

From:
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Flood Inquiry
Date: Monday, 11 April 2022 1:57:21 PM

Dear Professor O’Kane and Mr Fuller

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry. My sympathies go to those who have lost loved ones during this catastrophic event.

The devastation for towns like Lismore can not be imagined. The impact of the 2022 floods (and yes it is floods) along the east coast of Australia will be felt for decades, and possibly even a generation in places Lismore, Woodburn etc. The first flood was devastating, but to turn around, be in clean up and recover mode and have it all happen again is just heartbreaking and mentally many people will be unfortunately broken.

There has been great hype in the media about the ‘lack’ of response from the Government and their organisations. But honestly is a public inquiry the best way to go about trying to fix this? It takes time for the enquiry (6 months provided for this one), will take time to implement any recommendations (potentially years) and costs a great pile of money that could be put into these communities to help families and businesses rebuild and recover.

Has anyone gone to the emergency services divisions and asked them what could have been done differently in a non-public forum where they wont be shot down for speaking the truth? These are the people that were on the ground, experienced it all first hand and as first responders.

The floods were catastrophic, but floods are caused by rain which we have no control over. In the days/week prior the level of rain was constant and enough to make everything wet, but in the 24 or 48 hours prior to the flood event the rain was relentless and due to everything being wet and unable to be absorbed any more, it all just ran off to the river systems and created a flood. Completely out of anyone’s control. As with most towns on the east coast of Australia, the heart of the towns are built on flood plains as historically the river systems were the main form of transport and trade. As times have changed, the river systems are not used like they were 50 years ago, however the centre of the town and also the residences have remained. This makes those areas susceptible to floods. Over the years councils have built levee walls, increased and improved drainage to try and protect towns but if you think about it, building a levee only pushes that water to another area down river, and it is only a levee based on a river height estimate when that levee was built. Over the years following construction of the levee, things change up river – land use changed, dams put in, land degradation, deforestation, new housing estates open up, all which have an effect on the flow of water.

I have no doubt that anyone in emergency services that could respond in the areas hit did respond, some of them helping others while their own homes and families were dealing with the floods as well. We are thankful for the number of emergency services personnel that came to help in so many ways but if people think it was not fast enough, really, is that the emotions talking. For NSW to mobilise the SES, Fire and Rescue, Army (yes Federal but same thing) there is planning that needs to happen. We cannot just pick up thousands of people and drop them 700kms away in a split second. There needs to be planning around how long they going for, what

equipment do they need and if available, where will they sleep, what will they get to eat and drink, how will we get them there, who will coordinate the effort when they are there, which area needs the assistance first?

I do not blame the Government one bit. They responded, nobody knew this would happen, especially in the night to make the situation worse. If the Govt were to mobilise even 500 people that did not know the area, put them there in the middle of the night to get people out then the lives lost could have been higher. They don't know the area, what was under the flood water or where people were.

The worst thing is the media. How many times did we see on the news and social media that people were trapped and there was a media helicopter flying over beaming live scenes of people stranded, or people stranded on their roof being spoken to by the media or media going around in boats. If something needs to come from this inquiry, let it be that the media is banned or their resources used to help out. If you want to beam the live scenes, put a GoPro on the boat driver and have them go around and save people and animals rather than drive past in a hired boat with the driver, camera operator and reporter – now that is a waste of resources that could have helped.

The way forward is not an easy one or a cheap one. People have lost everything and that is terrible and unimaginable. But if they are allowed to rebuild on the flood plain, it WILL happen again. Would it be a better idea to have those towns that are on flood plains where river systems are not used for major trade or travel and that are susceptible to major floods move to higher land. I am sure the government would be willing to assist with the cost of rebuilding homes and new shopping precincts in flood free areas, otherwise I hate to say it, the floods will come again and there will be people still living on the flood plain and the devastation will occur again and the call will continue to go out to government for more funding to rebuild.

But can I ask that we please stop the finger pointing, this is a NATURAL disaster, it is not anyone in particular's fault and I don't believe could be controlled. Have a de-brief with those on the ground first and those that came to help and let's learn from that, and what is important, let's say thank you to ALL that have helped, especially the emergency service personnel.

Best of luck