

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 5:31:33 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

I've lived in the Mullumbimby township for 32 years. I was a member of Mullumbimby SES for 20 years so I'm quite aware of how the benchmarks for flood have been surpassed. After the 2017 flood I never imagined the previous water levels would be exceeded as they were. I awoke to being surrounded by water - like being in a houseboat. One room, my office,

was under water - dismaying but I was acutely aware that many others, my neighbours, were in a far greater predicament. At this stage I still had mobile service and knew that things were about to get worse with high tide approaching. I put on my gumboots, what a joke but at least gave me a sense of comfort knowing that I would be somewhat protected from debris, and waded out into the fetid brown, mid-thigh deep water to check on my immediate neighbours — completely inundated. They were in shock but I convinced them we needed to try to raise any hardwood furniture and paper files etc. up out of the water, telling them that making an effort now would not only save some important items but also help prevent an aftermath of despair. I've also studied Disaster Crisis Management. To date I've still not fully dealt with the damage and chaos at my own place, but again I feel so fortunate compared to so many others who in some cases are still awaiting "assessment". Over the past weeks I've thought a lot about the situation this precedent flood places Mullumbimby and other towns in the region. It's a situation that's been discussed over the years with my SES colleagues — how do you help a community living on a flood plain or in places subject to high volume rainfall/runoff mitigate the future of worsening climate change weather? I thought about the consequences of suggesting that people may need to leave — but it just doesn't seem feasible. Where would I go for instance? The negative psychological impact upon a whole community is something to be avoided (consider the ongoing impact of the VIC fires). It seems to me the best way forward is to help/educate those residents willing to adjust to a more realistic way of life on the floodplains. I cannot conceive this as viable unless all residents are given the option of raising their houses, where viable, and waterproofing and/or repurposing those buildings that are built on slabs etc. There is NO place for Mullum to relocate as a town but I feel for some this may

be the only option — and offering some kind of offset for their loss would be desirable.

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

A significant escalation in the volume of rainfall since the 2017 flood (hinterland), runoff inundating the town. Poor planning and approval of residential developments in the face of anticipated affects of climate change. We need local council to apply the consideration of further increases when approving ALL land developments, improvements, road upgrades etc. It's completely unconscionable that State Environmental Planning often overrides local LEPs, in favour of housing/land developers with projects that ignore regional conditions. The impact has been cumulative. Byron Shire Council struggles financially to implement basic infrastructure and maintain roads etc. and together with developers/tourism entrepreneurs, plays a dangerous game chasing tourism dollars at the expense of local residents.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Build above flood-level, community halls adequately protected from land-slide etc. in the suburbs and hinterland towns that can offer proper evacuation measures. These need to be equipped with generators, satellite dishes, etc. Support identified community members to nominate themselves to lead residents in times of crisis — ie. those with medical knowledge/skills, crisis management, engineers, search and rescue. Incentivised EDUCATION for all residents— being prepared for disaster etc. Mandatory orientation on local conditions/threats for all new residents/landlords — should be a prerequisite upon purchasing property and upon leasing a property to a tenant— and yes make people do it AGAIN every time to elevate sense of ownership, awareness and responsibility. There are TOO MANY ground level rentals

(illegal) and it's time property owners and newcomers faced up to this. If there is a housing shortage THERE IS A SHORTAGE - go elsewhere.

1.3 Response to floods

Fabulous community effort, but ill prepared for the potential PTSD from the exercise of search and rescue. The paid-appointed levels of NSW SES (and other organisations) needs to pull their finger out! It shouldn't come down to politics. Offer proper incentives. Help the community help themselves and stop trying to score points. Local council needs to convene better cooperation between all local bodies - incentives will help.

1.6 Any other matters

I would definitely like support on options to prevent future inundation. I have some cost-effective / time-effective ideas that will assist the whole community in being able to take up the option to raise houses, the ones that can be raised. This would allow a significantly higher number than the "2 per year" ratio, that I heard was on offer from State Government (?), at truly affordable prices.

Supporting documents or images
