

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Monday, 9 May 2022 9:22:21 AM

Your details

Title

First name

Last name

Email

Postcode

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 would like this submission to remain anonymous

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story

I am writing this submission to express my experience as a single mature age woman. I left Broadwater by only an hour before highways closed behind me as I headed south to Newcastle. I do not have experience of witnessing the flood, being rescued or life as it became for so many.

My late partner, _____ and I opened a Café in 2012. The business was closed in March 2020 due to Covid. My partner, _____, passed away six months later in October 2020. A very difficult time for me. The approval of the Building Application to change the operations to include Function Centre and Restaurant came one week before Covid closed our doors. I have spent the last 18 months attempting to make these changes.

It was on the 28th February, that I poorly packed my car running through mid-calf height water. I still admonish myself that I could have packed better. Next time I will know better. Still there were many things lost that were up so high. It just beggars belief the height of the water. The water I was running through was clear, this was not river water but rising from behind.

My time in Newcastle meant relying on social media for updates. I am not social media savvy but had to pick it up. There was no media coverage of Broadwater and Broadwater was devastated by this flood. Everything is different on a phone. This adds another layer of complexity to the overwhelming layers of emotions that are coursing through me.

I arrived in Broadwater on the Monday 7th March, with my son-in-law. I thought I knew what to expect, but the reality is so much more and sobbed in the arms of someone I knew and the first person I saw at the community centre. I am sobbing as I write this submission. The community Centre became "The Hub". It was here you could pick up groceries, a small medical centre, army, meals, coffee, and the community. There is a constant bombardment of activity, whether at the Hub, or at the building site, or home. I think I was just running with everyone else. But I knew before my last family members left that I would be alone to face this on my own. I was terrified. The cacophony died

down when the army pulled out. This was a very difficult time for me. Everything dries up – the volunteers included. I was alone with this mammoth task ahead of me.

I do not know how I could be supported more. The Hub did put on a 'Happy Hour' once a week, which I did attend and it did help me to go there. As a single person, I can not ask anyone to do anything "Here you go to Bunnings and I go to Services NSW". I must do everything by myself. I am applying for grants, trying to organise tradies, there is no hot water, gas, or electricity. I had an outside tap that leaked water for two months before I could get it fixed. The toilet doesn't flush properly. It is too much, overwhelming.

Trades are non-existent and so is accommodation. There really needs to be qualified Army personnel with trades or a team of trades coming in to assist with the basic plumbing, electrical, mould specialists etc. To allow people basic living standards. I wanted to return home and did return home after 4 weeks, but it took 8 weeks to get hot water and I still have not been able to find a mould specialist.

I tried for the Business Grant but failed to get it. I find a discrepancy with what is a business. My building is zoned commercial the fact that it was closed due to Covid and was transitioning into another business model means it is still a business. It should not be based on the income of the business. In both cases it is the building that is being repaired. My future income from this building has been put on hold. I just hope I can get a grant to help me to rebuild. I often wonder who the person is who sits viewing the forms and makes decisions about my future. It is so difficult to tick all the boxes.

About the fourth week I had asked at The Recovery Centre if I could get some help with other things ie plumbing (a leaking tap); mould

specialists etc. She gave me the numbers for Services NSW and Richmond Valley Council. I phoned both numbers I had been given by the Recovery Centre. I was shocked by their responses. Both were lovely women and genuinely concerned so nothing against these women. But, both asked me 'don't you have any family and friends'. I was aghast, first by the 1950's approach to family. Secondly, this was the number I was given to access help. Nothing, no help. Again, it was made clear that I am alone and help is going to be difficult. I want to make it clear that at all times I was spoken to respectfully and kindly by staff at all the Centres.

My sister who lives in Queensland read in the Courier Mail that Queensland tradies were prepared to come down and help in the Northern Rivers but gave up because they didn't know where to go. Here I am! Desperate for some work to be done but can't access these very people I need. There needs to be a Centralised Service that connects the various trades with the people who need help. Devastating.

I tell myself to practice patience and acceptance. Accept what I cannot change. I hear of people who are going on road trips for a few months, and I think to myself that there may be options as I wait patiently for repairs to be made. I doubt I will remain here full time. For me to stay here is to live in despair. I want to live again. I have had a very difficult past 5 years. I need to breathe light and freshness.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images
