

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 212
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Program: Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)
Topic: Northern NSW Floods
Hansard Page: -
Question Date: 23 May 2017
Question Type: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Has the Bureau reviewed its handling of the Lismore and Murwillumbah floods at the end of April and if so, has it identified any failings in its information delivery?

Answer:

The Bureau has undertaken an internal post-flood debrief following the April 2017 flooding and participated in nine post-flood event community forums organised by the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES) in May 2017. The Bureau also attended an After Action Review (ARR) meeting with the SES on 7 June 2017.

The Bureau will analyse the outcomes of these reviews and will work with emergency management partners to guide continuous improvements in the end-to-end Total Flood Warning System for the northern rivers of NSW.

In the case of Lismore and Murwillumbah, the Bureau's flood watch and warning services provided significant lead time of major flooding, and responded as the significance of the complex and rapidly-changing event unfolded.

Flood warning systems rely on data from monitoring networks. There were a small number of rainfall and river gauges that failed during the event, which is not unusual during extreme weather. In particular, some river level gauges were either reporting erroneous data or stopped reporting altogether. In these cases, the Bureau worked closely with the data providers and emergency services to estimate the reading for a faulty gauge by using a nearby gauge.

While there were some isolated technical failures in the observing network during the event, the flood forecast and warning service continued to operate effectively.

The Bureau and its state and local government partners will continue to work with members of the NSW Flood Warning Consultative Committee to further improve the quality and reliability of the flood warning network.