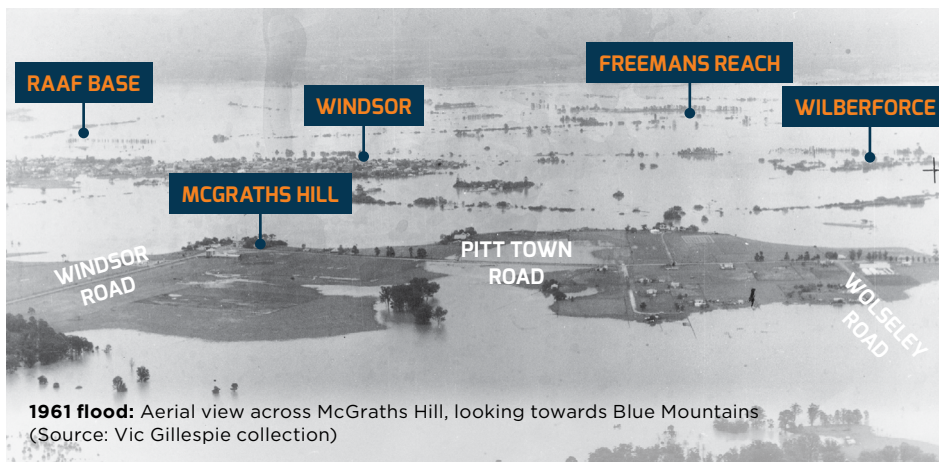


# It will flood again

FREQUENCY OF FLOODING IN THE HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has a long history of dangerous and damaging floods. Since records began in the 1790s, there have been over 130 moderate to major floods in the valley, including 6 major and 21 other serious floods since Warragamba Dam was completed in 1960.



**1961 flood:** Aerial view across McGraths Hill, looking towards Blue Mountains  
(Source: Vic Gillespie collection)

The largest flood in living memory was in November 1961, when the water reached 14.5 metres above normal river height at Windsor. During this flood the Nepean Rowing and Powerboat Club was destroyed, Yarramundi Bridge was flipped over and widespread devastation occurred across the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley.

The largest flood on record was in 1867 when floodwaters reached **19 metres** above normal river height at Windsor.

Large floods don't happen often, but when they do they have very significant impacts on the community.



View of Penrith from the Great Western Road during the 1867 flood  
(Source: Illustrated Times (London), 7 September 1867 p 145; State Library of NSW)

## Largest flood on record

There's a **15%** chance of a flood

as large as 1867 happening in an 80-year lifetime.

Observers from that time described a huge inland sea that stretched from Pitt Town to Kurrajong and from Riverstone to the Blue Mountains. Windsor, Richmond and Pitt Town became small flood islands. In Penrith, floodwaters nearly reached the corner of High and Woodriff Streets and most of Emu Plains was under water.

IF A FLOOD SIMILAR TO THIS RECORD FLOOD HAPPENED IN THE VALLEY NOW,

 **AROUND 90,000** PEOPLE

WOULD NEED TO BE EVACUATED FROM THE FLOODPLAIN AND

 **MORE THAN 15,500** HOMES

WOULD BE IMPACTED BY FLOODWATER.

## When is the next big flood due?

Until March 2021 there had not been a major flood since 1990. This is not unusual with the cycle of droughts and floods in the valley.

Hydrological research has shown that the region is characterised by drought-dominated and flood-dominated cycles that can last for decades (see diagram below). In fact, it is highly likely that a drought will be broken by a flood, and that more floods will follow.

On top of these underlying patterns, there are large annual variations of rainfall and runoff. Ultimately, floods are naturally occurring events. It will flood again in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, we just can't predict when.

Floods can occur in droughts. This happened in February 2020, when flooding happened across greater Sydney while level 2 water restrictions were in place, and bushfires were burning across the catchments.

## What you can do to prepare?

Make sure you talk with your family and friends about what you will do in a flood so that everyone knows what to do and what to expect. Prepare **NOW** and follow these six steps to save lives.

### 1. Know your risk

Visit [www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au) and view flood maps. Contact your local council for property-specific information.

### 2. Understand where to go

Find out about flood evacuation routes on the flood website. Check with friends and relatives outside the floodplain area to organise a place to go. Remember you won't always be at home when an evacuation warning or order is issued.

### 3. Know who to call

Keep local emergency numbers in your mobile or on your fridge. For emergency help in floods and storms, call the NSW SES on 132 500. In a life-threatening emergency, call 000 (triple zero).

### 4. Prepare a Home Emergency kit

Visit [www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au) to see what to include.

### 5. Check your insurance

Make sure your insurance is suitable to your situation and risk, and it is current.

### 6. Know when to act during a flood emergency

See information about the warning signs for flood at [www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au).

Listen to local and ABC radio for updates, visit the NSW SES website and follow NSW SES Facebook or NSW Police Facebook or Twitter.

## Pattern of floods in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley

