

Meeting Community-Identified Priorities Through Aboriginal-Led Disaster Recovery and Preparedness

August 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Country that we are standing on today, the Woiworrung Country and the several tribes who occupied the Birrarung, now known as the Yarra River. We pay our respects to our past and current Elders, the ones who have kept Country alive and our culture strong. We acknowledge the young ones, our next generation who will continue to carry our culture and knowledge forward.

This artwork 'Healing together' was created by Monique Rennie, a proud Kamillaroi woman living on Wonnarua Country in the NSW Upper Hunter. It illustrates organisations and communities coming together to find the strength to recover and rebuild after a natural disaster or significant event.

Who we are

Carlin Stanford

Manager Regional Coordination
Sydney and Southern Region

Michelle Guthrie (Rogers)

Manager Aboriginal Outcomes
Wiradjuri / Gomeroi woman



Meeting Aboriginal Community Identified Priorities

What communities told us

Communities consistently identified the need for:

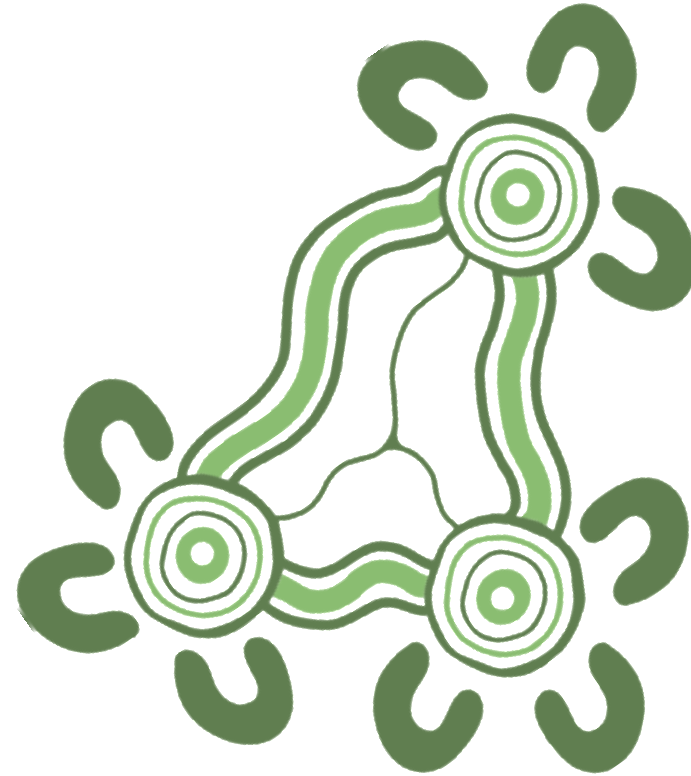
- Respect and dignity
- Community leadership
- Cultural safety
- Stronger involvement of Elders and ACCOs
- Trusted locations

Why this matters

Understanding Community Priorities

When communities identify priorities:

- Inclusion improves
- Preparedness improves
- Engagement increases
- Trust develops
- Recovery outcomes strengthen



Local knowledge drives better recovery outcomes



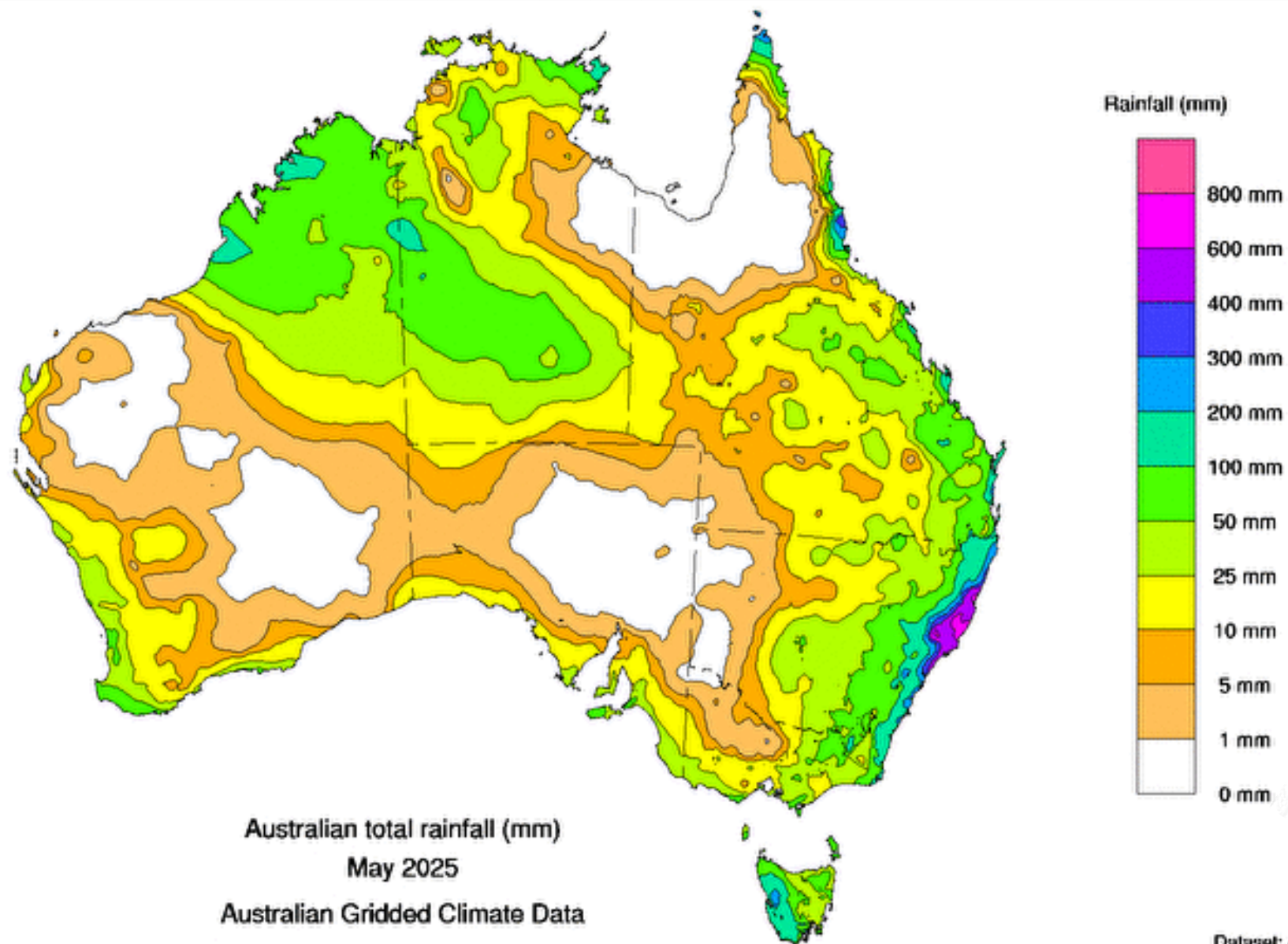
Mid North Coast Floods 2025

Aboriginal Recovery Assistance Points



Mid North Coast Floods 2025

Trigger warning

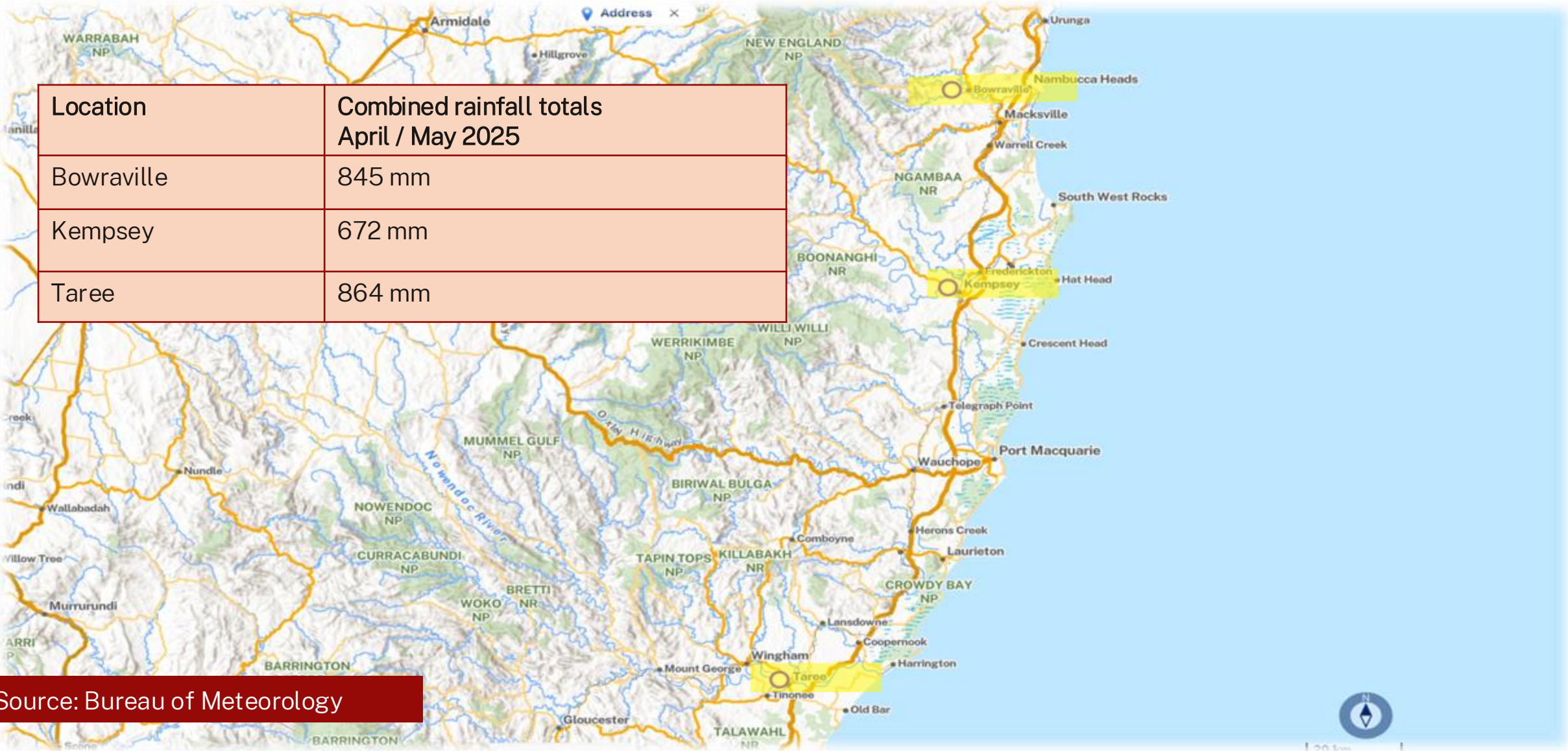


Dataset: AGCD v2

Issued: 20/05/2026



Mid North Coast

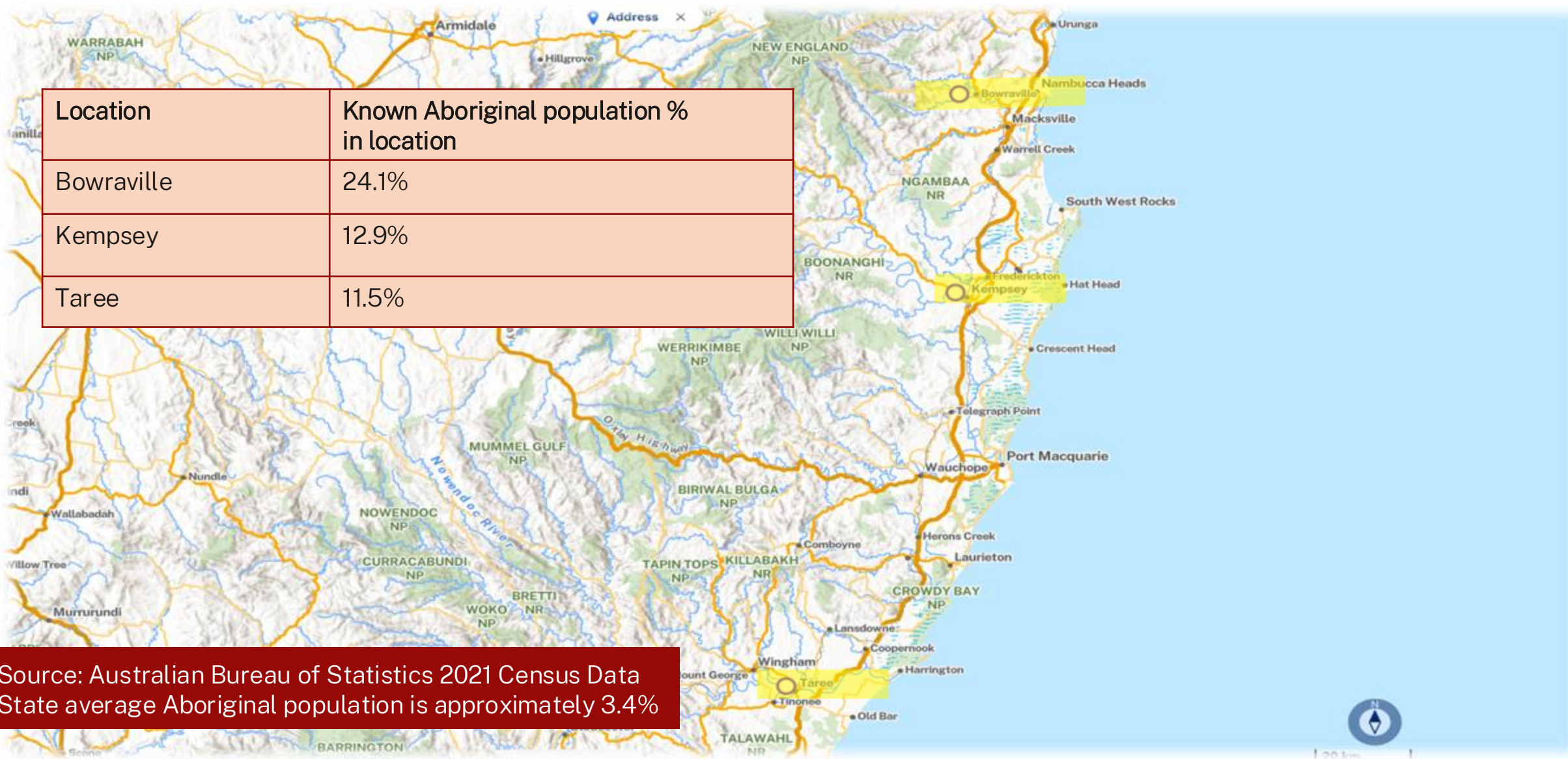


Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Mid North Coast

Location	Known Aboriginal population % in location
Bowraville	24.1%
Kempsey	12.9%
Taree	11.5%

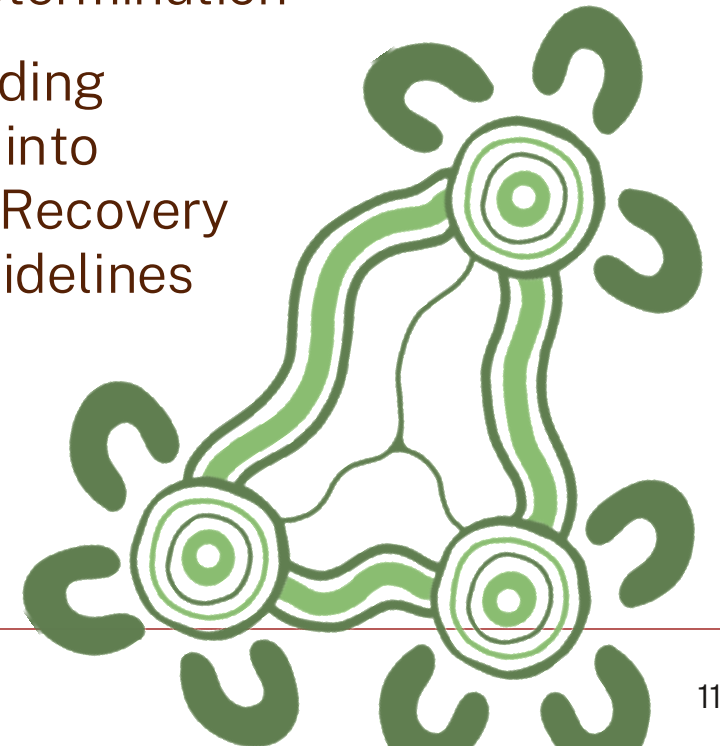
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census Data
State average Aboriginal population is approximately 3.4%



Recovery Objective

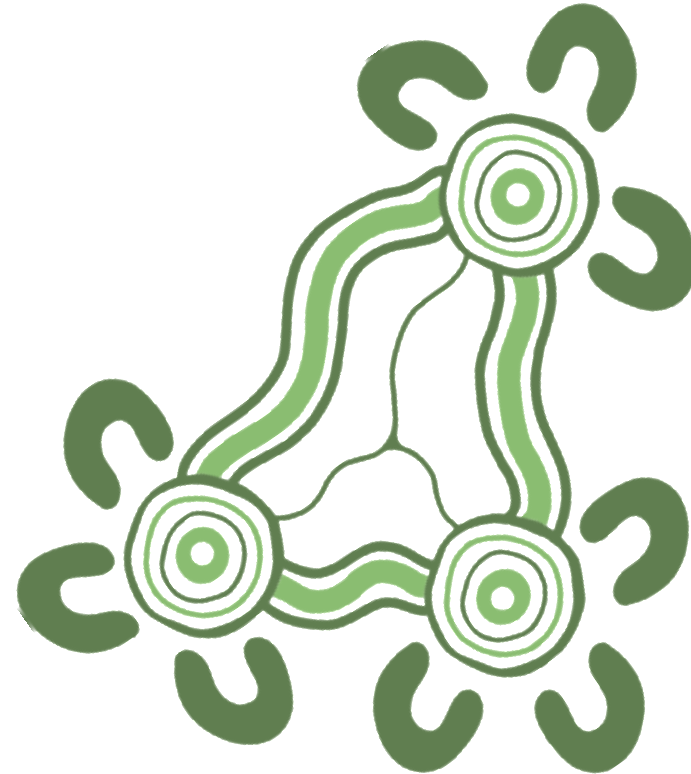
Establish Recovery Assistance Points in impacted Aboriginal communities.
Ensure recovery delivery is:

- Place based, culturally safe
- Designed by and with local Aboriginal communities
- Trauma informed
- Community-led
- Service delivery must respect and promote self determination
- Close out by embedding successful practice into Aboriginal Focused Recovery Assistance Point Guidelines



Yes! Absolutely...

But how?



Local knowledge drives better recovery outcomes

Just ask

- Local community Elders
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Biripi Aboriginal Medical Service
- Thungghutti Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)
- Mid Coast Council Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) and Councillors
- Dhina Durriti Aboriginal Corporation
- Aboriginal Affairs
- Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation
- Learning The Macleay
- Kempsey LALC
- Dalaigur Preschool and Children's Services
- The Mob Hub at Kempsey
- Community Flood Response First Nations Leader
- Community Flood Response First Nations Leader
- Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Services
- Fire and Rescue ALO
- NSW SES ALO



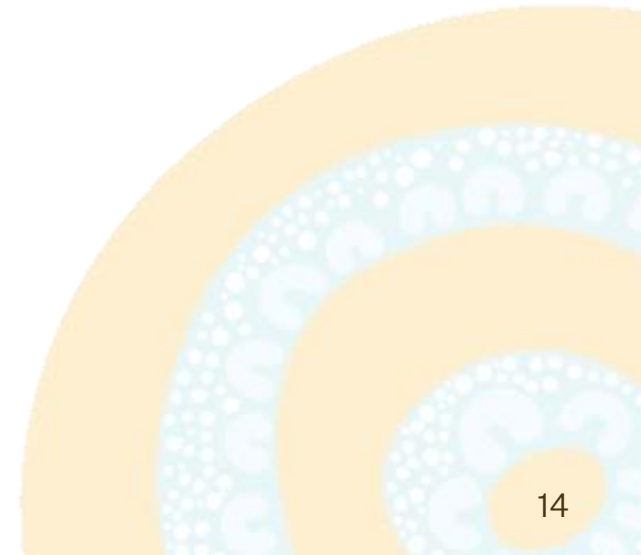
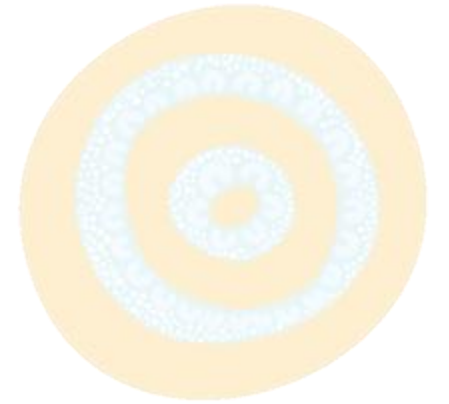


Core Principles



Six Guiding Principles

- Understanding the context
- Recognising the complexity
- Use community-led approaches
- Coordinate all approaches
- Communicate effectively
- Recognise and build capacity



Building trust through relationships

What builds trust?

- Early engagement
- Consistent presence
- Transparency
- Understanding local history
- Respect for Country
- Recognition of intergenerational experiences

Deep listening is more than consultation, it means genuinely hearing community perspectives before determining solutions.



Recovery actions

Recovery Assistance Points were established across 5 locations in the Mid North Coast

All locations and delivery design was determined by Aboriginal communities

Taree	Kempsey	Bowraville
Bushlands- Biripi	Kinchela Boys Home Office	Community Centre
Purfleet- Biripi ACMS*	Dunghutti Elders Centre	

*ACMS- Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service

Kempsey RAP Kinchela Boys Home

Key differences

- Service providers
- Focus of providers e.g. Birth certificates
- Reduced rigidity
- Tempo
- Ability to connect with their community
- Local and known



Feedback from community member attending Kinchela Boys Home (KBH) Recovery Assistance Point

“...they were all nice and honest and didn’t make me feel uncomfortable, so I was pretty happy with the outcome, and I would recommend everyone come and talk to the people like this, for the KBH to put this on and have a BBQ and music and everyone could relax I reckon it was a beautiful turn out and you should all come down”.



Outcome

Community-led decision making in practice



Between June and July 2025 , 9 Recovery Assistance Points were co-designed and established in Aboriginal communities in Taree, Kempsey and Bowraville.

Engagement sessions	Recovery Assistance Points	Aboriginal community presentations
14	9	461

NSW RA would like to acknowledge all our recovery partners who worked towards this outcome. Particularly Service NSW Aboriginal Service Design Manager- Chad Ritchie





ARGN1198

ACCO Preparedness Forum

ACCO Preparedness Forum

Why the forum was established

The forum was established through partnership between NSW Aboriginal Land Council and the NSW Reconstruction Authority. The forum emerged from discussions from Aboriginal organisations across the Northern

Objectives:

- Facilitate ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal organisations and the NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Ensure Aboriginal perspectives and priorities are embedded in disaster recovery
- Promote culturally safe and community-led approaches to disaster recovery.
- To recognise Aboriginal Community Orgs as being best placed to respond to Aboriginal communities during times of disaster
- Share information, resources, and best practices across organisations.

What makes the forum different

Community-led decision making in practice

The forum recognises that ACCOs are often:

- First responders
- Most trusted responders
- Best connected to community
- Understand the behaviour of Country
- Bring the knowledge of community connection and kinship to the forefront

Focus areas:

- Ongoing collaboration
- Community-led planning
- Cultural safety
- Country-centred decision making
- Advocacy for system improvements



Building preparedness before disaster

Preparedness Planning Templates

The Purpose:

To support Aboriginal community organisations across the Northern Rivers region to be disaster-ready through culturally safe, community-led planning and coordination.

The forum aims to strengthen connections between Aboriginal organisations and NSW Government agencies to improve preparedness, response, and recovery outcomes.

Developed for:

- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- ACCOs
- AMSs
- RNTBCs
- Aboriginal Community Housing Providers



Moving from Reactive to Proactive

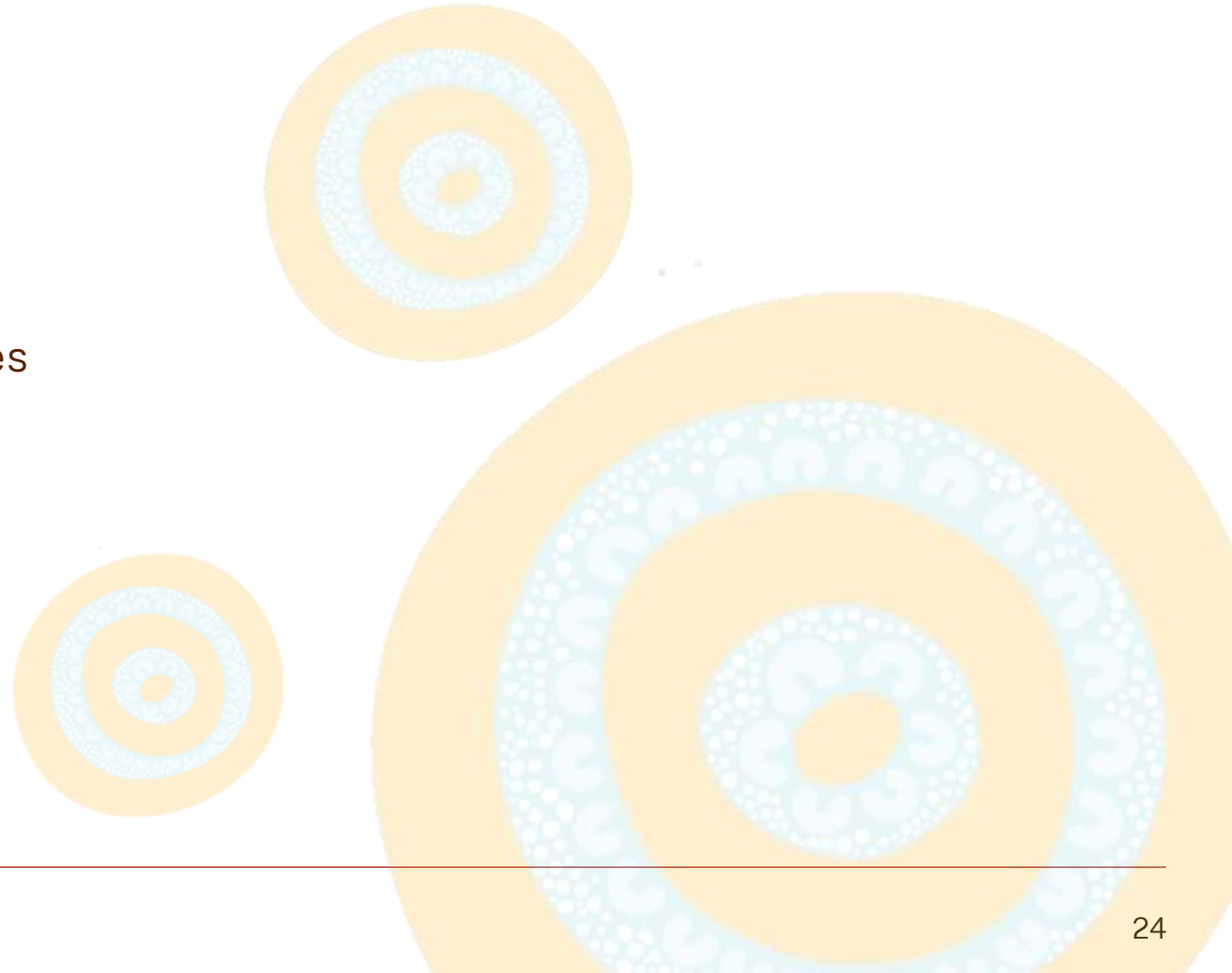
Forum outcomes

The forum supports

- Organisational capability building
- Aboriginal-led decision making
- Better collaboration
- Participation in emergency planning structures
- Country-centric decision making

Key message:

Preparedness begins before disaster strikes.



Conclusion

Understanding Community Priorities Leads to Inclusion



Across the RAP guidelines and ACCO Preparedness Forum, one message is clear:

WHEN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES LEAD, OUTCOMES IMPROVE

Understanding community priorities creates:

- Inclusion
- Trust
- Engagement
- Preparedness and recovery
- Resilience

Key message:

By embedding dignity, cultural safety and community leadership into disaster management, we move beyond service delivery and towards genuine partnership.

Thank you

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