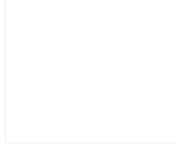


From: [Redacted]
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 7 April 2022 11:46:38 AM



Your details

Title

First name

Last name

Email

Submission details

I am making this submission as A resident in a flood-affected area

Submission type I am making a personal submission

Consent to make submission public I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story My partner and I moved to Lismore 9 months ago from Sydney, both buying properties in Goonellabah. He works in locally and I work remotely in . We absolutely love Lismore. The last few months, every time we would go into town, to have coffee at the local cafes, at community events, shopping at local businesses we would just find ourselves saying over how much we love Lismore. We very

quickly became part of the community, through my partners job, going to the local dog park, members of the gym, and some volunteering work. We love this community, we feel part of this community, we feel a sense of belonging here, one that we never felt in the city.

The first flood - we were laughing when we saw the the water had risen at the dog park in Lismore, the day before the floods, we were naïve about flooding and could not imagine what was to befall the town and people. The day before we saw local businesses clearing out their shops, we were shocked. The night of the first flood, we could not sleep, the rain was so strong and so loud, we were on our phones, on the local Facebook groups, then we started seeing posts from people asking to be saved, saying they were stuck on their roofs, or stuck in their roofs, water up to their neck, this was so devastating to read and all the while there was nothing we could do.

The next morning we drove down to Lismore, we saw our town under water, I have never seen anything like that in my life, we just broke down crying and went home, we sat on our phones and computers seeing messages of locals asking to be saved.

We woke up the next day and saw a Facebook post that our local gym was an evacuation center, I didnt even shower, I got in the car and went straight there, asking how I could help. The people, the community at the evacuation centre were incredible, they had set up a space for sleeping, for groceries, for food, for clothing, massage and acupuncture, counselling, GP clinic, there were people constantly bringing donations of mattresses, clothing, food, cakes, nappies. This was not coordinated very well at the beginning. There was no one point or person responsible for communications of what was needed re donations. There was not a clear

center or volunteer coordinator. Or section coordinators for each area in the evacuation centre, or even a communication structure between them, this was not clear to volunteers, but was slowly a bit more organised as the days went on.

Whilst the evacuation centre was amazing in what had been created overnight, there were major safety issues - everyone was sleeping in the same area - men, women, children, babies, dogs, this did not seem safe, as there were young single women, women with children, people with mental health issues and possible drug withdrawals all in the same space.

The community spirit, generosity and support was incredible, I have seen nothing like it in my life. As for local, state and federal government support, this was not clear.

It was community saving people, how lucky we were that we lived in a region where people owned boats, kayaks, canoes, it was local people going to save locals with their boats.

It was community that went to help the clean ups.

It was local people volunteering in the evacuation centre.

The community, and the people that came from Gold Coast, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney brought food and supplies, where was government?

It was locals housing friends, families, pets. It was locals buying food, goods, for the flood victims. Not only was it local community, untrained people that were doing the saving, support, cleaning, housing and volunteering, but they were using their own funds, and these were already traumatised people that started burning

out and having breakdowns.

Where was the government help?

Lismore was like a war zone, it still is, 6 weeks later, I can say this because I've been in a civil war zone. The town was in ruins, rubbish everywhere, hundreds of people in evacuation centres, people without phone reception, power, food and petrol (for a while). There were helicopters constantly flying above - it was like a war zone.

My work gave me a week off to volunteer at the evacuation centre, I walked around, giving those that were in shock, water, food, comfort. Even though we have donation centres available, they don't know what they want, they are in shock. The volunteers are exhausted and burnt out, I had a break down, took a week off and now back, doing an hour a day volunteering where I can.

The toll of this on people physical and mental health is going to show later. We can see the physical ruins, people losing everything - homes, businesses, livelihoods, lives, pets, belongings.

A lot of people are staying with friends and family, they are not registering for housing or grants, they are cleaning up their homes and businesses to go back, which is not sustainable, like the second flood showed us. But they are in survival mode, and now the volunteers are also burnt out and exhausted. Yes there are local services, but they are run by locals which have gone through their own trauma.

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#)

1.1 Causes and The creek near my place in Woodlawn, flooded,

contributing factors	our roads were blocked for 4-5 days, we have power and phone reception down.
1.2 Preparation and planning	<p>Not sure if there is an evacuation preparation and planning plan.</p> <p>identify and communicate the locations and plans clearly to community.</p> <p>have clear areas - sections in the evacuation centre, with clear coordinators and assistants.</p> <p>regular briefing meetings throughout the day, clear communication channels internally and externally, walkie talkies, incase there is no reception, watsapp groups for the volunteers etc.</p>
1.3 Response to floods	<p>the community response was amazing, but the government response was not clear or as strong, especially local, state and federal.</p> <p>It was great that the army finally came in, they have been wonderful, and so lucky they were here during the second flood.</p>
1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery	<p>How can there be transition, when there was another flood within a month, there is damage on top of damage, recovery has gone back, but also the implications on those affected, displaced, volunteers and service providers, it is trauma on trauma. We are still deep in it.</p> <p>People are walking around, still shocked and confused.</p>
1.5 Recovery from floods	<p>Its good there were some grants and financial support. But not very clear messaging around these, also how do people with no reception, phone, accessibility issues find out about these and access them. Even filling this out, its re-living the trauma.</p>
1.6 Any other matters	<p>People are shocked, exhausted, burnt out, traumatised - nearly everyone in this area, those that have lost everything, those supporting them - volunteers, service providers, there is a going to be huge long term physical and mental health issues. We need fresh people from outside of this disaster to come and help with recovery.</p>

Also what are the long term sustainable solutions, this inquiry might contribute to that, but also the immediate, medium and long term solutions. It is unclear who is helping and guiding this.

There are many people without housing that are not registering for housing or going through government channels, they are exhausted, disheartened, leaving this area. There are going to be major homelessness numbers arising from this, DV issues, drug and alcohol, and mental health. There is potential for a greater social/community disaster here unfortunately.

The only thing keeping everyone going is the community spirit, support, generosity and love, but this will also have its limits, we are all human going through different traumas from these events.

Thank you.

Supporting documents or images

From:
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Fwd: Thank you for your submission to the Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 8 April 2022 2:11:08 AM

Hi There,

I made 2 submissions yesterday, this big one, then a smaller one with some things I had forgotten in the first one.

With this submission, I chose for it to be public but could I please change my consent from making it public with my name to making it public but anonymous please.

Thank you.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: NSW Government <webforms@customerservice.nsw.gov.au>
Date: Thursday, April 7, 2022
Subject: Thank you for your submission to the Floods Inquiry
To: