

Hawkesbury Disaster and Emergency Dashboard

COUNCIL NAME

Hawkesbury City Council

WEB ADDRESS

hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

2,776 square kilometres

POPULATION

67,749

Overview of the project

Emergency management responses will be needed for disasters caused or exacerbated by climate change. The Hawkesbury Disaster and Emergency Dashboard provides residents with a single point of reference to keep up to date with vital information before, during and after a disaster or emergency assisting them to respond. Collating live updates on road conditions, weather warnings, evacuation orders, bushfire alerts, river heights, school closures and more, the Dashboard is a one-stop communications tool accessible by all residents, businesses, or visitors to the Hawkesbury LGA.

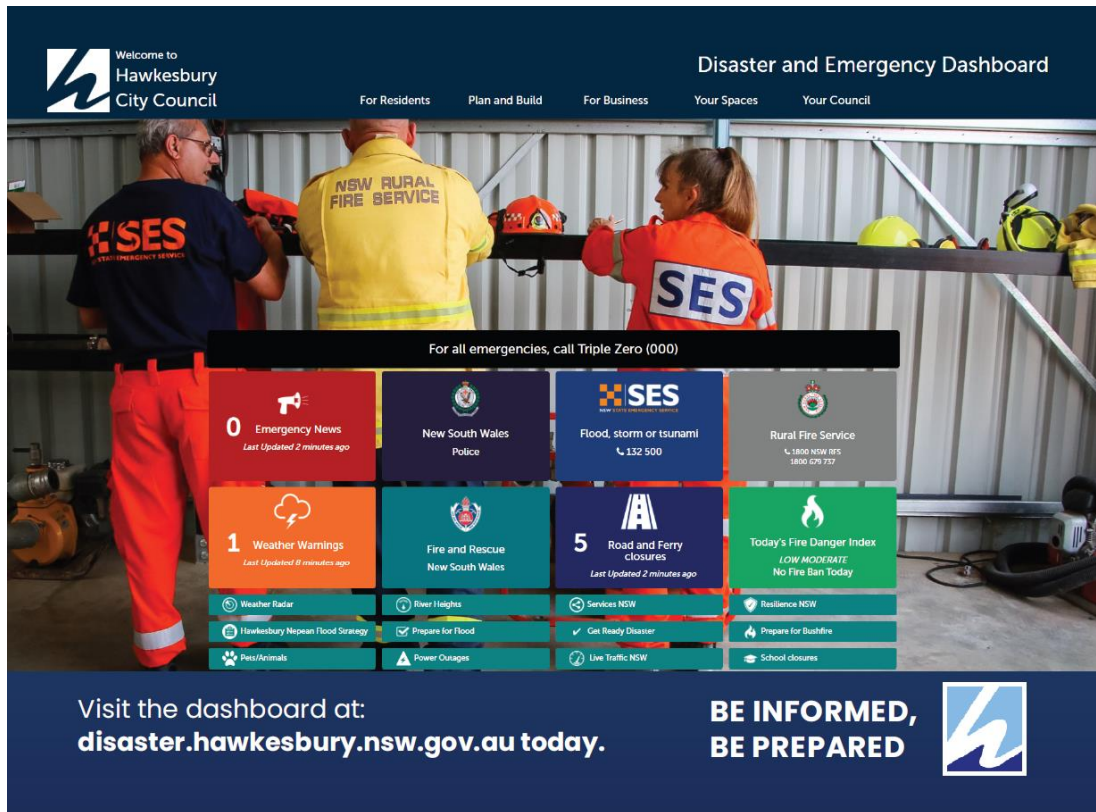


Image: Hawkesbury Disaster and Emergency Dashboard

How the project was carried out

The Increasing Resilience to Climate Change (IRCC) grant provided \$30,000 for the development of the Dashboard, with Council funding the yearly Dashboard hosting fee of \$5,000. The development of the Dashboard was achieved in around six months and was launched in October 2020. It was critical to the success of this project that the combat agencies, functional areas, and relevant sections of Council involved in 'on-ground' emergency response, recovery, and preparedness, were engaged from the outset.



Combat agencies and Council staff involved in the 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires response and recovery, and the Hawkesbury February 2020 flood, incorporated their experience into the development of the Dashboard.

Stakeholder discussions began before the grant application and continued via Zoom meetings during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown. Council staff and Council's Floodplain Management and Emergency Management Committees were consulted at the project's inception to ensure its outcomes were applicable to all stakeholders. The company engaged to develop the Hawkesbury Disaster and Emergency Dashboard has considerable expertise, having developed several Emergency Dashboards for Queensland councils, which have been accessed numerous times during natural disasters.

Stakeholders were consulted to determine Dashboard content and layout, ensuring they were comfortable with the information and links to their respective agencies. The following external agencies were involved in this project:

- NSW Police
- NSW State Emergency Services (SES)
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NSW Health
- Infrastructure NSW
- Transport for NSW (TfNSW)

Directly involved Council staff received training in use of the Dashboard and a 'demo version' was provided to the combat agencies to assess its user friendliness and relevance of the information provided.

Stakeholder engagement continued through feedback from residents, councillors, staff, and Council's Floodplain Management and Emergency Management committees. Further promotion included: bundling a Dashboard flyer with rates notices in January/February 2021; regular social media posts, including during the March 2021 flood; and distribution of Dashboard flyers at flood recovery centres and mobile community recovery hubs. The Hawkesbury Resilience tent at the April 2021 Hawkesbury Show played the Dashboard video produced by LGNSW/ DPIE on 'loop', and, in November 2021, information on the Dashboard was included in an Emergency Management Guide sent to all households in the Hawkesbury LGA.

Outcomes now and in the future

Council has committed to ensuring the Dashboard continues to be available to the community.

Since the Dashboard was launched in October 2020, it has received 497,099 page views, with mobile phones being the most popular device to access the Dashboard. During the March 2021 flood, the Dashboard had 245,000+ individual hits and 45,000+ unique views. Additionally, when the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley was placed on flood watch over the weekend of 26-28 November 2021, the Dashboard received 44,815 page views with 53% of people accessing the Dashboard being 'new visitors.'

The Dashboard enables staff to update information whilst in the field. This functionality streamlined the road closure notification process, improved work efficiencies, and provided the community with road closure notifications in real time. The Dashboard has strengthened relationships with combat agencies and NSW Government departments, with the Local Windsor Police Area Commander agreeing to appear in a video highlighting the Dashboard and its importance in relaying real-time information to the community.

Implementation of the Dashboard has provided the following additional outcomes:

- The community can check the Dashboard for daily road closure information.
- The Dashboard was used in the Emergency Operations Centre during the March 2021 flood.
- Other NSW councils have shown interest in developing a similar product for their respective LGAs.

- Communication and engagement with the community regarding the Dashboard will continue through Facebook promotion, community newsletters, community events run by Council's Resilience Officer, and rate notice mail-outs.

Benefits and lessons learned

The decision to engage all stakeholders early in the project assisted in a quick turnaround for delivery of the project.

Council will continue to promote the Dashboard to staff and within the community, continually seeking feedback on how the Dashboard can be improved; aiming to increase awareness and use of the Dashboard. The Dashboard provides a platform for future opportunities for data sharing, including further localised data, such as investigating local air quality, complementing NSW Government air quality data.

Previously, there was no single information source for road closures, as it was split between local and state roads. With this information now aggregated in the Dashboard, "double handling" could be prevented if updates to the Dashboard automatically flowed through to TfNSW's 'Live Traffic' site. Additionally, offering access to Live Traffic CCTV footage via the Dashboard during evacuations would assist in communicating with residents about available evacuation routes and potential traffic delays. There's no current standard version for Emergency Dashboards in NSW, which would allow information to be shared readily between neighbouring LGAs. Ideally, a fully funded NSW Government program providing all councils with this Dashboard would assist in emergency management across the state. Finally, upgraded telecommunications within the Hawkesbury LGA would help ensure access to the Dashboard by residents, businesses, and visitors in all areas of the LGA.



Funded by the
NSW Government
in association with
Local Government
NSW

More information

<https://disaster.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/>

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