FAQs

Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) level

Why does the new hospital need to developed above the Probable Maximum Flood level?

Flooding is a key risk across the Tweed Valley region, and the new hospital needs to be developed above the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) level to ensure that it will not need to be evacuated due to flooding. Being able to bring in essential supplies and ensuring that the major population centres retain access to acute hospital services under less extreme flooding events are also important considerations.

The PMF is the general standard applied to new hospital developments across NSW. It reflects the largest flood that could conceivably occur at a particular location, estimated from probable maximum rainfall together with the worst flood-producing conditions (e.g. highest tides) in that area. Put another way, it is the level of flooding that should never occur, as opposed to flooding that is predicted to occur albeit very infrequently, e.g. flooding predicted to occur on average once in 100 years, which is the standard generally applied to residential developments.

The planning policy framework that imposes this standard on the Tweed Valley Hospital project is outlined below:

NSW Floodplain Development Manual (2005)

The NSW *Floodplain Development Manual* relates to the development of flood prone land; providing guidance to local councils in the development and implementation of floodplain risk management processes in accord with the NSW Government's Flood Prone Land Policy.

The Manual is binding on all State Government agencies concerned with the use, development and management of flood prone land, and compels them to comply with Development Control Plans and local floodplain risk management plans prepared by councils, as well as take into account the principles of sound floodplain risk management.

Tweed Shire Council – Development Control Plan

The Tweed Shire Council's Development Control Plan requires all new critical infrastructure and facilities (including hospitals) to be located above the PMF level, unless exceptional circumstances can be justified, such as servicing existing flood prone communities where no practical alternative exists. In such cases, and where the development is a habitable land use, adequate PMF refuge must be provided.

As outlined in the **Site Selection Summary Report**, the proposed site has 16 hectares of land above the PMF level with good street frontage and various access points. There is alternative road access for the southern coastal population if the M1 and Tweed Coast Road are impacted by flooding. This will help maintain access to acute hospital services for the population south of the Tweed River during times of flood, with population centres to the north able to access Robina Hospital within approximately 30 minutes.

In addition to theoretical flood modelling and planning requirements, site selection investigations also looked at the actual impact of flooding on roads and access across the region during recent, real-life flood events. Recent reviews undertaken in consultation with State Emergency Services confirmed that access to the proposed site during the 2017 floods was maintained for the population to the south of the Tweed River. The proposed hospital site remained well above flood levels; and the TAFE site opposite was used as a major evacuation centre, which registered almost 400 local residents during that time.