



THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

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Report slams performance of post-flood programs

by Marty de Weerd

The NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) has begun rolling out a new series of targeted information and industry sessions to help flood-impacted residents in the Northern Rivers move from the planning phase into active construction and relocation.

This comes in the wake of the NSW Auditor-General's scathing report on the performance of the \$880 million Resilient Homes Program (RHP) and the \$100 million Resilient Lands Program (RLP), both of which the Auditor-General found to have been poorly planned and administered by the RA.

Key to the finding was that of the 4,382 homes and housing lots promised through these programs, none had been delivered by 31st March this year with the Auditor General's report stating that the RA's ability to deliver land within the anticipated five-year period was "at risk".

Both programs were already facing significant issues just months after being announced by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in October 2022 as "the biggest agreement of its kind ever in response to a very significant event".

By June 2023 the initial promise of 6,000 homes being eligible for buybacks had been reduced to just 2,000 and as of the end of March 2026, just 793 buy-backs had been finalised.

The delivery of the program has been met with a significant amount of criticism within the community, much of which is echoed in the report.

Flood survivors and community leaders have frequently questioned persistent delays which the report



Substantial premises in Magellan Street, Lismore reduced to rubble in May with no plans for the site. Photos: Chibo Mertineit



put down to insufficient planning in the design and implantation of the programs, with no business case or cost-benefit analysis to inform the design and establishment of the programs, no key milestones set, timely support for recovery unavailable to flood-affected homeowners, and timelines for the completion of the programs extended twice.

NSW Greens MLC and North Coast Spokesperson Sue Higginson said the program to protect flooded Northern Rivers homes has just a 1% completion rate.

"Just 54 Northern Rivers homes have accessed house-raises and retrofits to protect against floods, despite promises of 4,400 house-raises and retrofits made in the aftermath of the 2022 flood catastrophe – a 1% completion rate in four years," she said.

"The report also highlighted that the Resilient Lands Program is yet to deliver a single home.

"The climate-fuelled floods of

2022 decimated the Northern Rivers region, and the Auditor General's report has illuminated just how botched and traumatic the flood recovery has been for our community.

"After the floods, the NSW government swooped in and told our community they knew best. We made a considered and concerted call for relocations, but we were told we couldn't have that.

"Instead the government promised to buy back uninhabitable homes, and to mitigate flood risk by raising and retrofitting thousands of flooded homes. These promises have since turned to rubble."

Federal MP for Page, Kevin Hogan, also responded to the report saying, "Our community has been left behind with the Labor government's failed flood recovery efforts.

"The NSW Auditor-General report released yesterday has reinforced everything that our community has been saying for

years. The Resilient Homes and Resilient Lands Programs have failed.

"For a cost of nearly \$1 billion, little has been achieved. Lismore and surrounding villages are still exposed; our industrial estates and CBD are still no safer.

"There has not been one home built after four years. It will be over five years since the event before one home will be ready to move into. This is obviously not good enough.

"The buyback scheme has also failed. It has moved half a street and left the other half there. Over 1,000 homes identified to be bought back won't be.

"The CSIRO Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative Report will be released in June. Governments must commit to funding and delivering recommendations to take two metres off the next flood."

For many homeowners impacted by the 2022 floods, the journey to rebuild their lives has been highly complex, navigating various levels of

government, often without a clear path forward.

Four years on, many homeowners are still waiting for the very land on which they can rebuild. In light of this, the report has recommended that the RA find ways to expedite the delivery of this land by September this year.

Another issue that both the State Government and Lismore City Council have wrestled with is the future use of land left vacant by the buyback scheme.

The report found that the former Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation and the RA did not consider future planning for this land beyond rezoning to prevent future residential use.

A community consultation process was announced earlier this year, and the Auditor General's report recommends that the RA should finalise and implement plans for the vacant land by June 2027.

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