

From:
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Flood evidence for The 2022 NSW Flood Independent Inquiry
Date: Monday, 6 June 2022 12:51:01 PM

Attention,
2022 NSW Flood Independent Inquiry , Professor Mary O’Kane AC and Michael Fuller AMP,

Good afternoon,
Thank you for allocating the time for the public to submit evidence and provide feedback on Friday 3rd June, at Windsor RSL Public Forum. Below is the statement I had prepared, some parts I did not read as I struggled with my own delivery.
I forward the below statement to your contact email provided by MP .

Please confirm you have received and where I can find information in the future as follow up from this inquiry,
Kind Regards and thank you for your time,

My name is , I am a resident of Lower Portland on the Hawkesbury River. I will try my best to list extensive issues.
Our Road was swept away in the March 2021 flood, repairs had not begun before the March 2022 flood occurred, causing further damage.
We have limited access, we are heavily financially impacted with the delay of access to our property. One end of Greens Road impassable from flood damage and the other has tight hair pin bends not suitable for trailers or trucks.

My community will be without water haulage delivery for two years due to heavy vehicle restrictions from road damage. RFS trucks will not have full access to my home or my neighbours. Government levels not widening the fire trail access or the road during this period as a two lane pass. Emergency response is delayed by approximately another 45mins. Over the past year one ambulance already delayed trying to take Greens Road via GPS direction, then having to detour and arriving to a baby struggling to breath by a further 45min delay.

The 17 km flood Detour is not a road. It is a Bushfire trail, Wheelbarrow Ridge Trail. Allocated repairs to Greens Road did not begin until after the 2022 flood event.

We are aware we live rurally, but what I have encountered in dealing with disaster relief is the lack of problem solving support to process. When you cannot adapt the way you legislate and support disaster, you expose your constituents to prolonged suffering.

It will take time to repair the road properly, it is the handling of processes prior to workmen on site that is inexcusable.

We have no other road while ours is in the river, the estimated repair time could have been drastically reduced if dealt with as a response to a flood disaster, not just another government schedule road works through process.

Allocating three months for procurement should be avoided, allocating the same amount

of time to engage engineers, people are waiting to get into their flood damaged homes and the government is putting response out to process.

Garbage still sits on the side of the road because skip bins cant pass the road weight limits at damaged site 1 of Greens Road. There is no garbage truck collection for all of Greens Road during this time period.

Government levels have continually told us they cannot make our detour a road worthy access. We are told National Parks and wildlife govern the detour zone. Grading cannot occur, the trail continually washed out and pot holed.

The majority of one lane sections have limited vision.

After the Gospers fire that threatened the same trail we are driving as a flood detour, bush fire trails across the state where surveyed by government to make access better for fire trucks and RFS access. All levels of Government will not maintain Wheelbarrow Ridge Trail for residents safety on a detour for two years after a flood event, but in the event of a fire, how will two fire trucks pass on the same one lane route?

Common sense has to come into play when recovering from disaster.

You all have the power as the game changers to make rural communities less isolated from the services we are entitled too as your citizens. If you cannot offer a guarantee to our safety on a road engineered to todays standards for road requirements, come up with other options. It is part of flood relief.

I am also snubbed enquiring why we cannot utilise the river as a transit option while the road is being repaired. It would keep our families and elderly off the trail, reduce travel times, open tourism venues and relieve the personal costs during this prolonged period of time created by government, not a flood. Even if the water service operated at allocated times.

Water taxi's cross Sydney harbour daily, yet on the Hawkesbury River, famous for the states transit system for produce in the states beginning, denied as a sensible response for flood relief.

Funding is denied by Resilience NSW for a water taxi/barge/boat because it does not fall in a certain category. Because there is not enough children, not enough people in the isolated community. There might not be a huge amount of us but Flood recovery and relief surely includes all who are flood affected.

My daughter, 8 at the time of the 2021 flood, developed anxiety travelling the detour. At that point in time, as all government levels visited the sites and spoke of "doing what ever they can" and putting out the requests to engage geo techs, she was throwing up from anxiety on the side of a trail and seeking coping support. She is a tough kid, never encountering car sickness, this is a result of facing near head on collisions on a track with limited visibility. Still my children enduring the mental exhaustion of the detour and the lengthy travel times to school everyday.

I am exhausted dealing with your red tape.

Still, the residents wait to repair homes, no income from tourism and small business. The process needs to be planned to shorten the recovery period.

But we are told it is a process, now expected to finish in the first quarter of

2023.

Flood disaster response should include planning that reduces these prolonged repair times. Why aren't public works plans already part of the flood response plan?

All I have heard from government authorities are reasons why they cannot work with other policy holders.

So many whys? Followed with answers of no, not our area, not our job. My question is who's job is it? It is up to government to fix alignment amongst departments to fix the planning.

Planning is more than a reaction, its prediction, levels of government should have procurements on tentative contracts to respond to rebuilding infrastructure, such as roads or placing emergency accommodation. Why are we waiting months for decisions to be made when State government, SES, Resilience NSW, have had the flood mapping for years, you all know what roads in the flood plain are going under in minor to major flood levels. You have them to evacuate people, to save their lives.

Local level Government would have records of how much a road costs to fix per metre, these forecasts can be made.

Why does it matter if it's a council road or a state road that is damaged? Don't all Hawkesbury drivers deserve road worthy roads after a flood? All drivers to be safe. Why is this funding not coming from one area of control after a flood disaster? Transport NSW roads responded to within three months while local roads still remain barely passable.

The Telstra towers were out during the most dangerous of flood waters, the power was off in Lower Portland for over a week. The most crucial of times to communicate, we had no reliable communication. Our satellites only cover so much without power support. Yes, we invest in generated power and fuel, we individually plan. Where is the planning from large corporation and government to back up communication? It is a LIFE AND DEATH necessity.

People with no reception, needing life saving medication were uncontactable by community, inaccessible when valleys flooded with storm water and river created their own islands.

SES evacuation alerts being sent when storm water already cut off evacuation roads.

Diabetics could not obtain insulin, caught out as flood waters that usually last a matter of days, lasted a week of slight drops and rises. Isolated with no phone service. SES Headquarters were amazing but medical supplies could not be collected or supplied the same way. How does one pick up anxiety medication for someone who suffers crippling attacks, who is only accessible by SES. These people cannot get to a pharmacy with the script and supply it to headquarters to distribute? How does one call for medical supplies when the mobile coverage doesn't work?

If Telstra can't supply communication coverage, isolated communities need satellite phones to coordinate relief. Much like the defibrillator projects for response, these areas that cannot reach each other should be provided with the

communication.

The NSW voluntary house raising scheme was implemented to improve the impact of environmental damage, recognising an area to improve past infrastructure but it also sends people away. Because we can't change the past but we can prepare for the future. A Lower Portland Local, who received a letter they do not qualify to raise their structure because they are in a flood plain. Madness. Isn't that the purpose outlined in the scheme? It simply appears one office does not want to process with another, so the property owners will clean up again after the next flood, the process of red tape to hard to improve their flood readiness in a structure built in the 1940s.

Caravan park and ski park owners need to be lawed to have only removable structures. The amount of awnings attached to caravans and vans being poured down the river by flood current is a disgrace to the environment. Yes, we love our river lifestyles, but these floods will continue to return, every structure should be removable, and cabins should have removable kitchens etc, there is enough technology to forecast rain events in the Hawkesbury to allocate time to evacuate holiday parks.

A report needs to be published on the drains water systems now flowing directly into the Hawkesbury River from developments such as the "Hills Of Carmel" Vineyard and Marsden Park. Where rain once fell on the ground, absorbed or transferred equally down several creeks, now collected on roof tops and flushed directly to the Hawkesbury. These developments need their own water catchment plans so it is not added to the flood plain system, and further developments should not go up in the flood plain, otherwise we are only going to see heartache and expense.

Claim processing can always be improved for those who legitimately deserve the service they undertook.

I refer to the northern rivers now, my parents live not far from Woodburn, at the time of the 2022 flood needing medical assistance three times a week.

Local Evans Head Chemist was flooded out of access to his chemist when the rain bomb hit the northern rivers. With parts of the pacific highway flooded with water, took the initiative to hire a private helicopter to return to Evans Head the morning of the 2/3/22 knowing life saving medical scripts had to be filled for the isolated. He issued approximately 750 scripts that day to community that had been flooded out of Broadwater, Woodburn areas. 750 medications. As a result of his initiative, he SAVED LIVES. A claim for the expense of the helicopter that saw him attend to his crucial role in the community was directed to Resilience NSW, directly lodged on Trevor's behalf by the local federal member Kevin Hogan. Today despite the federal office follow up, the claim has not been processed. He is a modest man, who cannot carry this expense but would do it again to save lives. The claim process obviously needs reviewing if life saving medical supplies and assistance to travel around flood damaged roads, whether it be water barges or helicopters, do not fall under reason for claim support.