

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 8:30:56 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

My husband and two children were temporarily living with my family at Swan Bay at the time of the first flood (Feb 28th). We had bought a townhouse 6 months ago in Woodburn earlier and were preparing to move into this property. We were renting the property out at the time of the flood.

The night before the first flood we were expecting major flooding but nothing like what eventuated! We were maybe expecting water to enter our property at Woodburn but only in the lower storey. We are on a hill at Swan Bay so we were confident that we would not need to evacuate.

When I woke at 5am on Monday morning we saw on Facebook that the levee at the Wilson's River at Lismore had been breached. We tuned in to news breakfast and started seeing reports of people in Lismore crying out to be rescued after the SES and emergency services had become overwhelmed and could no longer respond. Slowly our local Facebook group feeds started filling up with requests for people to be rescued - firstly in Lismore then Coraki, Bungawalbin. An evacuation order came out for Swan Bay, however we were already flooded in so we could not leave. We knew all that water still had to come down from Lismore, we remained confident that we would be ok on our hill.

Tuesday morning (1st of March) we woke to water views and sunshine. Our small neighbourhood in Swan Bay was surrounded by water, we were an island. We walked down to the swollen river and met people who were rescued by a neighbour at 4am in the morning from a house in lower Swan Bay, we could just see the roof from where we were standing on our island. Neighbours were using the end of Reardons lane and a neighbour's property as a 'boat ramp' where they were going out in their boats to Bungawalbyn, Coraki, Woodburn and Swan Bay rescuing stranded people.

We lost power, phone reception and internet mid morning and it began to dawn on us that we would be stranded for a long time.

People started to become concerned with

access to basic food and supplies and medications. The people living in the Swan Bay area had been communicating through Facebook messenger in a neighborhood chat (set up by the neighborhood to provide info/comms during the 2019 bushfires which impacted this area. We were fortunate to have a local police member living in the neighborhood. She was able to contact those higher up to organise a food drop by chopper for us. We also began to have community meetings at 5pm in the afternoon on a fellow neighbours property. By Wednesday afternoon a chopper arrived with food and basic supplies. While many of us were grateful to be getting food and supplies we also felt guilty and worried that other neighboring areas may be missing out. From the short bursts of social media (when the internet was working only very early in the morning for about 30 mins) we knew this was the case, particularly in Coraki. We received two more food drops by chopper on Thursday and Friday. By Sunday the water had finally dropped down enough that a normal car could drive south to Maclean through New Italy. Our week of isolation was over.

Now it was time for the clean up of our house in Woodburn. Our house sat submerged in water for 9 days in total. The water had reached chest high in the 2nd floor. We were very overwhelmed with clean up. I can still smell the stench to this day. My husband and I started the clean up on our own but quickly realized we needed help. The army were in Woodburn at the time but there were so few or they had already been assigned to jobs that we could not get them to help us. There was no organization of the volunteers at all - no place to recruit ppl. I ended up just walking the streets of Woodburn recruiting people myself. By the end we had about 8 ppl helping. We were lucky to chance upon a couple of builders/tradespeople who had tools and knew what they were doing. They removed the laminate floorboards and chipboard

kitchen for us. If it wasn't for these volunteers we would be in a lot of trouble. The army did show up a few days later to see if we needed help. My husband asked a group of them to move a hot water system. They couldn't move it. They said they were going to get some tools and come back but they never did. We ended up moving the system ourselves.

The volunteer run Woodburn Hub at mcgearys shed was so helpful for us. Also all the ppl that cooked meals and food.

Three months later our house is still a shell. After the initial rush of help we have found there to be not much direction/support or advice with how to rebuild on a flood plain.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors	Climate driven weather event. The rain bomb where rainfall exceeded 700ml in the Wilson and Richmond River catchment area caused this unprecedented flooding event.
1.2 Preparation and planning	No prep or planning at all. People seemed very complacent. People are used to flooding in this area. No one thought it would be this big. It was unprecedented.
1.3 Response to floods	Response from SES was slow - it was clear that there were not enough SES volunteers to deal with an incident this large scale. It also seemed apparent that there were no plans in place for cut off communities without access to supplies and telecommunications.
1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery	Volunteer hubs set up have been helpful to access services.
1.5 Recovery from	Not enough support on the ground in isolated

floods

communities.

Not enough mental health outreach and support.
Case management support for affected people is required, it is very overwhelming applying for grants, assistance etc.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [3A6BC469-1B4F-49C2-9167-BB441AADC2BC.jpeg](#)
 - [2D8B1A01-7FDB-407A-93E2-92A2109F5CBD.jpeg](#)
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