



19 February 2026

The following is a written opening statement, requested by the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority in support of Uniting NSW.ACT's attendance at the public hearing on 20 February 2026. Uniting will be represented by:

- Mr Charlie Chubb Head of Northern & Western NSW, Uniting NSW.ACT
- Ms Niki Gill Operations Manager North Coast, Uniting NSW.ACT

This opening statement supports Uniting's submission: [Submission 14 - Uniting NSW and ACT.pdf](#)

Written Opening Statement:

Uniting is one of the largest community service providers in New South Wales, supporting more than 155,000 people each year across aged care, disability, homelessness, family services, and community programs. Our interest in this inquiry comes from extensive, frontline disaster-recovery experience across Northern NSW.

Since the 2022 floods, our teams have supported more than 4,500 people in emergency accommodation and continued assisting households through long-term recovery and reconstruction. We were again on the ground before, during, and after ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, supporting several thousand people in impacted communities.

Most recently, in May 2025, Uniting was procured by the NSW Reconstruction Authority to provide support to individuals seeking assistance post major flooding on the Mid North Coast.

Uniting deployed its already existing and experienced disaster recovery staff from the Recovery Support Service in Northern NSW to assist over 1000 people accessing the Recovery Assistance Points set up across the region.

From this work, there are three areas we'd like to highlight:

- First, **recovery alone is no longer enough**. The growing intensity and frequency of disasters means communities now cycle continuously through response, recovery, and preparation. Funding following the 2021 floods only supported people to return to the status quo, leaving them vulnerable again in 2025.

Despite this clear problem, current funding, particularly the DRFA funding model, remain heavily event based. This creates service gaps, delays, uncertainty, and leaves vulnerable people at heightened risk each time disasters recur.

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- Second, we see issues regarding continuity of supports and funding decisions, across the disaster cycle, preparedness, response, recovery, and adaptation. This results in duplication and handover gaps. People with complex needs fall through these cracks. Effective disaster support requires a workforce that can operate seamlessly across all phases, with strong knowledge of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.
- Third, we'd like to make it clear that we have seen improvements from the 2022 floods through to the May 2025 events. The system has shown it can learn and adapt, coordination has strengthened, recovery has become more responsive, and frontline collaboration has improved. This demonstrates that when experience is embedded into practice, communities receive safer, faster and more effective support.

Our central recommendation is that NSW embed ongoing, disaster skilled social support across the entire disaster welfare cycle, not just during declared events. Recovery alone is no longer enough. Adaptation and preparedness require the same sustained, community focused support if we are to build resilience in a future of more frequent and severe disasters.

We must treat recovery, preparedness and adaptation as a single continuum. With continuity of funding across this continuum, we can see communities not only being restored but strengthened.