



# Community experiences before and after flood

EMPA October Webinar

Wednesday 25 October 2023

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# Overview – webinar content

- Quick study overview – methodology and data
- Question ‘cluster’ areas
  - Experience of emergency management
  - Communication methods
  - Information needs – before, during, and after
  - Preparedness
  - Most helpful action/advice
  - Reported ‘learnings’ from flood-impacted residents
- Additional questions/comments



# Methodology

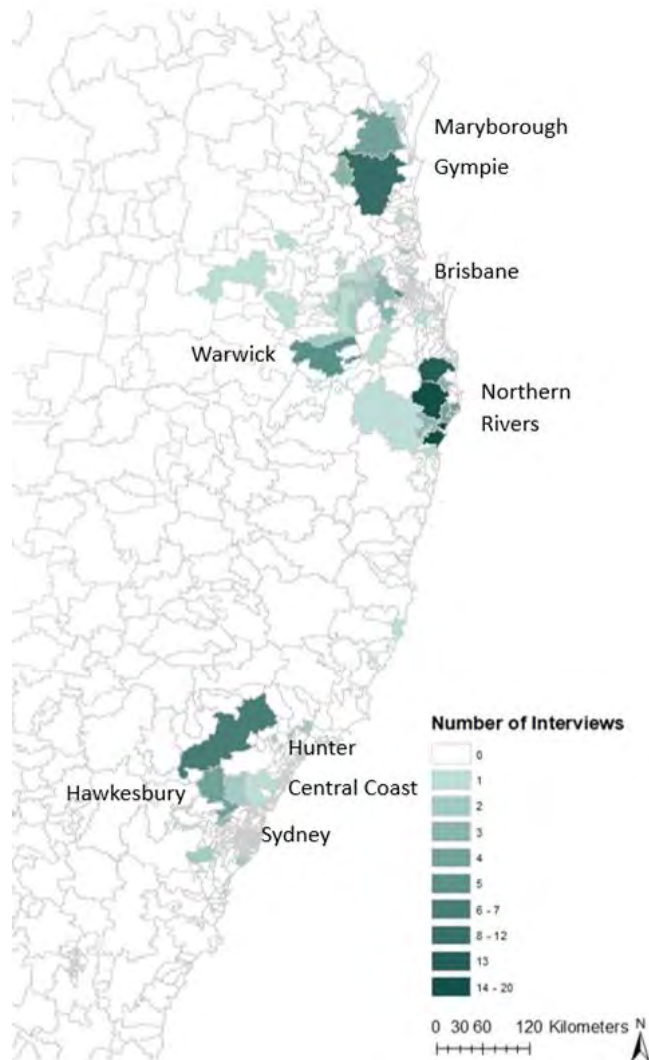
Mixed methods

Trauma-informed approach

Post-event research



# Data – locations, timing, samples



→ Many different flood experiences

→ Interviews

- 192 interviews
- 15 Aug – 27 Oct '22

→ Online survey

- 430 responses
- 24 Nov '22 – 17 Feb '22

→ Reports

- policy relevant focus

[www.naturalhazards.com.au/floods2022](http://www.naturalhazards.com.au/floods2022)

Community experiences of the  
January – July 2022 floods in New  
South Wales and Queensland  
Summary Report

The research summarised in this document was conducted by:  
**Mel Taylor,<sup>1</sup> Fiona Miller,<sup>1</sup> Kim Johnston,<sup>2</sup> Anne Lane,<sup>2</sup> Barbara Ryan,<sup>3</sup> Rachel King,<sup>4</sup>  
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# Emergency Management

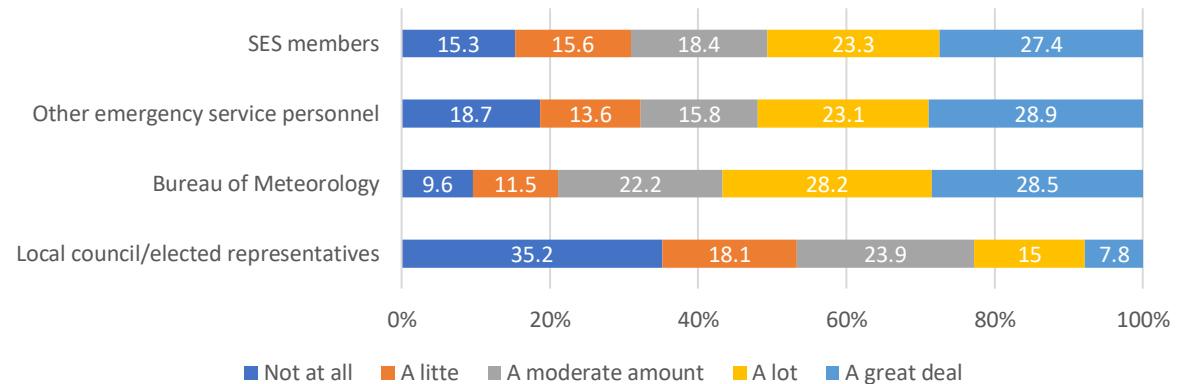
What were the community's experiences of emergency management?



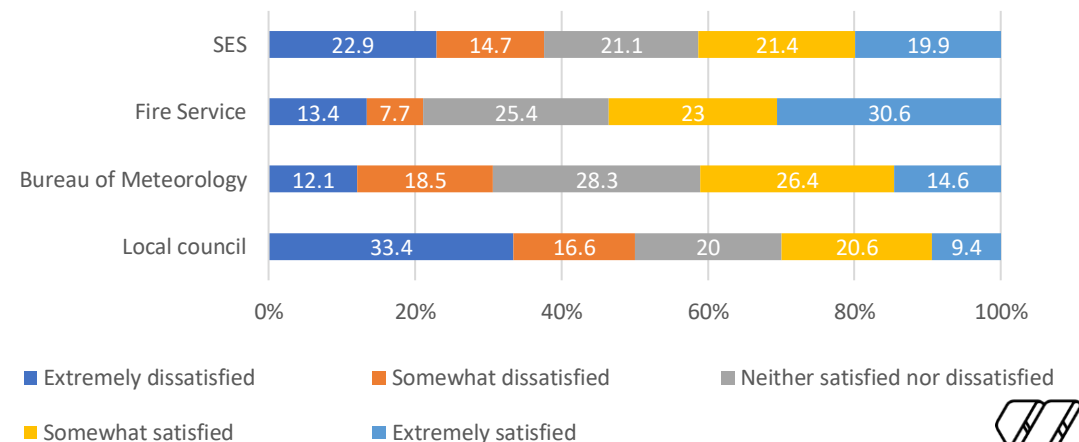
# Experiences of emergency management

- Highly varied / mixed
- Dependent on..
  - Flood experience/s
  - Location
  - Timing (response/recovery)
- Indicators – ‘Trust’ and ‘Satisfaction’
  - Trust – lower with Damage to home/land (all)
  - Satisfaction – lower with Damage to home/land (all), and Impact to home (SES/BOM)

Trust – for help in understanding extent and location of flooding



Satisfaction with support received



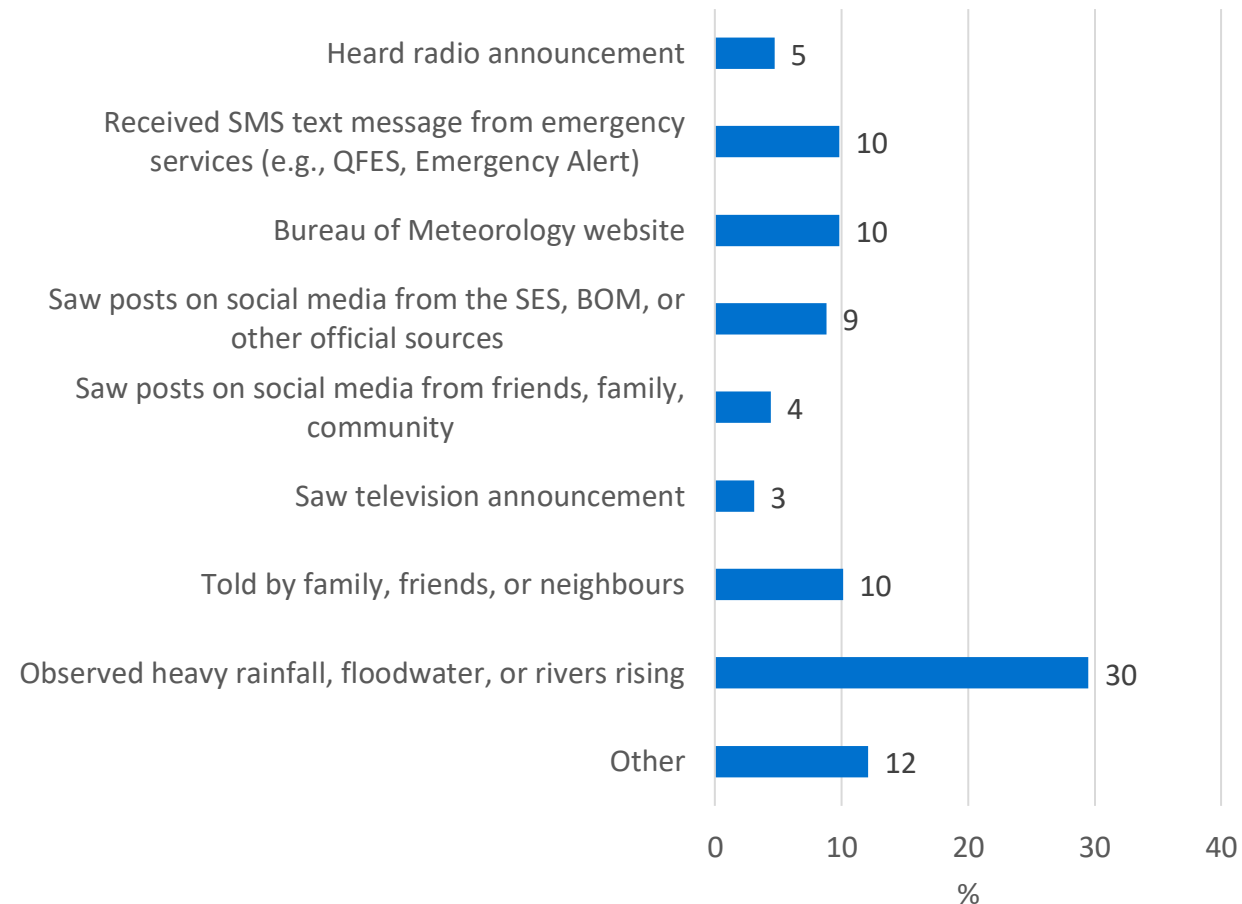
# Communication methods

What did the public find the most effective method of communication from the authorities during the crisis?



# Alerting - early warning

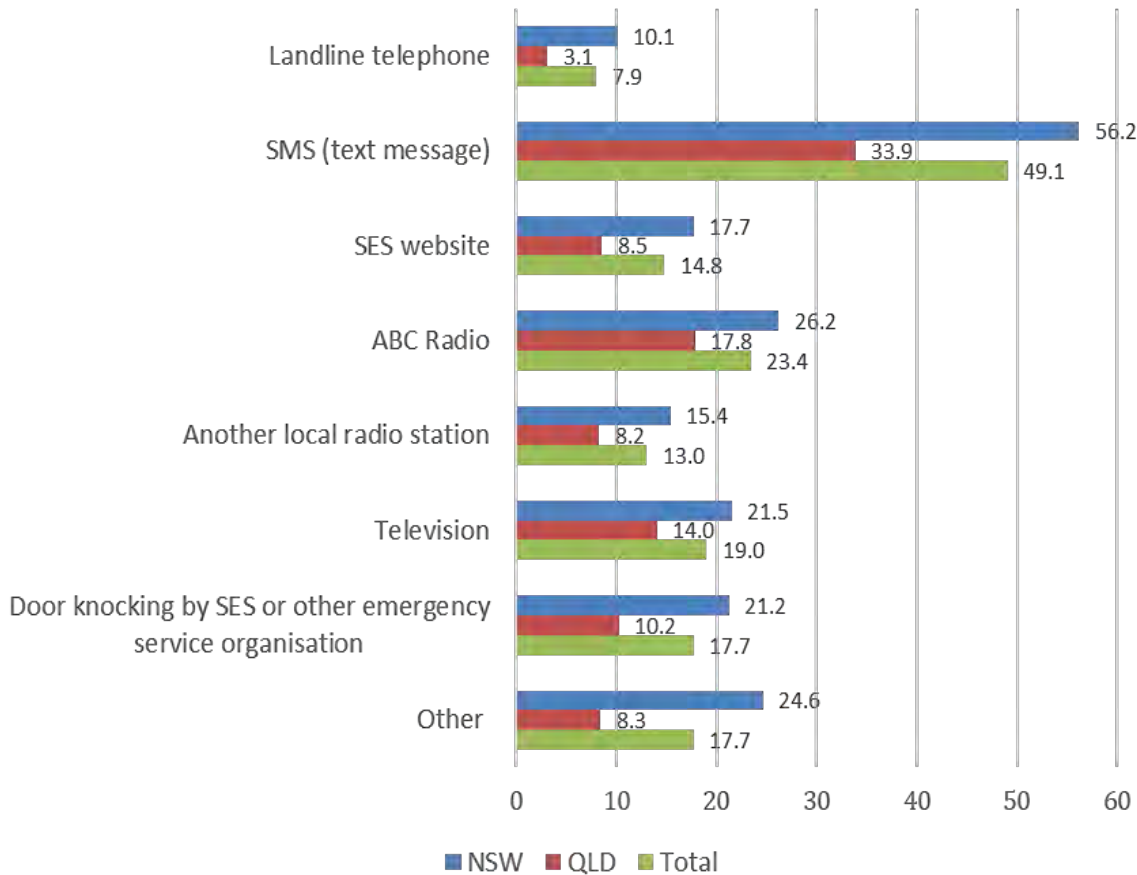
How did you first find out that your town or suburb was likely to experience flooding?  
(single response)





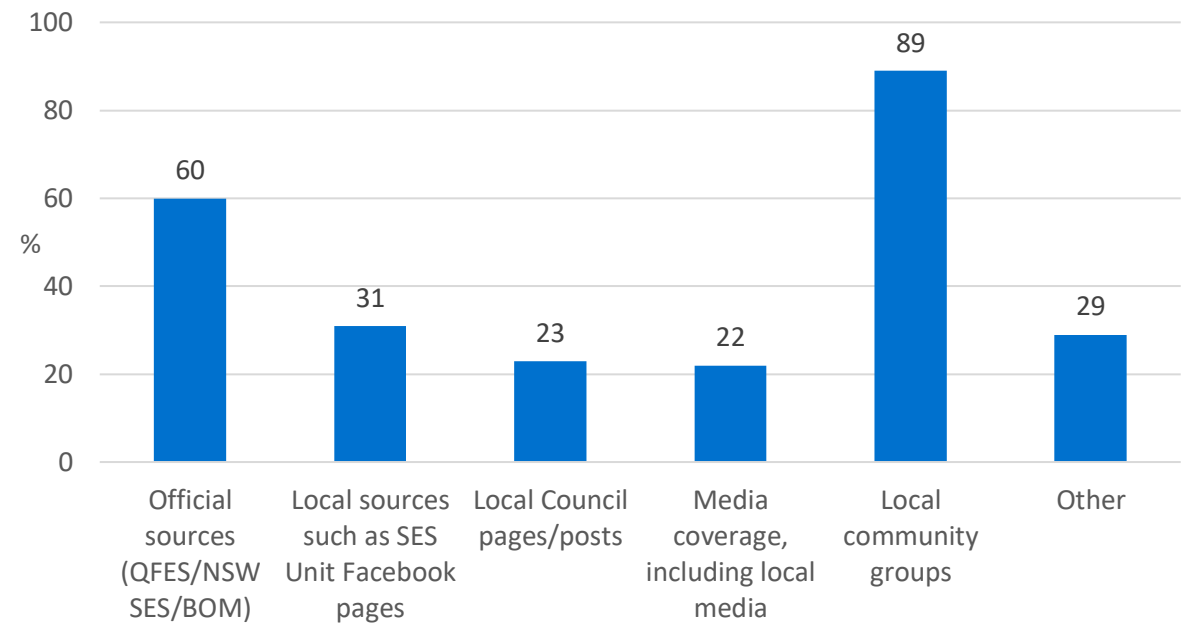
# How were warnings received?

Routes through which official SES warnings were received  
(Multiple responses permitted)

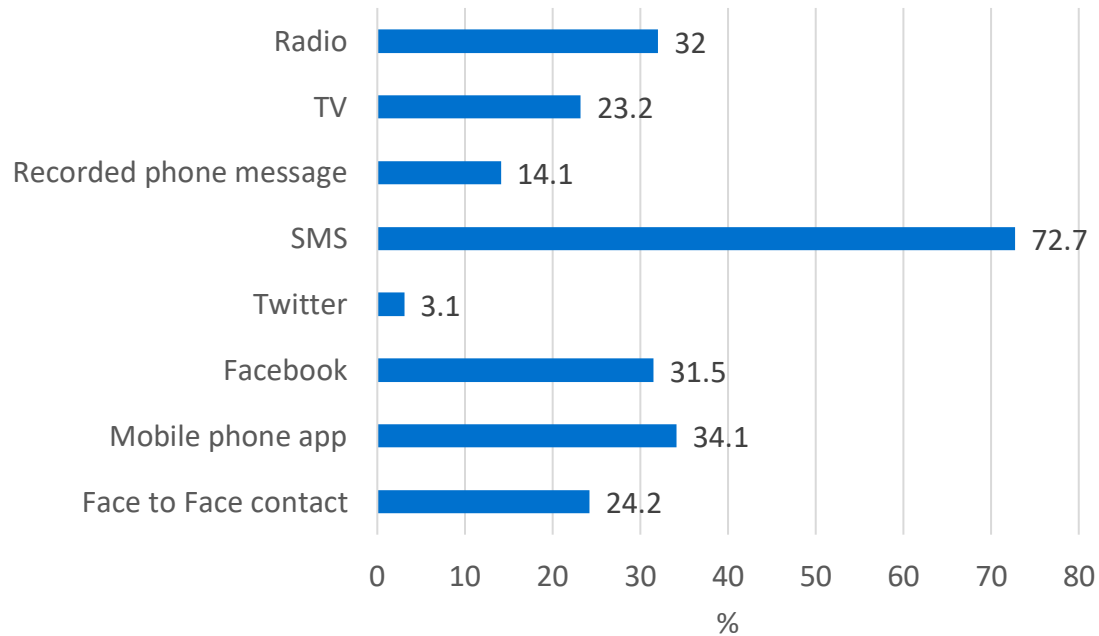


# What about social media?

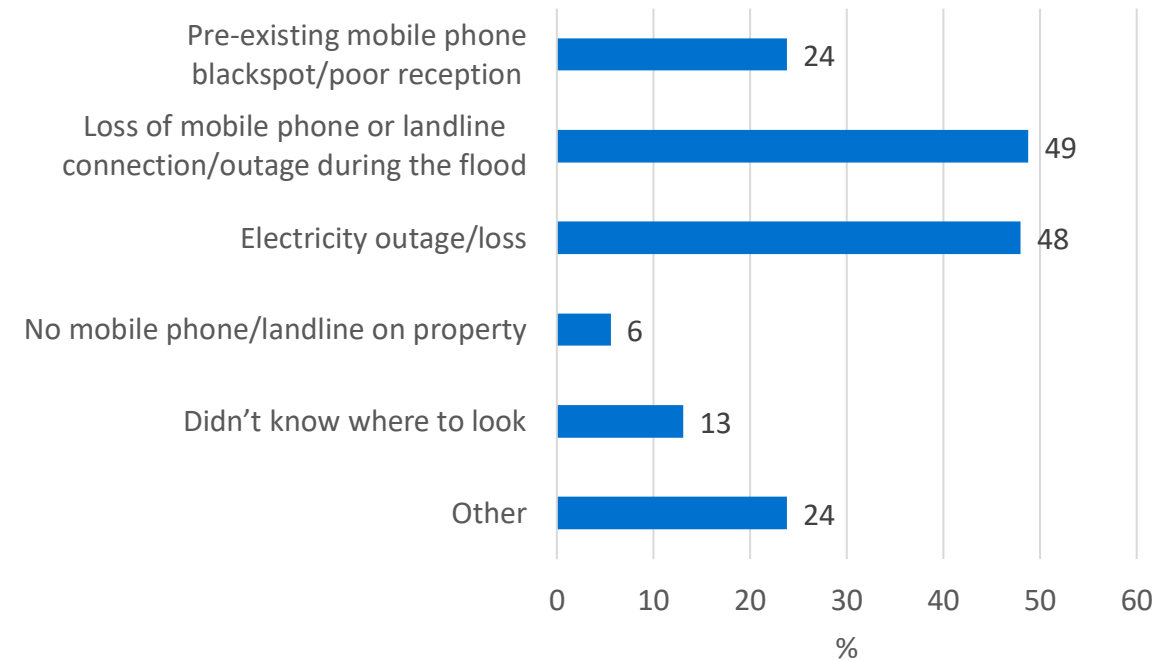
What were the most useful sources of information on social media?



# How do residents want to receive future warnings?

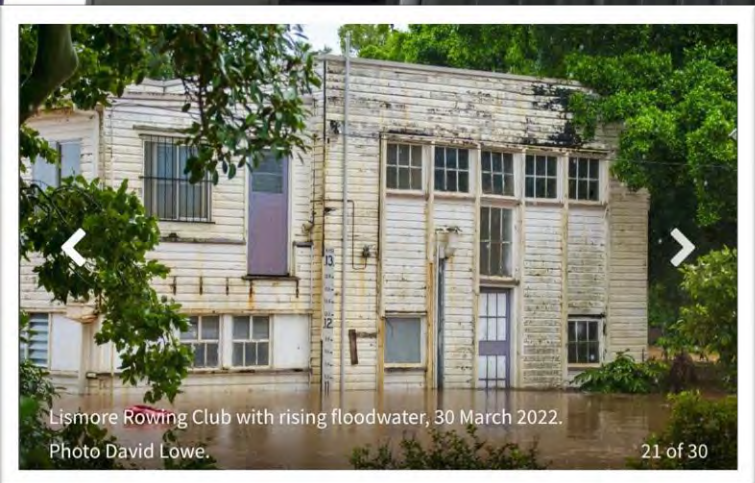


## Challenges...





AHD  
13.0  
12.8  
12.6  
12.4  
12.2  
12.0  
11.8  
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11.4  
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86  
84  
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80  
78  
76  
74  
72



Lismore Rowing Club with rising floodwater, 30 March 2022.

Photo David Lowe.

# Information needs

What priority information requirements did the community have before, during and after the floods?



# Priority information needs – ‘before’

- Awareness and understanding of flood risk
  - lower awareness (likelihood of flooding to property) – not flooded previously, renters, no flood insurance
- Frustration at lack of
  - accurate/current flood data
  - easy-to-find local data
  - information for new residents – buyers, renters
- Confusion / lack of understanding
  - translation of ‘data’ to personal context
  - flood terminology

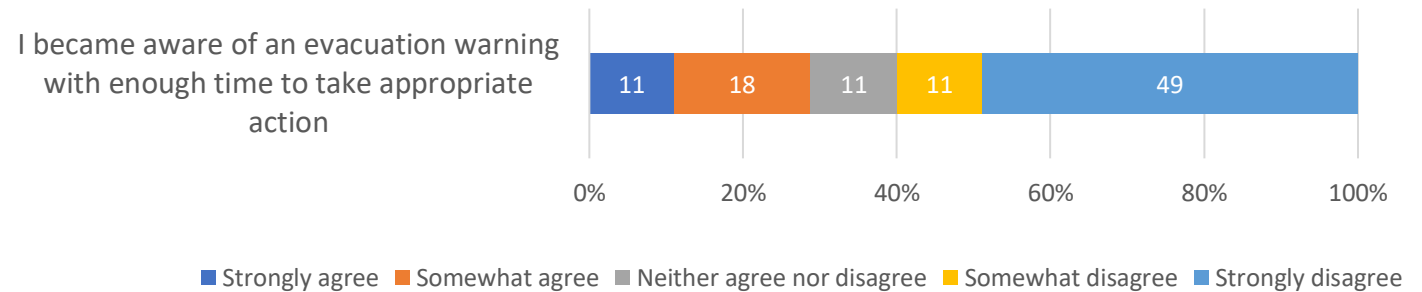


*Flood level markers on Aza Motel, Lismore. Photo: Andy Gough*



# Priority information needs – ‘during’

- High expectations
  - Hyper-localised, relevant, timely information



- Real-time information for monitoring and decision-making
  - Traffic/bridge/river cameras
  - Local social media
  - Assisting decisions about leaving / ground-truthing official and unofficial information

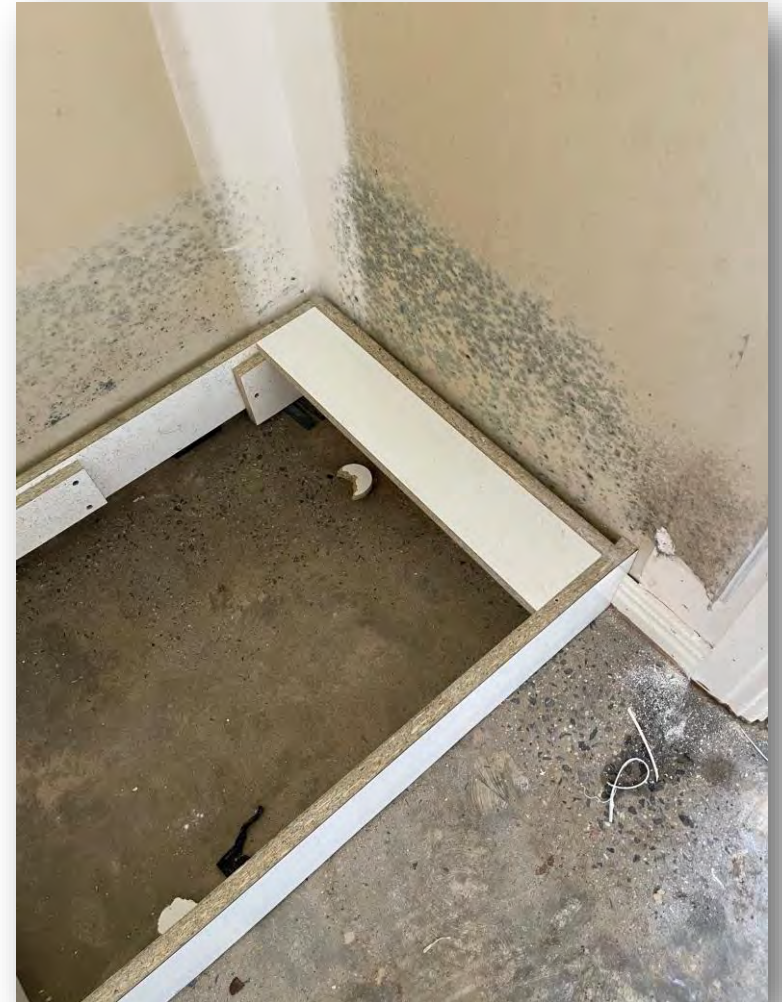


Transport NSW – Windsor bridge camera (Freeman’s Reach side)  
March 2022 - 2<sup>nd</sup> 5.32pm; 3<sup>rd</sup> 2.21am; and 8.29am. Source: Daily Mail



# Priority information needs – ‘after’

- Clean-up advice, recovery support, insurance
  - Shock and trauma
- Clean-up
  - What can be saved, timing of removals
- Recovery support
  - How/what to claim, connectivity and documentation issues post-flood
- Insurance
  - What evidence - documenting losses, taking timely action (delays)

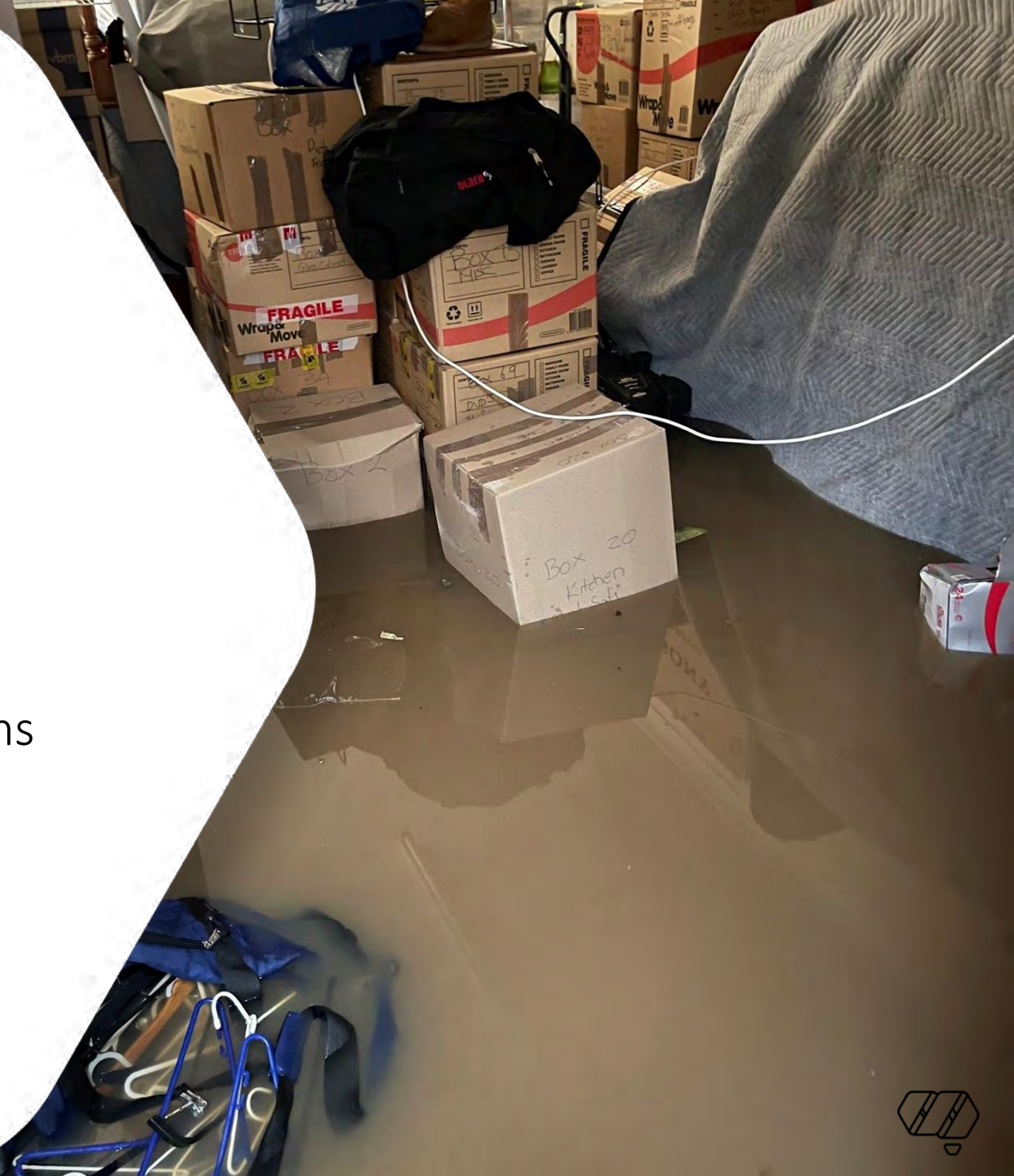




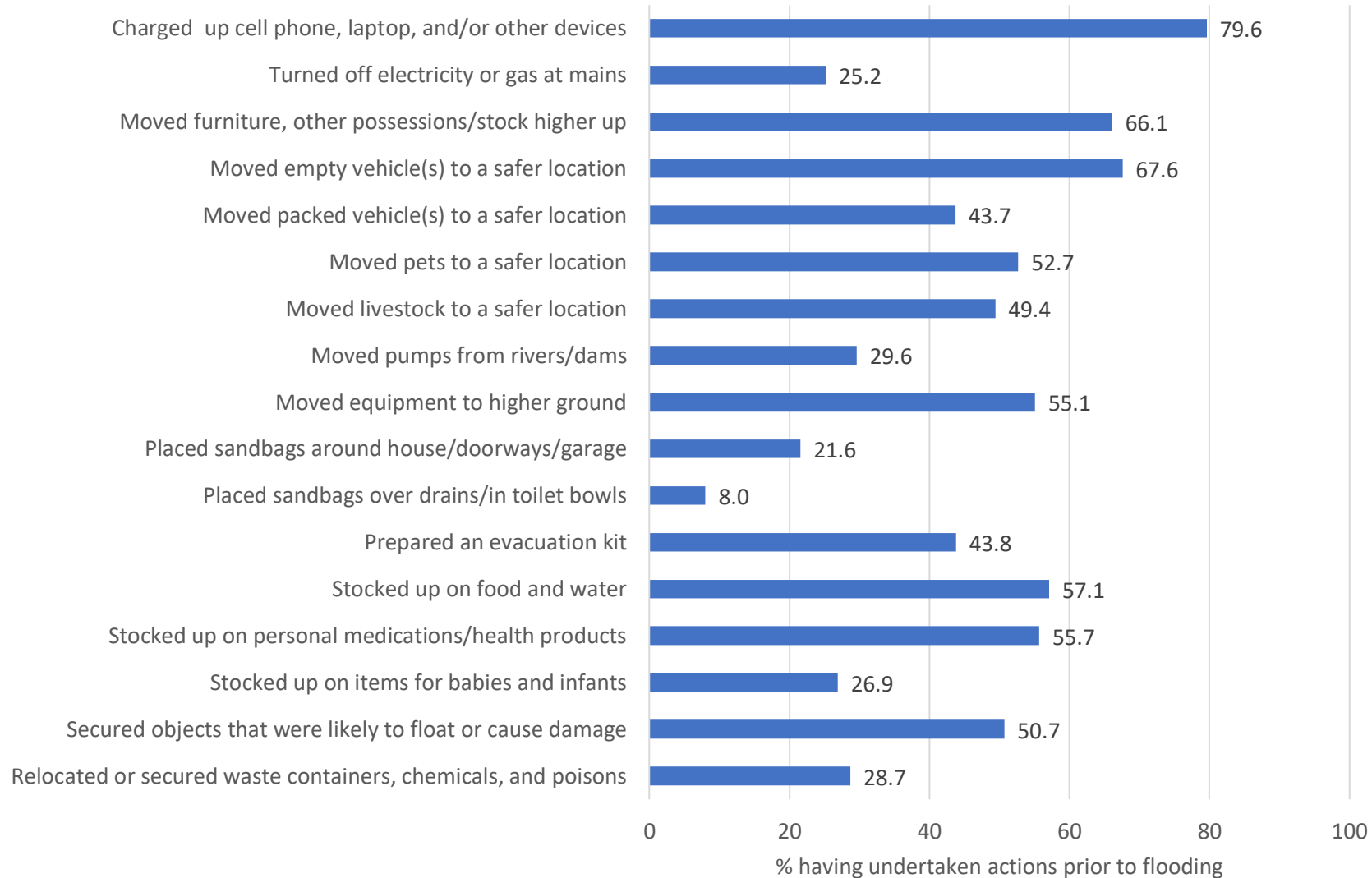


# Preparedness

- What insights are there for preparedness?
- What did the community do?
- What was the outcome of preparedness actions /did preparedness help?
- How useful was the preparedness information they had?
- What would people do differently?



# What did people do?



# Preparedness insights

→ 31% felt they had done everything they could do to prepare

→ Higher preparedness

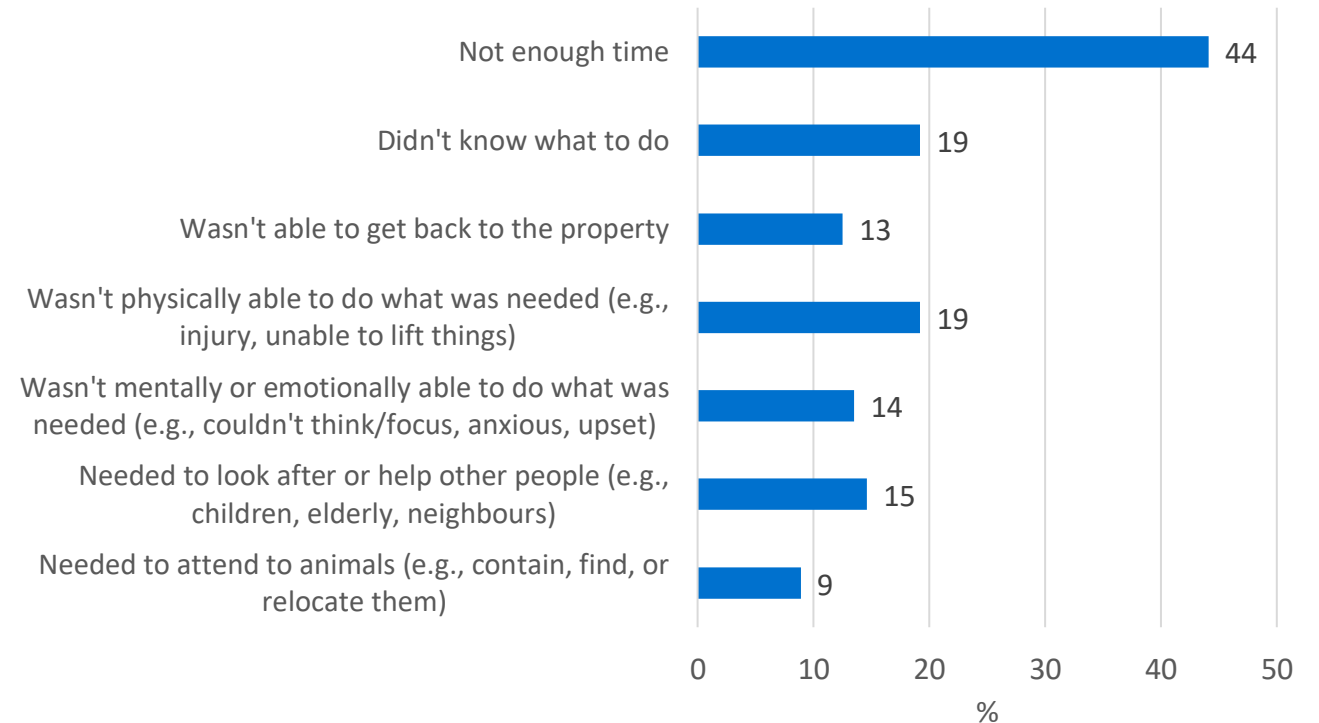
→ Prior flood experience

→ More time to take action before the flood

→ 5% provided 'other' reasons for not being prepared

→ Underestimated risks – didn't feel they needed to prepare; lacked awareness of flooding; health/infirmity/strength issues; reassurances from others.

Reasons for not being as prepared as you could be?



# Usefulness of information and what people would do differently (preparedness)

- BE MORE PREPARED!!!!
- What would we do differently?
  - Act sooner – moving things at the floodwaters are rising
  - Get out early / leave sooner – being trapped/frightened, distressing experiences
  - Avoid unsafe acts - late evacuations typically
  - Fill up the car (with stuff) before moving it to higher ground
  - Save the useful stuff – not the expensive stuff – think about ‘after’
  - Move/save animals – especially horses
  - Train dog to pee on artificial turf!





# Most helpful advice/action

What worked and what didn't work during the flooding from the perspective of people who were severely impacted?





- Highly varied / mixed and dependent on flood experience/s
- What didn't work...
  - Official response / rescue / communications / technology
  - Prior experience/expectations/comparisons – of flood severity, water behaviour, timings
  - Storm drains (and other infrastructure) – physical structures impacting floodwater
- What worked...
  - Community – early warning, advice during, local information, alerting others, rescue, reassurance
  - Local networks – phone trees/UHF radios, community resilience teams, tech/flood savvy groups, personal connections with official agencies/personnel
  - Prior experience – preparedness, engagement, structural modifications (e.g., earthworks, drainage, planting, hoists, lift off hinges)
  - Jet skis and boats for evacuation/riding out flood
  - Sheltering in place (79% reported it was the best decision!)



# Reported learnings

What were the things people wished they knew before, that they know now, that could have lessened or avoided their resulting situation?





# Learnings/advice to others

- BE MORE PREPARED (already covered)
  - Accept help (charity, support)
  - Be persistent
  - Have skills/trades that you can swap with others
  - Think differently – about self, possessions
  - Take your time (clean up)
  - Make your home/business flood resilient



# Additional questions / comments

[www.naturalhazards.com.au/floods2022](http://www.naturalhazards.com.au/floods2022)

Please complete



Please complete our quick  
research knowledge and  
translation survey

**USEFUL,  
USEABLE,  
USED**

