

**From:**  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Submission to flood enquiry  
**Date:** Tuesday, 3 May 2022 8:54:14 PM

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Hello,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live at \_\_\_\_\_ East Lismore. I have lived there for about 2 years but have lived in the area for most of my life. On the 28<sup>th</sup> February I got up to change my newborn daughter's nappy and I saw the water coming up the road at a slow walking pace. A few hours later it had risen about 5 metres to the point that it was above floor level in the house and up to my knees. Soon after, we waved a member of the public in a boat down and were taken to dry ground. Just a little about my experience.

The main reason I would like to make a submission is to advocate for the health of the river. It was heartbreaking to see how much pollution of various kinds went into our river. It is now poisonous to eat the fish from that river or to swim in it. I don't know if it will ever recover. This will seem like a typical 'greenie' view but please consider this thoroughly. We seem to understand the river as, at best, an inconvenience (and at worst, a toilet). We assume that it is something we have the right to (and the ability to) control to our own ends, by damming, channelling, diverting etcetera. This seems like it could be a really big mistake of judgment that we have made over and over again, to our own detriment, and may well do again. The efforts we have made in the past in this spirit, such as the Lismore levee, contributed no protection in the 2022 flood but instead gave us a false sense of security and increased water current. The contribution of the Wivenhoe dam to the 2011 Queensland floods is another example, as are the levee failures in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

What if we took a different approach? What if we lived *in* and *with* our environment, not on it? The ecosystem functions of flood include adding river silts to the terrestrial environment, top up wetlands, create and improve underwater habitat. We have the ability to allow the river to continue to provide these services to the environment and benefit from them. A clean and functional river that can flood naturally could provide excellent recreational value, improve agriculture and create new tourism opportunities. But mostly, this is about respect. Allowing barrels of oil and other petrochemicals, plastic of many kinds, shipping containers, cars and all the others millions of things that we keep under or in our houses and industrial areas to end up in the environment during a flood is a show of complete disrespect to the river. I think about the First Nations wisdom that if you look after country, she will look after you. There might be a lot of value in considering whether the inverse is true: that we will never prosper here while we continue to disrespect that river.

I believe the greatest strength of human society is not its ability to manipulate its environment but its ability to adapt to it. The river, though it may be a great natural resource with its own kind of intelligence, cannot weight up and rationalise and decide

and, crucially, adapt, in the way that we can. So I believe we should do the right thing by it and move away from it.

This may seem extreme. These things aren't black and white and I understand that there are a lot of reasons for taking other solutions. But if we can adjust our approach to the river and orient ourselves a little more toward respecting the river by responding to this flood with an understanding that the health of the river is valuable and important and then take action accordingly and in a substantial and meaningful way, I believe it will be money well spent for every generation to come.

Thank you for listening.

All the best,