

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 11 May 2022 1:11:07 PM

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

Personally I think Ballina was forgotten about. There was little or no warning given that an area that had previously never flooded before could be impacted. Because my place of employment in Lismore was effected in the 2017 floods I was wary and watching the rainfall and more importantly the tides for Ballina. I live on the canals in West Ballina. On the

Monday afternoon 28th Feb, I took a few things upstairs, brought my parrot's cage inside and warned a couple of neighbours that I felt we could be at risk. They were all shocked by the suggestion.

I received sms messages to my phone during the night, around 2:15 a.m to say to be prepared to evacuate; there was a phone call to the landline as well. Not everyone received these warnings. Next morning some houses were door-knocked, mine wasn't.

I packed essentials after the middle of the night warning, in case an Evacuation Order was issued, which occurred early the next morning. My greatest concern was for my elderly, unwell husband, I was also concerned that if we stayed, I would lose my car to the flood-water. I drove out of the street by the requested time 7 a.m. My car almost floated at the end of the street. I had on-board my husband, 2 x cats in carriers, my dog, supplies for the pets, medication and scripts for my husband plus 2 x small suitcases. I also threw in a slab of bottled water.

The lack of warning made knowing where to go very difficult. I have no family within hundreds of kilometers. Roads were already cut in so many places travel was difficult so I couldn't get to friends. I knew there would be Evacuation Centres, but due to my husband's health conditions I was trying to avoid them. I knew Covid posed a high risk. I later heard of people who evacuated late, due to no warning, were dropped at the designated Evacuation Centre but it had been closed and moved to somewhere else but there were no signs.

The first private home we stayed at was not sustainable so we spent 2 nights in 2 different homes.

Sometimes, words can be more damaging than actions. Most people were thoughtful and understanding, but my greatest trauma came not from being evacuated and having my home flooded, but by the lack of compassion and venomous words spat at me after the 2nd night

in the first home. There had been no warning, but apparently we had disrupted their normal routine. Our location had meant he had not been able to "play pool" for 2 days. I was told we had to get out or move to a location that was not physically possible for my husband. I immediately packed and left that house. The verbal attack happened when the person who had welcomed me was out. Fortunately, we found someone more compassionate. But the way I was spoken to shook me to my core; I was physically shaking for hours.

I think it is why, to this day, I have not been able to cry and express grief over the personal loss of my home and contents.

It was a stressful time for everyone for many, many reasons. We were dealing with the unknown. Power was interrupted for lengthy periods. The internet and phone services were non-existent or very sporadic which complicated many issues. Food and fuel were in short supply. No internet meant it was difficult to shop; people needed cash, which few had. The poor communication greatly exacerbated the distress for many. It seems impossible in 2022 that calls to 000 couldn't be made; that there was no way to boost the communication. There needs to be better planning around this infrastructure.

We had no power for several days after we returned home. Food was a big issue. Random strangers delivered meals, fruit and water. I do believe that could have been better co-ordinated. Maybe it was in some streets, but not mine. Randomly, I had noticed strange / changed behaviour with wildlife in the time before the floods. Notably, crows nesting high in trees in a suburban area and black swans, which are not usual residents, arrived.

This is just my story. Many suffered much more greatly than I did. Everyone I have spoken with has a different story

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

I believe the new highway not only impacted Woodburn, I believe it is at least partly to blame for Ballina flooding. We have lived in the same home for 16 years. We have been through many previous flood events. The water has never looked like entering our home before.

1.2 Preparation and planning

SES Ballina needs to be moved. Local knowledge is paramount.

Supporting documents or images
