

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Sunday, 1 May 2022 4:33:39 PM

## Your details

\_\_\_\_\_

**Title**

**First name**

**Last name**

**Email**

**Postcode**

## Submission details

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**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 would like this submission to remain anonymous

## Share your experience or tell your story

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**Your story**

Dear Ms O'Kane and Mr Fuller,

I am a northern rivers resident who witnessed the 2022 floods in the community where I live (Kingscliff) and neighbouring suburb Chinderah.

If the 2022 floods taught us anything it is that we are now in uncharted waters with regards to

flood risk. What we saw in 2022 changed within hours from a predicted minor flood to a fast rising behemoth, surrounding our community, creating an inland sea and isolating us for a week, cutting the M1 and putting lives at risk across our region. All this is in a well developed, suburban neighbourhood within 10km of the high rises in Coolangatta. It is hard to believe it really happened.

I am making this submission because I am very concerned that the experience of the 2022 flood and its impact on Kingscliff requires urgent reassessment of the flood risk in Kingscliff. I am not an expert but I believe the role of this inquiry is to listen to the community about what happened during this flood and to identify where there are things that can be improved. Most of the impacts of the flood were the cause of a natural disaster and unavoidable - phones were down, the M1 flooded, the river became an inland sea that spilled onto our roads, schools, shops and homes. The community did an amazing job responding alongside the SES and later the defence force to help clean the mess.

In terms of things that can be done differently, I have questions about how floodplain development now goes forward. Gales Kingscliff ([www.galeskingscliff.com.au](http://www.galeskingscliff.com.au)) is proposing a 200ha development for a series of new housing estates on the Kingscliff floodplain, and is in the final stages of approval. The land is low lying, swampy and regularly becomes waterlogged and flooded in summer. I'm excited for the development - it will bring new cafes and houses instead of swamps.

However during the 2022 flood event this land became hectares of water, several metres deep, transforming into huge lakes across our community that spilled over flooding our shops, schools, roads, yards and houses. It became very obvious how vulnerable Kingscliff is in a

major flood. I am not an engineer but it is very concerning that we are proposing a major housing estate on this same land.

This is the window of opportunity to take a floodplain and make sure that future floodplain development works, for the future flood mitigation of this town, and not just to pursue the most profitable use of the land. I do not have confidence that existing approvals and a 'business as usual' approach from council, developers and the courts will result in the best outcome from a flood mitigation perspective. Please can your inquiry consider how the government can pro-actively plan and mitigate for flood, pausing the current developments such as Gales Kingscliff while there is still an opportunity to do so, and making sure that where we need major flood drains, basins and flood plains, that these are retained strategically and preserved for the benefit of our community, regardless of who owns the land now. This is the role of Government, to achieve the public benefit that individuals cannot achieve alone.

#### Personal Account of the 2022 Floods in Kingscliff and Chinderah:

The devastating events of 1 March caught us by surprise as we were expecting a minor flood at Chinderah. Chinderah is a riverside location and we have family there who flooded in 2017. The loss of our phone and internet connection across the district on the morning of 1 March meant that despite being increasingly alarmed at the rising water levels in our local lake and the river we did not have good information that a major flood was coming. Family in Chinderah prepared their home for a minor flood but that was not what occurred.

In our suburb in Kingscliff it does not flood. Yet we could see water rising from Noble lake where it has only been in 2017 previously. We could see the water but there was no flood warning for Kingscliff. With no phone or internet working I drove to the top of the hill to find a mobile phone signal and called my family in Toowoomba to look up the BOM information and relay it to me via phone. My brother was stranded on the M1 in an uber at Banora so I knew the M1 was underwater too.

On the western side of Kingscliff is Noble lake, with a housing estate next to it (where we live). The housing estate is built up above flood level and has large flood basins surrounding it. These basins are also linked to Noble lake by drainage channels that run through the estate. I estimate these to be 2-4 metres deep and they are several hundred metres wide and kilometres long. The estate and its access roads are built up 2-4m high with the basins either side (eg Turnock St).

On 1 March the lake was overflowing into the drainage channels around the estate. These channels were dry in the morning but rose very high and very fast on the afternoon of 1 March. In the late evening/early hours of 2 March the channels were completely full and overflowed onto our roads and were encroaching on our front lawn. The stormwater/street drains were flooded and the water was rising. We had never flooded before and there was no flood warning for Kingscliff.

On the evening of 1 March (approx 2am in the morning) all the large drainage basins either side of Turnock St were completely full and had overtopped onto the roads. All roads to the estate were underwater. The estate is accessed by Turnock St roundabout (which was under water from the Library to Dominoes), or Beach St (also underwater).

I experienced the 2011 floods in suburban Brisbane and compared with 2022, what happened in the Northern Rivers in 2022 was like a third world experience. We had no warnings, no communications (phone and internet both went down on the morning of 1 March), no help from authorities, no cash, no fuel, no food. We were on our own. Luckily our community is amazing and we helped ourselves and each other. There was nothing else we could do. My husband literally rescued our 80 year old relative from waist deep water in her home. She couldn't walk through it so they hitched rides with others who were desperately trying to get their 4WDs out of the street through the rising water. A few hours earlier she had been sitting on the verandah expecting a 'minor flood'. How lucky we went back again to check on her when we did. The only reason we went back was because I could see with my eyes the water rising around our place and knew it would be bad where she was. Two days later when the water went down I helped sifting through her mud stained possessions and salvaging the family heirlooms that she had placed up on the beds to save them. The water went higher than the beds inside the house, it was almost up to the light switches. The house will need to be totally rebuilt. Again. They just finished after 2017.

When I finally was able to get out of the region when the M1 reopened nearly a week later, driving 20 minutes north to the Gold Coast was surreal. They weren't impacted at all - their daily lives were going on as normal and they seemed oblivious to what was happening over the south side of the Tweed River! They knew all about Lismore but nothing about Chinderah. Why did no one help us? The scale of the event completely overwhelmed all the authorities and the communications were down. I am concerned that in the aftermath, the same thing will happen and Chinderah and Kingscliff, along with many

many other small communities, will be forgotten as the NSW State Government understandably tries to deal with the devastation in Lismore and across the State.

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## Terms of Reference (optional)

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

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### 1.3 Response to floods

In terms of things that can be done differently, I have questions about how floodplain development now goes forward. Gales Kingscliff ([www.galeskingscliff.com.au](http://www.galeskingscliff.com.au)) is proposing a 200ha development for a series of new housing estates on the Kingscliff floodplain, and is in the final stages of approval. The land is low lying, swampy and regularly becomes waterlogged and flooded in summer. I'm excited for the development - it will bring new cafes and houses instead of swamps.

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### **Supporting documents or images**

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