What is Hunter Local Land Services?

Hunter Local Land Services (LLS) provides advice and quality services to landholders and the community across its region to improve:

- Biosecurity
- Agricultural production
- Emergency management
- Natural resource management.

Our locally-based board and staff add value to local industries, enhance natural resources, protect industries from pests and diseases and help communities respond to emergencies.

We employ local people such as vets, biosecurity officers and agricultural advisory services staff, who have a range of skills and expertise to support landholders with local issues.

Hunter LLS services three districts: the Lower Hunter, Upper Hunter and Manning Great Lakes, with staff based in locations around the region.

During the flood response Hunter LLS and DPI:

- responded to 148 requests for assistance
- distributed 20 tonnes of emergency fodder
- supplied fodder to 1,800 cattle, 480 horses and 12 camels
- arranged 40 helicopter sorties to stranded stock
- provided helicopter support to ferry food to 50,000 stranded chickens
- removed and/or disposed of more than 500 dead livestock
- responded to 25 requests for support with stranded stock
- assisted with missing and found stock
- established small animal holding facilities at key evacuation centres
- staffed four recovery centres.

Hunter LLS and DPI are now working with affected landholders to aid in the recovery. So far we have:

- undertaken ongoing assessment and reporting to government on agricultural damage and production loss
- involved LLS staff from 8 regions plus worked alongside staff from the Rural Assistance Authority, National Parks, Rural Fire Service, and the Department of Trade and Investment
- extended payment of annual LLS rates by three months
- appointed a dedicated Hunter Flood Recovery Officer to assist rural communities recover and increase their resilience to future floods
- developed a comprehensive Landholder Resource Pack to assist landholders rapidly assess their options and access support.

Rapid flood response and recovery

Hunter LLS, in partnership with NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), is responsible for the coordination of agriculture and animal services in emergencies.

Following the storm and flooding in the Lower Hunter during April 2015, Local Land Services and NSW DPI staff combined to assist flood-affected farmers and communities, and provide support to the primary emergency services agency, the State Emergency Services.

Stranded cattle in floodwaters at Gillieston Heights make their way to nearby land
Key learnings – Primary Producers

In the post-recovery phase, Hunter LLS is working to ensure the lessons learnt from the flood and the flood response and recovery are captured and effectively communicated to increase the preparedness and resilience of regional communities to future flooding.

It is known there is a window of opportunity following a natural disaster when landholders are most receptive to change.

There were several landholders who had high quality flood response and recovery plans for their enterprises which helped them recover quickly from the recent event. The role of the Hunter LLS Flood Recovery Officer is to assist other primary producers to develop their own response and recovery plans.

Key learnings – Hunter LLS

Some of the lessons learnt for LLS, and the things LLS did well during the response phase, included:

- the high capacity of LLS to rapidly mobilise staff from across the state to support local teams
- the high capacity of LLS to take on regional responsibilities for emergency management and work seamlessly with DPI to provide high quality, effective flood response
- the importance of effective communications to support local communities when so much communication infrastructure was damaged/down
- the general under-estimation of damage to primary producers and the value of case studies at the enterprise level to provide more accurate information for government
- the value of the appointment of the government’s Regional Recovery Coordinator and the importance of engaging that person with rural communities and primary producers.

Supporting the region to be flood prepared

In order to support communities prepare for and respond to future flood events more effectively, Hunter LLS will work towards having in place:

- ‘flood ready’ plans developed with priority at-risk rural communities
- greater community awareness of the role Hunter LLS can play to assist them in emergencies
- updated resources to assist communities in accessing information and support as soon as possible following a flood.