

28 July 2017

The Hon Troy Grant MP
Minister for Emergency Services
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: office@grant.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister

RE: Review of the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) Operational Response - 2017

Within the first month of my commencement as NSW SES Commissioner, the effects of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Debbie bore down on the Richmond Tweed Region of NSW. As you are aware, the operational response by the NSW SES saw over 3,400 requests for assistance and 496 recorded flood rescue activations. The loss of life and impact on the community and businesses was telling as I travelled the Region during, and post the event. The valiant efforts by our members in the Region, those who assisted from out-of-area, and the contribution from other emergency services' agencies in response cannot be understated. I do, however, also acknowledge that the operational response was not without its issues.

To enable me to have a clear and independent picture of what is needed moving forward, I requested Mr David Owens to undertake an assessment of the Service's operational preparedness and response at various levels of operational management, from 14:28 on 28 March 2017 to 00:00 on 2 April 2017 in the Lismore and Murwillumbah areas. I did so, proactively, to understand the areas and recommendations for improvement in the Service.

The attached Review Report is that presented by Mr Owens. The NSW SES has considered the recommendations and prepared its Response with clearly defined actions and timelines. Indeed, the Service is already implementing many of the identified issues. I take this matter extremely seriously and I have learnt a great deal from this event. We are moving at best speed to improve on critical areas identified by Mr Owens and from our own internal and inter-agency After Action Reviews. Some of the issues raised are being dealt with in part

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through the organisation's broader "Transformation". I intend to brief Lismore City Council in the near future and release both the Review Report and our response publicly.

Acting on the lessons learnt in the Northern Rivers will ensure we achieve better outcomes for communities across NSW and for the operational capability of NSW SES.

Yours sincerely



Mark Smethurst DSC, AM
Commissioner

Encl.

1. Independent Review of the NSW State Emergency Service Operational Response: Northern Rivers Floods March 2017 (18 July 2017)
2. NSW SES Response to Recommendations - Independent Review of the NSW State Emergency Service Operational Response: Northern Rivers Floods March 2017 (July 2017)