

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Saturday, 18 June 2022 2:03:18 PM

Your details

Title

First name

Last name

Email

Postcode

Submission details

I am making this submission as Emergency services personnel

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](#)

1.2 Preparation and planning My husband (retired) and I both have experience in Emergency Management and would like to share our experience in the days before the

Lismore flood as we were inland from the Sunshine Coast at Somerset Dam. On Wednesday 23rd February, 95% of campers evacuated as we were told by the Caravan Park Managers "as a duty of care" a significant rain event was due to hit the area and we would be unable to exit the campground for up to a week. Access to the dam was about to be cut off in all directions. The comparison in how we received a six hour notification to evacuate well in advance of the impending weather event the following day. A Somerset Council staff member contacted tourist operators to notify holiday makers to evacuate as a 300-500 mm rain event was about to move over the Somerset region. The previous night a rain event had moved onto the Sunshine Coast resulting in major flooding. Somerset Dam staff sent a text to everyone at the location. We were advised, because it was the first time in 10 years Somerset Council had notified tourist businesses, we packed up and left having completed 3 nights of our 7-night stay.

The Sunshine Coast media outlets were advising on Wednesday 23 February this major rain event was heading south to Northern NSW.

Based on our experience, we suggest as part of the preparedness and response strategy there needs to be an all-agency responsibility to communicating impending major weather events with both State and Local Government being active participants ie SES in consultation with the Bureau of Meterology, Police, Local councils (dedicated staff member/s), Rous County Council (Water), Resilience NSW, Regional NSW, Business NSW, ADF, North Coast Emergency Management's DEMO and LEMO as well as local media and social media channels. It is unreasonable to expect one agency to have the sole responsibility and be effective in collating the information relevant to the weather event and getting the message out ie Lismore City Council would have a dedicated staff

member to contact tourism and business operators.

It appeared no Agency, State or Local Government Department had ownership of 24-hour monitoring and importantly notifications of the unfolding weather event and forecast like Qld did. Previously, there were communication systems with a success history that can be put back in place for future timely pre warnings.

With the North Coast expansion in recent years, we have many new residents, farmers and businesses unaware of our flood history, river heights, river flow, personal and business preparedness and response requirements. Lismore City Council has a role to inform newcomers about these areas of immense concern perhaps through information sheets with links to all the resources, provided to purchasers/residents. The 1974 and 2022 flood levels should again be indicated on Electricity Poles around the city and South and North Lismore to assist residents and businesses with decision making.

The question is, was there sufficient Agency/Department/Council staff with weather monitoring and communication responsibilities and was there any pre-event planning. An all-agency Risk Management Plan (RMP) needs to be formulated covering all weather forecasts and actions. As this event was on a weekend this should be included in the RMP.

After the 2017 flood, primary producers called for "champions of the valley" like there used to be as this was a very effective way of monitoring river/stream heights and flow before the water reaches Lismore and travels downstream. Locals have an intimate knowledge of what rainfall is occurring in their valley. This was how rainfall events were communicated 20-30 years ago. This information was then broadcast on Radio (2LM). People on the ground higher up the river

reporting on the volume of water that was travelling down. This is a way of confirming/updating what the “weather experts” have predicted. We have heard of multiple Lismore residents that were told by friend up the valley to get the hell out of there as this is like nothing they have ever seen before. River gauges have proven to give inaccurate and unreliable data.

Major service providers like Essential Energy, Telstra and Optus, Disability & Aged care providers, Schools, ABC and Commercial channels, both Radio and TV, also play an important role to ensure their services are prepared for major rainfall events and appropriate strategies in place.

Supporting documents or images
