

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 4:03:56 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

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.6 Any other matters

Communications and emergency planning

I am a resident of the Northern Rivers. Although

my home was not inundated, I was directly affected by the flooding event.

During the flood event that occurred on 28 February I was without internet and phone for a week. We have very poor phone service here at the best of times and often no phone service, but usually when we have no service, the screen of the phone states 'Emergency calls only'. During the flood event, the week we had no phone service, we did not even have the capacity to make emergency calls. The message on the phone was 'No service'. As stated, we also had no internet and roads were cut. We had no means of communicating with anyone, and no way of calling for assistance if we had needed it, for example, a medical emergency.

I worked for the NSW Government for approximately 32 years, and in this capacity was a member of a Local Emergency Committee and often attended District Emergency Committee meetings as a representative of a NSW Government Agency. I therefore have a sound understanding of the way in which these plans work and assumptions made in them. These plans and emergency responses are reliant on communications. From my experience during the recent flood events, it is apparent that the situation we were in for a full week or having no means of communicating is not accounted for in emergency planning or response. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

People from Sydney, both government and private citizens, generally have no appreciation of the poor communication services common in this region. This needs to be better understood and acknowledged by decision-makers and the coordinators of the emergency response centres, largely based in Sydney.

The poor phone service and unreliable internet service in the Northern Rivers must be

addressed so that we are not faced with this same situation in future. Better phone service is required at all times, and measures need to be put in place to restore communications as a matter of urgency when we are dealing with disasters, which will be more frequent and unpredictable in future due to climate change. Telcos need to put in place temporary measures to restore communications in a much more timely manner than we saw during the recent flood events. I understand it was an unprecedented event, but this is what we now need to plan for. If this is not possible, other means of communication need to be established and made available to all residents urgently so that we are able to communicate with emergency services during events such as the recent floods. If anything had happened to us or any of our neighbours during that week that we had no phone or internet service we had no way of getting any assistance. This can and will cost lives. It is therefore critical that these communication issues are addressed as part of this enquiry and an appropriate action is taken to remedy them.

Supporting documents or images
