

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Saturday, 4 June 2022 10:04:32 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

My residence is on the Richmond River in Casino. I have lived at this address for 23years this May (2022). I have seen substantial waters course down this river and rise up on the bank (my back block). NEVER have I ever experienced this volume of water in conjunction with continued and sustained rainfall. Having been a previous member of the local SES many

years ago and having done my EOC training, obtaining a flood boat operations licence and done many manual river and creek water readings I believe I have a fair understanding of how this situation may have been managed and handled differently.

The Richmond River at Casino experiences a rise in levels approximately 24hrs after any substantial rainfall that occurs at Kyogle. There were 2 x 24hr river rises combined with approximately a rainfall volume of 300+mm falling during this period at Casino. This was an aberrant condition as previously (generally) the river rises have occurred with less intense simultaneous rainfall or no concurrent rainfall, allowing the river to rise and fall with rare exceptions of breaking the bank.

My house was built to spec in 1984, things change over time, understandably and my residence was one of only a handful that had water through the living residences along

We evacuated the afternoon of the 28th Feb and watched the water rise and surround the house. Sextonville Rd was completely blocked at both the eastern (town) end and western ends preventing any chance of departing entirely. During the day the local SES travelled through the waters and assisted people further up the road, as they drove past our place they deliberately placed their hands up to their heads/eyes and turned their heads the other way, so as not to have to be bothered to engage or advise us. At no point were they offering assistance or providing ANY information. They were most unhelpful, seemed to be lacking training and any formal guidance. Apart from Facebook posts from council about situations, which weren't always updated and dependant upon battery reserves on our devices, information was provided poorly and ineffectively. Rarely in a timely manner. People that were in locations not affected by the water were getting personal door knocks from SES and

combat agencies, where we as directly affected were getting notified diddly squat and no assistance offered (pers obs, was on the phone as this very scenario played out). Currently we are still in temporary accommodation, not having had a complete resolution to our house and insurance. I will outline some further issues below pertaining more closely to the terms of reference.

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

The widespread and excessive rainfall that fell cannot be held accountable to any individual, organisation or government body. The planning models of local councils, the training, skills and resources (or lack thereof) of combat agencies and local council's response is an area that needs addressing more closely. Planning and infrastructure has altered runoff and affected the geography that water can flow into, over and through. Whilst housing is an ongoing social issue, so is the building codes and how and where these structures are placed.

1.2 Preparation and planning

There appeared to be no preparation or planning in response to this specific event. The magnitude of the event in the Richmond Valley LGA overwhelmed everyone and affected everyone; directly or indirectly. Whilst rain had been forecast and predicted for this period little preparation was evident or information sent out advising as to the potential gravity of the situation and measures that could/should or possibly undertaken in advance.

1.3 Response to floods

Response was disgraceful and minimalist. Elderly residents were evacuated from their flats in a low lying area of Casino around 0400 - 0500hrs on the 28th due to storm water and drains. The services that evacuated these frail and sometimes compromised individuals done a

great job. Sadly once evacuated to safe land, the agency that did the evacuation could not provide a refuge and basically had to leave these individuals to their own devices. If it were not for the good and generous nature of a neighbour, several of these people would be sitting in the rain and have nowhere to go. RVC did not implement an evacuation centre until almost 12hrs after this occurred. Not good enough. It almost appeared that RVC had no contingency to deal with this situation at all, which I find incomprehensible as during my time with the SES, all combat agencies, police, council, ambulance used to hold regular meetings and periodic combined training exercises for different scenarios.

Older people that are not conversant with technology or have access to reliable internet and such as happens in rural areas were unable to be provided with updates or information as nothing was coming through the radio, which was all that was available once electricity was lost and battery power was all that was available and internet was out. Many of these people have lived through the 1954 and 1974 floods, so had an understanding of preparations and how to manage. But what is the point when broadcasters won't fulfil their obligations and provide updates to isolated people using battery radios.

The SES seemed disorganised and not trained or ready to handle a situation like this.

They had little local knowledge, were unable to answer basic questions, provide dangerous suggestions (such as get into your ceiling/roof cavity and wait), flat out refused to assist or offer any course of action that might help people.

Since the SES has become overly bureaucratic and distant from the local people and input, this organisation has become ineffective and does not instil much confidence in the community.

1.4 Transition from incident response to

Response to recovery was sloppy, disorganised and confusing. There were so many groups or individuals wanting to assist, which is

recovery

commendable, but who do you trust and what can they provide. Response needs to be co-ordinated with the local LGA authority and recognised and approved bodies (government or charity) only. This way people know they can trust the response teams. Resilience NSW needs a good look at their structure and procedures, they're just a giant waste of taxpayer money and long lunches.

Venues for people to go to and options to get to these places was restricted and often difficult to get to. Such a widespread disaster affected everyone and that includes the volunteers and paid employees of council and combat agencies. A provision needs to be put in place where defence personnel or appropriately trained combat and support personnel from unaffected LGA's can be mobilised and sent in to assist. Also providing respite and relief from people burning out.

1.5 Recovery from floods

Such a widespread disaster on the back of covid with the ongoing rainfall being experienced, will make any inroads to recovery more protracted and lengthy, such things are unavoidable. This is one area that unfortunately just has to play out as the days unfold and resources are available to rebuild the area and information is disseminated and reports are compiled. Frustratingly this doesn't help those that are displaced, lost property, possessions and require some resolution and certainty about the future.

1.6 Any other matters

Relating back to the initial response and recovery phases, but more specifically aimed at the government (federal and state responses). After the fires and now the floods, provision should be addressed that allows the defence force to be deployed sooner than current legislation or practices entails. Also, facilities in the region that can be used and maintained for such eventualities, for example: the airport/runway in Casino was once up to jet standard, Caribous have landed here in the past. Over the course of the years, the tarmac has

degraded and the airport has been sold off to private enterprise, even though the runway is still there. Casino airport does not flood and rarely has fog inhibiting landing. In this flood situation where roads were cut and supplies (food and people) were unable to access, flights could've landed and been here so much sooner for the region. A joint government maintenance fund could support such a notion and the terminal building is still there with kitchen facilities that can temporarily accommodate people flown in. Also providing in legislation that vital infrastructure such as this can be commandeered in such extraordinary situations. I would also like to address the disparity and often unfairness in funding and assistance that was available. The Commonwealths offer of assistance was invaluable and cannot be underestimated the benefit it provided at the time. However with any goodwill, there are those that wish to take advantage and have profiteered out of lying on the forms to obtain these benefits. Deception included their address and extent of damage. Some people in Casino successfully claimed this benefit with their correct address, it's just that their correct address is in one of the highest areas of town amongst gentle hills and slopes. No storm water damage and absolutely no flood water damage. There seemed to be no checks or knowledge of geography or cross reference of verification. Perhaps if their residence is not on the insurance or assessors list then scepticism about claims would emerge at tax time.

I'm also concerned about the skills and uniformity of assessors. Two different assessors at the one site can have diverge in their assessment. Is there a national or state qualification or certification that assessors need to achieve, such as a trades gold card that can assure people that there is uniformity and objectiveness in their assessment of property and training background.

Supporting documents or images