This would include:

- significant on-site incidents from contractors or MRA staff
- potential political and/or media attention.

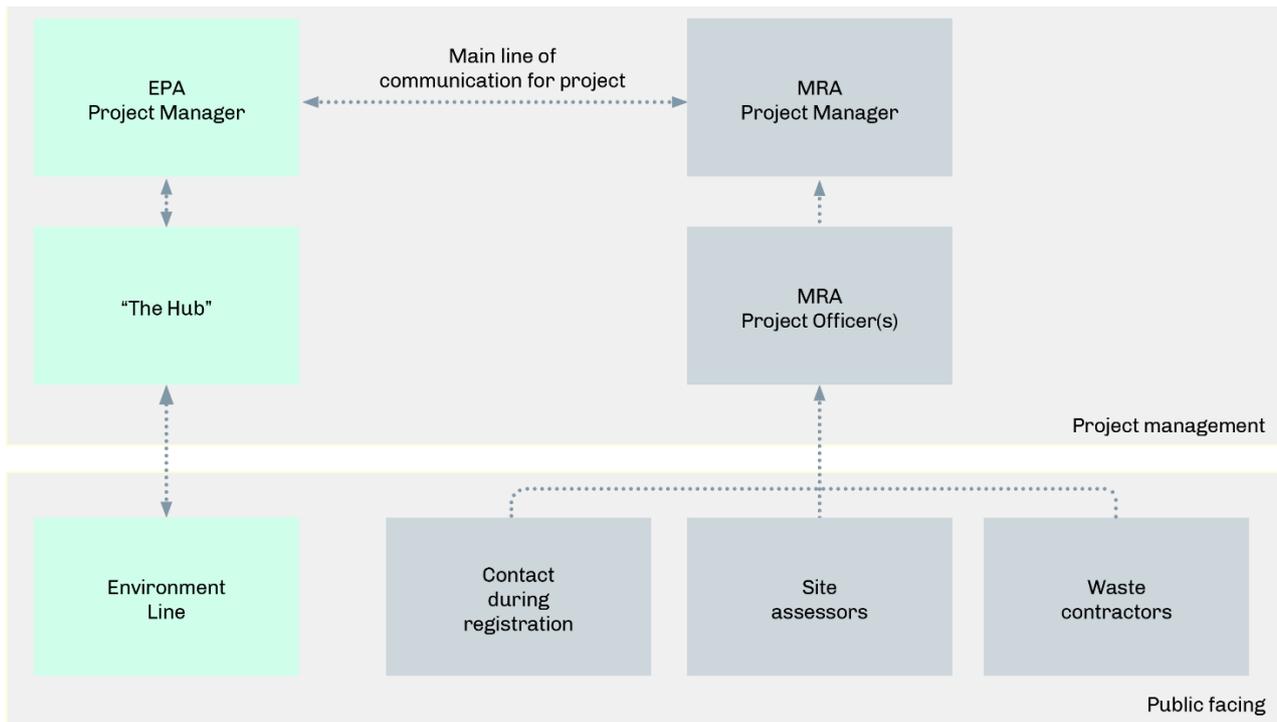


Figure 4 Concept communication channels for the administration of the program

10.4. Aboriginal engagement

Aboriginal-managed land through the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALCs) or Aboriginal corporation is eligible under this program, with the costs of clean-up paid by the NSW Government. The assessment process will be conducted through a procedure similar to the one detailed in Figure 2.

However, any engagement and interactions with LALCs or other Aboriginal bodies will be guided by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the NSW EPA. The program may seek to use Aboriginal Rangers or similar programs where appropriate and available.

11. Risk management

A risk management framework has been developed to assess:

- program risks
- overall potential site risks.

An individual site risk assessment will be completed by the assessor before any physical site assessment.

MRA's Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIDRA) process will be used to identify hazards before attending the site, as well as identifying hazards when on site.

12. Flood debris material types

There are likely to be several categories of flood debris identified and collected in accordance with the Waste Classification Guidelines/POEO Act as part of this program. MRA has identified four key flood debris types, below, and there will be others, including metal, tyres, concrete and machinery.

12.1. Hazardous waste

Hazardous waste, as classified under the Waste Classification Guidelines, will be identified through two stages of the program with photos from aerial surveillance or through photos and descriptions sent during the incident application process.

If hazardous waste is identified before attending the site, it will be assessed by another appropriately qualified expert. The nature of the waste will be discussed with NSW Fire and Rescue and the EPA before attending the site.

If hazardous waste is identified by the assessor on site, the project manager and another appropriately qualified expert will be called. The NSW Fire and Rescue (local number) will also be called to secure the site.

12.2. Vehicles

If vehicles are identified on site, MRA will:

- undertake a check with the NSW Police
- check the NSW Services website to see if the vehicle is insured.

Recovery of insured vehicles will be the responsibility of insurance companies. Uninsured vehicles will be collected as part of this program. Checks will be made before loading vehicles to make sure that any fluids contained in them (coolant, oil, fuel etc.) will not leak during loading or transport.

12.3. Asbestos

Asbestos will be managed in accordance with legislative requirements, including using an approved contractor to remove it. It is unlikely that friable asbestos will be encountered as part of this program so it is unlikely that Class A-licensed removalists will be needed.

If suspected asbestos-containing material is identified before attending the site, it will first be assessed by an appropriately qualified expert. A decision will then be made about the need for a licensed asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist to accompany the assessors to the site.

If asbestos waste is identified by the assessor on site, the project manager and an appropriately qualified expert will be contacted. A decision will then be made about the need for a licensed asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist to make an additional visit to the site.

If the licensed asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist determines that the suspected asbestos-containing material does indeed contain asbestos then this waste will be collected, transported and disposed of in accordance with Part 7 of the POEO (Waste) Regulation and using WasteLocate.

12.4. Silage

Silage was identified as a potential issue with removal and disposal, causing potential risks for biosecurity and health and safety to humans and/or the environment. Expected silage conditions and management options are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6 Expected silage condition and management options

Silage bale condition	Management
Bale fully wrapped and in good condition	Clean-up and remove to a licensed facility for composting or landfill
Damaged bale with minor tears in plastic	Clean-up and remove to a licensed facility for composting or landfill

Silage bale condition	Management
Damaged bale with major tears/damage	Clean-up and remove to a licensed facility for composting or landfill
Plastic wrap only	Only significant volumes of plastic wrap will be removed under this program. An estimation will be at least one bale's worth of plastic wrap will be removed.
Damaged bales from Hastings River	May have naturally occurring asbestos (NOA). Asbestos testing needed before removal. Bales contaminated with NOA will be disposed of as asbestos waste.
Minor amounts of plastic on silage (less than two bales worth of plastic)	Not removed

13. Standards of cleanliness

The clean-up involves the removal of identified flood-generated anthropogenic debris from the impacted land areas to approved disposal facilities. The clean-up will focus on the removal of visible anthropogenic debris that is safe to remove and does not result in additional environmental harm. The highest priority will be given to identified hazardous materials that pose a significant risk to human health and the environment. The removal of organic waste is not in the scope of the program unless it presents a significant risk to human health and the environment.

Debris is to be removed only where safe to do so and based on an environmental risk assessment to make sure the removal of the debris does not cause greater harm. There is likely to be a background level of debris from other sources located within the sectors. Only anthropogenic debris generated from the flood event is to be collected by contractors.

Table 7 Standards of cleanliness

Resource/environmental value	Acceptable level of cleanliness	Risk rating level
Land	Remove all large visible anthropogenic debris that was deposited by the flood and represents a significant threat to the environment or amenity.	Rating Level 1, 2 or 3
River/creek beds	Where more easily accessible by land, remove all visible anthropogenic debris that was deposited by the flood and represents a threat to the environment, access or amenity.	Rating Level 1, 2 or 3
Cultural and historic value	Remove all visible anthropogenic debris and natural debris that was deposited by the flood and represents a threat to the cultural site, environment, access or amenity. Do this through liaison with Heritage NSW, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and cultural custodians.	Rating Level 1 or 2

14. Fraud management

14.1. Fraudulent claims

MRA acknowledges the potential for fraudulent requests for debris removal to occur. To combat the occurrence of fraudulent claims being processed, MRA will:

- use Nearmaps whenever possible to confirm flood debris was generated during the March 2021 and February–March 2022 flooding events
- request photographic evidence from applicants of flood debris before approval
- perform site inspections of private land where fraudulent applications are suspected.

In instances where Nearmaps or photographs are not available, MRA will rely on the on-site assessor to take photographs and record on-site observations.

If the on-site assessor suspects a fraudulent claim, the project manager and the EPA will decide if the debris removal should go ahead or not.

The EPA will have the ultimate responsibility for rejecting any suspected fraudulent claims.

14.2. Fraudulent disposal

MRA acknowledges there is a risk of collection subcontractors disposing of collected flood debris material in ways that may cause harm to the community or the environment.

To mitigate this risk, all collection subcontractors engaged in the program must show receipts of disposal at an appropriately licensed waste facility before the MRA/EPA makes payment.

Checks prior to engagement will include:

- legitimacy and compliance of the subcontractor, identified through tender requirements and assessment (e.g. ABN, EPA register)
- tender documentation will make expectations clear, including transportation requirements for trackable waste (e.g. tyres and asbestos)
- identified disposal waste facilities will be cross-checked by MRA against the NSW EPA POEO Public Register for current penalty notices.

15. Privacy and data collection

All data collected by MRA will be stored securely according to MRA's Privacy Policy.

All data collected during the project will only be accessed through MRA company devices and saved on the MRA Dropbox.

Appendix A: Environmental guidance for clean-up (NSW 2021 flood response)

General advice about precautions required when cleaning up debris from shorelines and in waterways.

In general, environmental receptors on estuarine foreshores will be modified or cleared non-native vegetation and pasture, native terrestrial vegetation (*Casuarina*, dune grasses), semi-saline rushes, seagrass beds, mangroves, saltmarsh, sandy shores, mudflats, sandflats. All these receptors have differing susceptibility to secondary damage from recovery efforts and will need to be assessed individually. Ocean foreshores are most likely to be either rocky, sandy beach or dune grasses. They are less susceptible to secondary damage but will need to be treated with care, especially dunes.

The environments encountered have been divided into 10 classes for the purposes of this advice, and debris into light (able to be easily picked up by hand) and heavy (two-person or mechanical lift).

Culturally significant sites

Sensitive components

Culturally significant sites could be located along the shoreline and care should be taken to make sure the clean-up is carried out without causing disturbance or damage to the sites.

Light debris – recommended approach

Seek advice through the EPA before carrying out clean-up at a known or suspected culturally significant site.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Seek advice through the EPA before carrying out clean-up at a known or suspected culturally significant site.

Ocean beach

Sensitive components

Sandy beaches and dunes are generally reasonably resilient. Vegetated dunes, however, are quite fragile and can be easily damaged by vehicles or by dragging heavy debris.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material can be carried back to vehicles. Don't drive vehicles on vegetated dunes.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Don't drive vehicles on vegetated dunes. Heavy items should be moved with care to unvegetated sand, with as little disturbance of vegetation as possible.

Ocean rocks

Sensitive components

Rocks and rock shelves are inherently robust, but they often support communities of easily damaged plants and animals.

Safety

Ocean rocks are dangerous environments that can 'self clean'. Extreme care should be taken when working on ocean rocks.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material can be carried back to vehicles.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care within safety limits. It may not be possible to remove some items.

Estuarine beach

Sensitive components

Sandy beaches and dunes are generally reasonably resilient. Vegetated dunes, however, are quite fragile and can be easily damaged by vehicles or by dragging heavy debris.

Seagrass often grows offshore of estuarine beaches and is easily damaged by vessel propellers. If seagrass is present, approach beaches by vessel at high tide only, or find a path that avoids seagrass.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material can be carried back to vehicles or vessels. Don't drive vehicles on vegetated dunes.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Don't drive vehicles on vegetated dunes. Heavy items should be moved with care to unvegetated sand, with as little disturbance of vegetation as possible. Removal can be via land vehicles or vessels.

Estuarine rocks

Sensitive components

Rocks and rock shelves are inherently robust, but they often support communities of easily damaged plants and animals.

Safety

Ocean rocks are dangerous environments that can 'self clean'.

Extreme care should be taken when working on ocean rocks.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material can be carried back to vehicles or vessels.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care within safety limits. Removal can be via land vehicles or vessels.

Seagrass beds

Sensitive components

There are two main types of seagrass, eelgrass (*Zostera*) and the larger strapweed (*Posidonia*). Both species are important habitats for fish and invertebrates in estuaries. Both are very susceptible to damage by propellers, boat hulls and anchors as well as by walking through beds. Strapweed is particularly susceptible to long-term damage – propeller damage may last decades. Strapweed is found in estuaries from Wallis Lake south.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material should be scooped from seagrass by landing net from a shallow-draught boat.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care, using lifting gantry or flotation.

Mangroves

Sensitive components

Mangrove trees are resilient to physical damage, but their air roots (pneumatophores) are fragile and easily broken by trampling.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material should be carried from mangroves while moving carefully. Personnel should enter mangroves at low tide only if necessary and the number of paths used should be kept to a minimum. Alternatively, debris could be scooped by landing net from a shallow-draught boat at high tide.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care, using lifting gantry or flotation.

Saltmarsh

Sensitive components

Saltmarsh is very susceptible to physical damage by trampling and damage may last for years.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material should be carried from saltmarsh by moving carefully between plants. Personnel should enter saltmarsh at low tide only if necessary and the number of paths used should be kept to a minimum.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care, using lifting gantry or flotation.

Reeds

Sensitive components

Reeds are susceptible to physical damage by trampling but are reasonably resilient.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material should preferably be carried to a section of bank clear of reeds, or be collected from the bow of a shallow-draught boat.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care, using lifting gantry or flotation.

Riverbanks

Sensitive components

Vegetation along riverbanks is generally resilient to foot access.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material should preferably be carried to a section of bank clear of vegetation, or be collected from the bow of a shallow-draught boat.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Heavy items should be moved with care, using lifting gantry or flotation.

Special case: Lion Island

Lion Island has a population of endangered little penguins. Special care must be taken to avoid disturbance of nesting birds.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material can be removed from beach areas. Caution is required when removing debris located further into vegetated areas.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Larger debris can be removed from the beach areas. Caution is required when removing debris located further into vegetated areas.

Special case: Barrenjoey Head

Seals use the rocks on Barrenjoey Head as a haul out.

Light debris – recommended approach

Do not approach seals without EPA approval. Upon approach, seals will usually evacuate the site and the debris can then be removed.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Do not approach seals without EPA approval. Upon approach, seals will usually evacuate the site and the debris can then be removed.

Beaches

Many of the ocean and estuarine beaches are roosting or feeding areas for shorebirds and seabirds.

Light debris – recommended approach

Hand-picked material should be carried from beaches by moving carefully between roosting flocks. The number of personnel working at the site should be limited to reduce disturbance.

Shorebird flocks feeding on mudflats should not be disturbed. Wait for higher tide levels when fewer birds are present before you hand-pick the site.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Where large debris requires removal, a once-off disturbance may be permitted where approved by the EPA. Moving carefully between roosting or feeding flocks may be possible but should be limited to reduce disturbance.

Shorebird flocks feeding on mudflats should not be disturbed, wait for higher tide levels when fewer birds are present before you remove debris.

Estuarine or marine wildlife

Several species may be present in the marine and riverine aquatic habitats that are being worked in, or traversed when transporting personnel or debris by vessel. These species include whales and marine turtles.

Light debris – recommended approach

Reduce vessel speed and post additional lookouts if wildlife is reported in the sector. Collect small debris in hand nets.

Heavy debris – recommended approach

Reduce vessel speed and post additional lookouts if wildlife is reported in the sector. Upon the approach of a whale or turtle, the removal of large debris must stop and not recommence until the animal has left the area and the EPA deems it safe to recommence the work.

Appendix B: Natural Disaster Declaration NSW LGAs (AGRN 960)

Natural Disaster Declaration NSW Local Government Areas – AGRN 960	
Armidale	Kyogle
Ballina	Lachlan
Bathurst	Lake Macquarie City
Bega Valley	Lismore
Bellingen	Lithgow
Blacktown	Liverpool
Blue Mountains	Liverpool Plains
Bogan	Maitland City
Brewarrina	MidCoast
Byron	Moree Plains
Cabonne	Muswellbrook
Camden	Nambucca Valley
Campbelltown	Narrabri
Canterbury Bankstown	Narromine
Central Coast	Newcastle City
Central Darling	Northern Beaches
Cessnock City Council	Oberon
Clarence Valley	Parramatta
Cobar	Penrith
Coffs Harbour City	Port Macquarie Hastings
Coonamble	Port Stephens
Cumberland	Queanbeyan–Palerang
Dungog Shire	Richmond Valley
Eurobodalla	Shoalhaven
Fairfield	Singleton
Georges River	Snowy Monaro
Gilgandra	Sutherland
Glen Innes Severn	Tamworth
Goulburn Mulwaree	Temora
Greater Hume	Tenterfield
Gunnedah	The Hills
Gwydir	Tweed
Hawkesbury	Upper Lachlan

Hornsby	Uralla
Hunters Hill	Walcha
Inner West	Walgett
Inverell	Warren
Kempsey	Wingecarribee
Ku-ring-gai	Wollondilly

Appendix C: Detailed material types for inclusion or exclusion

Items included for collection

Asbestos: asbestos-containing materials

Paint: paint tins, paint brushes

Oil and lubricants

Fuel: gas bottles, jerry cans, citronella, petroleum, diesel, other fuels

Chemicals: household chemicals, hospital chemicals, industrial chemicals, pesticides, other chemicals

Cement: cladding, sheeting, cement mix, concrete, bitumen

Engineered timber: treated timber, posts, engineered logs

Fencing: fence posts, fence wire, metal fencing, other wiring

Plastic: rigid plastic, soft plastic, expanded polystyrene, pellets, other plastic

Metal: metal posts and wiring, metal sheeting, machinery, vehicles (if uninsured)

Mattresses: springs, bed frames, bed posts

Textiles: clothing, shoes, sheets, towels

Ceramics: plates, cups, pot plants, tiles, bowls, other crockery

Cardboard and paper: office paper, corrugated cardboard, magazine paper, pamphlets, brochures, books, newspapers

Furniture: couches, tables, chairs

E-waste: computers, televisions, keyboards, audio equipment, cords, other e-waste

Production/livestock animal carcasses: cows, domesticated pigs, sheep, domesticated goats, chickens, ducks

Silage bales that are whole and intact or ruptured

Tyres

Whitegoods

Items excluded for collection

Leaves, driftwood, branches, straw bales, soil, sand, creek pebbles and stones, roots, grass

Wildlife carcasses: kangaroos, birds, possums, foxes, feral pigs, rodents, other wildlife

Insured vehicles

Food waste

Silage with small volumes of plastic attached or minimal plastic (<50% of whole bale covered)

Appendix D: Assessment proforma for incident

Purpose	Information needed	Information
Desktop assessment	Site address/location	
	Is the location within one of the disaster-declared areas from March 2021 and February–March 2022?	[insert LGA and Number]
	Is the location within one of the three identified sectors?	[list sector and Number]
	Is the location Private Land and/or identified Aboriginal land?	(Yes/No/Unsure)
	Is the waste from the March 2021 and February–March 2022 floods?	(Yes/No/Unsure)
	Is the waste man-made or manufactured (anthropogenic)?	(Yes/No/Unsure)
	Is the waste a risk to human health?	(Yes/No/Unsure)
	Is the waste a risk to the environment?	(Yes/No/Unsure)
	Are there photos/images of the waste?	(Yes/No)
	Has the incident been reported to the NSW EPA or council?	(Yes/No)
	Photographic evidence?	[insert photos]
	Has any of the following hazardous waste been identified?	
	• asbestos	(Yes/No/Unsure)
	• chemicals	(Yes/No)
	• used oil drums	(Yes/No)
• paint	(Yes/No)	
• fuel/gas bottles	(Yes/No)	
Contact information (to be completed before on-site assessment)	Site address	
	Name of landholder	
	Email address	
	Best contact number	
	Scheduled date of assessment	--/------
	Actual date of assessment	--/------
	Owner available for on-site assistance?	(Yes/No)
	Has the landowner signed and given consent to access?	(Yes/No)
	Are there any biosecurity protocols on site?	(Yes/No)
	Are there any risks to the assessor's safety?	

Purpose	Information needed	Information
Contact information (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dogs 	(Yes/No) – if YES identify what owner will do
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> site access 	(Yes/No) – if YES ask for details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> phone access 	(Yes/No)
	Are you aware of any Aboriginal heritage on your land?	(Yes/No)
	Is the waste composed of silage, or silage wrap?	(Yes/No)
	Has the owner/occupier identified any of the hazardous wastes below?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asbestos 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chemicals 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used oil drums 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paint 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fuel/gas bottles 	(Yes/No)
Initial assessment (to be completed on site by MRA assessor)	Main waste type	
	Secondary waste type (if any)	
	Estimated volume to be removed	
	Estimated tonnes using density factor (to calculate assumed tonnes)	
	Is waste easily accessible for vehicles?	(Yes/No)
	Would access be required through another landholder's property?	(Yes/No)
	Would any natural habitat/ecosystems be damaged by collecting waste?	(Yes/No)
Photo evidence	Have 'before photos' been uploaded to SharePoint?	(Yes/No)
	Date 'before photos' were taken	--/------
	Have 'after photos' been uploaded to SharePoint?	(Yes/No)
	Date 'after photos' were taken	--/------
On-site risk assessment	Is the waste more easily accessible via land or via the waterway?	Land/waterway
	Is the waste a car or vehicle?	Yes – note VIN/numberplate if safe to do so
	Does the flood waste contain any item or substance listed below?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asbestos 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chemical drums 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used oil drums 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paint 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fuel/gas bottles 	(Yes/No)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other chemicals 	(Yes/No)

Purpose	Information needed	Information	
Collection subcontractor information	Name of business		
	Contact name		
	Contact number		
	Contact email		
	ABN		
	Invoice number		
	Date collected	--/--/----	
	Tonnes collected		
	Name of disposal business/facility		
	Location of disposal business/facility		
	Has receipt of collection been uploaded to SharePoint?	(Yes/No)	
	Disposal subcontractor information	Name of business	
		Location of business	
Type of business (landfill, metal recycler etc.)			
Contact name			
Contact number			
Contact email			
ABN			
Invoice number			
Has receipt of disposal been uploaded to SharePoint?		(Yes/No)	
Disposal information	Date waste is received	--/--/----	
	Tonnes received		
	Categorisation of waste		
	Estimated tonnes landfilled		
	Estimated tonnes recovered through recycling		

Appendix E: Natural Disaster Declaration NSW LGAs (AGRN 1012)

Natural Disaster Declaration NSW Local Government Areas – AGRN 1012	
Armidale	Lismore
Ballina	Lithgow
Bayside	Liverpool
Bega	Maitland
Bellingen	MidCoast
Blacktown	Mid-Western
Blue Mountains	Muswellbrook
Byron	Nambucca
Camden	Newcastle
Campbelltown	Northern Beaches
Canterbury Bankstown	Parramatta
Central Coast	Penrith
Cessnock	Port Macquarie Hastings
Clarence Valley	Port Stephens
Coffs Harbour	Queanbeyan–Palerang
Cumberland	Richmond Valley
Dungog	Ryde
Eurobodalla	Shellharbour
Fairfield	Shoalhaven
Georges River	Singleton
Glen Innes Severn	Snowy Monaro
Goulburn Mulwaree	Strathfield
Hawkesbury	Sutherland
Hornsby	Tenterfield
Inner West	The Hills
Kempsey	Tweed
Kiama	Upper Hunter
Ku-ring-gai	Wingecarribee
Kyogle	Wollondilly
Lake Macquarie	Wollongong