

From:
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: SES fail
Date: Tuesday, 5 April 2022 7:57:57 AM
Attachments: [flood_rescue .mov](#)

On 28th Feb morning i called my elderly (85 yrs) neighbours, as i could see a torrent of water rushing into their place at Mullumbimby.

The water was too high (up to chest height) and too fast-flowing for me to go in. They said they were sitting on the kitchen table waiting for the SES to rescue them. They had called the SES about 45 minutes earlier and spoken to someone about their dire straights. They told me the water was up to the level of the table and still rising. The husband was just out of hospital after a hip operation.

I immediately called SES - no answer. I also called the police - no answer.

I was standing in the middle of the road outside in the pouring rain calling these numbers repeatedly, at the same time looking for anyone to help.

Fortunately a vehicle came along - i flagged them down and said we desperately needed a boat to rescue this elderly couple. They went home and came back with a boat and went in and rescued the couple, who were completely traumatised.

I attach the video i took of them bringing the couple out - you can see the water is up to the armpits of the girl rescuer. The current was very strong - the male rescuer said the boat was almost swept away from them twice during the rescue..

I know that the SES was inundated and overwhelmed with calls.

I would suggest that a better phone answering system be set up with enough people to man it in an emergency so that calls can get through and be dealt with. The system would not necessarily have to be in a fixed place - volunteers could be linked to a central computer system so they could take calls from their homes. Or there could be a number of volunteers dedicated to manning the SES facebook page and listing there all emergencies. It was on the Mullumbytes facebook page that many boat and other rescues were coordinated by local residents on that first horrendous day.

This couple could easily have died - from the trauma of watching the swirling water rise higher and higher around them, or from being swept out by the water into the Brunswick river, which was also flowing at a tremendous rate.

Thank you,