

Positively

PENRITH

Flood Planning Position Paper

FOR PENRITH LGA

Penrith is a river city with an important strategic role

As a river city, Penrith offers great amenity. It is a key strategic centre with an important role in the Western Parkland City. Planning for future growth has been made difficult by the many NSW Government policies and recommendations relating to floodplain management. There is no clarity for land use planning decisions and this is preventing growth in the Penrith City Centre, creating ongoing uncertainty.

Uncertainty is constraining development

Council has properly planned to meet the risks of a 1 in 100-year flood (plus freeboard) being the long-held standard. The lack of clarity around flood planning by the NSW Government and the ever-changing policy framework has made it difficult to plan for the future of Penrith, has constrained development and created significant uncertainty.

We need infrastructure to unlock the city

Our communities rely on a regional network of arterial roads as their means of evacuation. Castlereagh Connection will provide an evacuation solution for Penrith that addresses the current flood and safety risks to communities living in the catchment and to facilitate responsible development.

Penrith City Centre

The lack of clarity around flood planning by the NSW Government has made it difficult for Council to plan and has created uncertainty for industry, particularly for Penrith City Centre.

As an interim solution to unlock development in Penrith City Centre, the NSW Government implemented an "Adaptive Management Framework" in 2019 to manage flood risk and evacuation constraints. This placed a cap on residential dwellings in the City Centre of 4,050 dwellings, while the zoned potential is between 8,000-9,000 dwellings. Already there have been 1,100 dwellings approved or under assessment, representing 27% of that cap.

A NSW Government Agency/ Council Taskforce was established to develop bespoke solutions to address evacuation capacity, unlocking future development in the next stages of the Adaptive Management Framework. This critical work has not made any progress.

NSW Government flood planning

Different agencies play a role in floodplain management, often with competing policy frameworks. Council has planned to meet the risks of a 1 in 100-year flood (plus freeboard) being the long-held standard. This is complicated by the myriad of new policies and recommendations being released by the NSW Government, including the cap on development in Penrith City Centre introduced in 2019 with no pathway forward.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy Taskforce Options Assessment Report (INSW 2019) indicates there is insufficient road capacity to safely evacuate. Recent flood inquiries, such as the O’Kane / Fuller Inquiry (2023), have called upon the government to determine and deliver contemporary, risk based, flood planning controls.

The NSW Government has developed a flood evacuation modelling tool (FEM2), released in 2023. While the full details are yet to be released, the modelling has identified constraints to the evacuation network, which significantly limits the evacuation capacity of the current road network. We ask that the assumptions used in the FEM2 Flood Evacuation Model be revisited with a risk based approach and a view to determining a solution to facilitate growth, particularly for the Penrith City Centre.

Despite Council guiding development at a particular flood planning level to manage risk, uncertainty remains due to new announcements by the NSW Government, causing concern amongst industry.

Castlereagh Connection

Our communities rely on a regional network of arterial roads as their means of evacuation. There is an immediate need for a contemporary, all encompassing, evacuation solution for Penrith as part of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley that addresses the current flood and safety risks to communities living in the catchment and to facilitate responsible development.

A corridor for the Castlereagh Connection has been preserved since 1951, around 22kms running between the M7 Motorway and the Nepean River. It is almost 90% in government ownership and could be constructed in stages as funding allows. It would intersect with four of the current evacuation routes and divert up to 24,000 vehicles. The FEM2 Flood Evacuation Model Technical Report demonstrates that the benefits of introducing the Castlereagh Connection are significant, with the potential of reducing people at risk by 71%.

The Commonwealth Government has confirmed \$50 Million towards planning for this project, contingent upon the NSW Government matching this funding. To date, the NSW Government has committed only \$1 Million. Council seeks clarification on the scope and timing of the Business Case and calls on the Government to ensure further funding for the construction of this road connection is committed.



Next Steps

We call on the Government to:

- Determine clear flood planning policies, having engaged with all stakeholders, including flood planning levels, in respect to Penrith City Centre and our wider City.
- Review assumptions in the FEM2 Flood Evacuation Model with a risk-based approach to facilitate appropriate and responsible growth and development in the catchment.
- Progress the Business Case for the Castlereagh Connection as an evacuation solution that reduces risks to communities living in the catchment and facilitates responsible development.
- Provide certainty for the future of Penrith City Centre.
- Provide clarity in relation to flood planning for Penrith Lakes unlocking this important site.