

From:
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Completed submission for
Date: Friday, 8 April 2022 6:48:31 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

On the 28th February, 2022, I witnessed the most amazing cyclonic event in the history of the Northern Rivers of New South Wales and directly, South Lismore.

South Lismore...the suburb our council has been trying to destroy since they declared us and North Lismore "Undesirable and Unworthy" in 2001/2002, hence we lost our railway station as N.S.W State Rail is not allowed to have a station in undesirable and unworthy suburbs. And yet, our council continued to approve the build up of our flood plains for industrial estate usage - opened roads for further expansion of our flood plains.

This cyclonic event was not a flood. I have witnessed floods as many others have - for me since 1995.

Lismore has not ever flooded whilst it was raining. Usually the rain stops and we have 2 - 3 days to prepare for the water coming downstream.

Woodburn and Coraki have not ever flooded at the same time as Lismore...they usually have 2-3 days AFTER we've flooded to prepare for the water coming down to them.

Ballina does not flood!

This was not a flood event, this was an arm of a cyclone that did not form instead it tailed it's way down the whole east coast of Australia. My friend in Victoria who has sent me money to help me, flooded on Monday 4th of April from the same weather event.

My views shall not be considered...however, if the east coast of Australia has moved closer to the Equator by approx. 108klms (in my humble uneducated opinion) we, from South Queensland to Port Macquaire, need to be considered tropical and no longer flood zone prone.

On the morning of the 28th February, 2022, around 3am, the rain had been relentless. I got up and looked outside again. At midnight I could see my unit block's neighbour's yard's grass. By 3:38am I had measured the water was coming up one step every ten minutes and the lights went out.

I heard my neighbour who heard me out on the verandah. She sounded so scared, had no torch or light source. I assured her we would be okay that we had 80 minutes to get prepared.

I stuffed things into 3 bags...one bag had my pillow. I needed it for my jaw but that's a really long story, a novel at least.

My neighbour had been on the phone to the S.E.S who told her to stay inside. I refused to let her do that. I yelled at her to "GET OUT HERE!" She said they told her it was dangerous on the verandah in case it collapsed.

I told her..."If your fridge falls over, we only have one door, it may trap you, you have to get out here with me." I promised her I would keep her alive.

I put a chair onto the table I normally kept plants on and put my plants into my bathroom. I made put a chair on her table too. I made put her phone into a sandwich bag,

sealed and her ID and gather her medications. I couldn't believe she didn't put shoes or socks on. My priority was to keep my feet dry as with my jaw, I cannot shiver so I was aware if hypothermia got me, I would probably lose my strength and ability to stay focused.

had recently had Pancreatic Cancer surgery...with her nurse still coming to dress it daily...there was no way I was allowing her to stay in that water, no matter what the S.E.S told her.

The SES were not there! I was in charge and if she wanted to stay alive she'd better darn listen. I was not that harsh on the night nor the day...I kept her calm, I kept reminding her we were dry while others were up to the necks, drowning. My friend died, around the corner, upstream. I didn't know she was there alone, her walker couldn't move against the current, I can still hear her last breath. I have to have a break, tears have fogged my glasses.

It was not until after three S.E.S boats and four private boats ignored us - because we were dry on our chairs. They did not know the table my chair was on was made of plywood or my neighbour's of plastic, she began to float, I made her come onto my table. How she crawled through that space and I got her chair onto my table and my table held, I don't remember, I just know we were together and we were saved.

daughter, , was ringing every 10 mins asking if we were rescued. I kept assuring her we would be by the time her husband got her from Evans Head. Somehow got from Evans Head to Ballina and then Lismore and then to our driveway, just after we were rescued. He continued saving people until darkness said no more boats allowed. I kept assuring I would not let her mother die. children, and , aged 4 and 2yrs... have grown to know me...I felt a huge responsibility for a woman who does not normally talk to me. She is shy and reserved, I am not. Even with my brain damage and consistent pain, I am a good human being.

Even if I pushed all my loved ones away because I kept thinking I was going to die, way before the storm, I just thought something's going to cause me not to live and I thought it was going to be me...so I didn't want anyone crying at my funeral. I know, that is very sad. My first husband took his own life, and I was so sad with pain I could see no point of me. There are people I love who I hurt.

I survived to live a better life. I am smart. I have saved more than one life in my lifetime and in the same river.

Luckier than most, I have good friends to stay with for now. My home won't be liveable for months. I paid over \$1000 rent before I was notified to stop though that shall be held for when/if I move back in.

I have a lot more than most. I miss my stamps, sewing and art supplies collected over 40 years, no space of my own to create and be calm and not allow the stupidity of wars and governments to ignite my adrenalin hence creating words spilling out of my fingers without my brain's capacity to keep up.

I love life.

I love our world.

I love Lismore.

I love South and North Lismore.

I love the truth.
The truth makes me dangerous.
I won't ever forget the truth.
That keeps me vital.
How I kept my neighbour alive?
That is a miracle!

I went to register as disaster affected last Monday, the 4th of April, 2022, at Lismore University. I had to repeat and relive my experience to five different agencies, all in the same place, though all had their own little section. I had to write and re-write what I had lost, tick boxes as if those boxes were the ones full of my baby photos, full of my children's baby photos, full of my children's dead father's pictures... what freaking boxes have you ticked for me? Why can't I fill out those forms once, they be photocopied and people read them before they have to tell me how to feel what to think and what to do...people who did not live it, who know nothing about my experience or or anybody else's. Why was it so darn difficult to get help???

My whole suburb is gone, my whole next suburb, my whole business town... South Lismore, North Lismore, Lismore CBD...all of downstream Coraki, Bungawalbyn, Dungarubba, Wooburn, Swan Bay, Cabage Tree, Broadwater, Wardell, Ballina...etc...and then there's inland.

Nobody has anywhere to live! Landlords don't care as they want insurance and then they won't fix anything, they'll sell to council and council will again make money from our pain by approving more industrial building sites.

I lived through the Newcastle earthquake of 1989 in Hamilton, the epicentre. This cyclone event on 28/02/2022 is the scariest moment of my life. I was so scared I would fail Storm and her mother would die. I was so scared I would fail after assuring her she was better on the chairs, tied to bottles with me than inside her unit.

I keep having nightmares Karen falls into the water and I cannot save her, I wake gasping for air, guilty I live.

I keep having nightmares about my friend dying and about the children who were so scared as they sat on their roofs in the rain, waiting and hoping to be rescued, and some now freak out at any hint of rain. I know I do at the moment with the live satellite indicating more rain to come. I have no where to save what I managed to save.

Being homeless is more costly. I want to pay my way. I don't want my friends to be out of pocket because I need feeding and bathing and to use their water and electricity. I don't know what to do. Silly me. Of course I do, just laugh and have faith. No religion involved. I rely on me.,

If you did not live this you shall not know it, ever. And you should not want to experience anything like this. So many lives were lost, must have been - there were not enough boats to rescue everyone, we all know that Lismore only has 6, yes six, S.E.S boats - and not many know how to control a boat against such wild, strong currents.

The water did not flow normally, as per a normal flood. It was erratic and dangerously filthy. Sewage, oil, dead animals floated past, some deposited within our homes.

During the event I was calm and organised. Determined to keep Karen alive and keep

spirits up. I rang my neighbours and told them to get out their roof cavity the water was rising too fast. I rang Ibrahim from Lismore Appliances asking if he knew anyone with a boat - meanwhile, he was hanging onto the side of his building, in water, needing to be rescued. And he does not swim. At least I had earned a bronze medallion in my teens.

The aftermath is devastating. Devastation to the absolute maximum. Not one house survived for kilometres in every direction. Families are displaced and distraught.

We need help!

I am better at helping than needing help. I'd rather be a helper. My brain has good solutions to complex issues though it's rarely appreciated. I just know, I am so grateful my brain worked well that night and day!

I won't be the same very again.

The 01/03/2022 was the worst for me - I learned my youngest son was flooding, my eldest son in Qld his roof collapsed. My 2nd son, his daughter, my granddaughter became scared of storms...My friends downstream at Coraki, Swan Bay, Woodburn, Broadwater, Dungarubba....etc...to Ballina...lost everything other than their lives. I keep reminding everyone to find what to be grateful for...we're alive.

I also managed to save a knee-high stack of hand written books I wrote...I am happy, but overwhelmed with the loss and the devastation.

Strangers came to help during the clean-up. They stole my \$10 note out of my plastic sandwich bag wallet. They stole one of my guitars that my sons learned to play on, they stole my ladder that my father made me. They stole my ability to sort through my own belongings by distracting me and overwhelming an overwhelmed 56 year old disabled pensioner.

I don't know what to do anymore.

Since the floods I have been staying with friends in Goonellabah. I am very lucky and grateful to have such wonderful, loving, caring, kind and nurturing friends to stay with, and . These two wonderful people took me in and have made me feel welcomed, cared for and loved.

Each day I came 'home' to their place after cleaning my unit, throwing out my beloved belongings, my grandmother's belongings, my father's, my children's...they would hug me, let me cry, talk, laugh, cry more. It is so challenging cleaning up on my own, my children were all flood affected too.

My friend came to help me clean the walls and ceilings of my unit. I am trying every day to clean and to save what is left of my belongings. I've had no water since the flood until today 04/08/2022 so tomorrow, I can begin to clean my antique furniture in the hope of saving something.

I cannot think clearly each day. I developed a stutter I have not ever had before and I have been having nightmares about my neighbour falling into the water and of me, failing to save her. The eased after about 3 weeks. On week 5, Monday 04/04/2022, exactly 5 weeks after the cyclonic flooding, I went to Southern Cross University in Lismore to register for help.

I thought I was ready and capable though after having to repeat my story five times and complete five forms, ticking boxes of belongings as if they were my baby photographs or my children's baby photo's or my father's - none of those boxes ticked anything for me. I couldn't understand why my first form could not be photocopied and given out to the charities available to me for them to read, instead of me having to re-live that night and day over and over and over again. The people were all wonderful and caring and supportive. But the reliving of the trauma caused my nightmares to return that night and they are recurring every night. I have woken up all this week crying. I was not doing that last week.

I am shaking all the time. During the event I was calm and collected, organized and I know I saved my neighbour's life though I have not seen her since so I think a part of my brain needs to see her again, soon. We are trying to organize that.

ON the 4th day after being able to go back to my unit and start cleaning, I could not walk. My feet had been wearing wet boots and socks since being rescued. drove to me to Alstonville for shoes and socks, with the hope we could get fuel to return to her place as stocks were low and people were lining up for kilometres and restricted to \$50 per car. I was able to buy socks though no shoes. During shopping a well-dressed, non-affected man ran over my cold, bare, sore feet with his trolley telling me I "Should not shop without wearing shoes." I burst into tears replying "I would if I owned any." He had no empathy whatsoever. rushed to me and explained I was from Southy. The man replied "Serves herself right."

What does that mean?

I love living in South Lismore. We have a wonderful community and I can walk or ride my 1950's original Malvin Star pushbike everywhere I need or want. I can have a fish in the river (not that I'd eat anything, catch and release only in the Leicester River) - which joins the Wilson River at Lismore then joins the Richmond River at Coraki and then that is joined by the Bungawalbyn River, Rocky Mouth Creek (that flows to Evans Head), the river then continues to Broadwater, Wardell, South Ballina and out to sea at the beautiful Ballina bar.

I have lived on the Northern Rivers for 30 years. My youngest son was born here in Lismore Base Hospital, he is now a mechanic at Little River located in Evans Head. When I first moved up here, I met a woman named . Her brother was the on the Aussie movie Fields of Fire. and grew up on , a 200 acre farm their grandfather passed down to them. and I became firm friends with 50 years between us in age, she taught me everything she could about our floods. I had lived through the 1989 Newcastle Earthquake and was keen to learn all I could to keep my family safe. lived until she was 97 years young.

I have seen it rain in Lismore for 40 days straight and we did not flood. Lismore CBD does not flood from the river - it floods from Brown's Creek first, during flash flooding or small floods. When upstream at Upper Wilson's Creek behind Mullumbimby receives heavy rainfall that is when Lismore begins to prepare for a minor flooding. IF Kyogle is also hit with heavy rain at the same time, the Leicester, which flows down from Kyogle, joins the

Wilson's at Lismore and pending how much rain is still falling upstream - we prepare for major flooding - meaning we expect the levy to break. At this point South Lismore, usually, is already prepared. Our cars would be out, our belongings lifted. My belongings were lifted on Sunday 27/02/2022 by me as I was certain we were going to flood on the previous Thursday.

Nobody believed me in 2017 when I told my boss [redacted] at the [redacted] "Prepare high this is going to be big." Her reply was "Don't be so bloody stupid [redacted]." This time, I told my friend [redacted] at Lismore Appliances we were going to flood and he was not quite so blatant though also did not believe me. It wasn't difficult to see what was coming on the live satellite pictures I could see and for how much water fell up north. I did my best to prepare but there was nothing anyone could have done to prepare for what did come. That was NOT a flood. We do not flood from where that water came from over South Lismore. The way the rain never stopped all night and day, the wind howled so hard the rain was horizontal not vertical. This was a cyclone.

All that is wrong with me shall become right, with hard work, determination and focus. I did well and I am proud of me.

The shock of this must be so much worse for many others.

Today I took pizzas to everyone helping at Lismore Appliances, 34 Union street South Lismore. Then I had lunch with my friend who celebrated her 91st birthday, [redacted]. [redacted] was also rescued out of her window into a boat along with her disabled son and doctor son. It was so lovely to almost feel 'normal' for one lunch with one lovely family and a fantastic woman!

After lunch I drove to my unit where I needed to lock up. This morning I received a call from my landlord's son-in-law, [redacted], asking me to unlock my unit in 15 mins time so the electrician could get in to fix my leaking hot water system. Out of 7 units, I am the only one with a lockable upstairs and garage. I am the only one that saved all 3 of my wheely bins. There have been many days where I am the only idiot there cleaning my unit, on my own.

Today I returned after 3:30pm to lock up again. My hot water system was still leaking and nobody had done anything in my unit at all. Oh, but the other units are all done, and not just these other 6, they also fixed 7 others at another unit block before mine. I truly don't understand, I did speak with [redacted] about it though I don't know what to do. I feel as if I'm hostage as I have no way of removing my belongings that did survive and nowhere to put them if I could move them. The price of storage sheds is now ridiculous as there's so few available.

I feel as if I'm hitting my head against a brick wall and since it's so full of flood mud it just keeps bouncing back.

I need help. We all need help. I'm just a little fish who is busy helping myself as best I can with great support from fantastic friends. I know I am strong and capable even with my disability. I have a titanium right TMJ and jaw joint plus my left jaw was recently (during covid) re-dislocated by another woohoo "specialist" - who denies it of course so therefore I won't name them. The invisible pain I live with is intense within my head and whole body. Our jaw is connected to ever single part of our body. I feel extremely proud of me for not panicking, remaining calm and keeping my neighbour alive.

I don't understand why I feel so weak now. I know my pain is not 'normal' though I know I am built for it so it is mine and mine alone to deal with. I am allergic to too much to bother trying 'pain killers'. I prefer to work hard while I can and rest when my body forces me too. Last week I did not walk properly or go anywhere for 4 days.

This cyclonic flood event taught me I am still strong and capable though I must remember I still have to be very careful and take care of myself. If too much pressure builds up in my pain, I can sound far crankier than I truly mean to portray. I can become snappy and lose control of my typing fingers if pain triggers adrenalin.

South Lismore and North Lismore was deemed "Undesirable and Unworthy" by Lismore City Council around the year 2001/2002. After this NSW State Rail removed our train station as they are not permitted to have a station in "Undesirable and Unworthy" suburbs. After this, Lismore City Council stopped further housing development though began raising the flood plain at South Lismore where Bunnings, Spotlight and a car yard are built plus all along Caniaba Street South Lismore and have opened another road further west and plan to raise all of that land for Industrial usage. This should not be allowed to continue.

The raising of these lands has caused the flood waters to flow faster and higher in South and North Lismore as per 2017. Nothing could have changed this event. If those buildings were not there the water may have been 1 meter lower and lives may have been saved.

My friend and neighbour drowned. Her name is . She played guitar and sang country songs. I did not know she was home alone. I know she was on the phone to another friend when she drowned. She drowned and she died because she could not push her walker against the strength of the water rushing into her home and nobody went to save her. Nobody.

This event has changed me. I'm hoping that is for the best in the long run.

If you did not live it, you should not tell anyone how to feel, think or be. Nobody is more or less deserving. We all lost so very, very much and a whole lot more. We lost our dignity of going home each night to warm bed, to a roof we pay for, to a hot meal, to the safety our homes give us all.

Please help us to go home, please. I need a home of my own again. I need to paint and restore furniture. I need to potter with my plants and cook myself whatever I want whenever I want it. I want to walk around my own home naked on hot days if I feel like it instead of like a dog in mud covered in sweat and sewage.

The end. [20220228_083133](#) [Submission1](#)

Sincerely