

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Saturday, 25 June 2022 12:19:21 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** We are a family of four (mum, dad, 2 daughters age      and      ) with 2 dogs. We moved to      in Sept 2021 (just under 6 months prior to the flood).

When we moved in we were made aware the road can inundate on some King tides during the year. Our neighbours have lived in the street for

30 years and they have stated homes have never been inundated.

Tuesday 1st March 2.13am text received from  
“SES FLOOD EVACUATION  
WARNING for people in low lying areas in Ballina, Ballina West, Ballina South and areas south to Wardell. Prepare to evacuate your property Tuesday morning. Floodwaters are expected to rise. If evacuation is necessary, further advice will be provided as an Evacuation Order. Listen to local radio or visit [ses.nsw.gov.au](http://ses.nsw.gov.au) or call the SES on 132500”

I turn my mobile phone to silent each night. I only received this text around 3.30am as I woke when my husband returned from nightshift work. I immediately jumped out of bed and started to put furniture and belongings up onto benchtops and smaller items upstairs. I let my husband sleep as he had also worked the previous day and been up for nearly 24hrs (due to employees being sick with COVID and unable to work). I felt panicked and my brain was struggling to process what I needed to do in such a short time.

Tuesday 1st March 5.59am text received from  
“SES FLOOD EVACUATION  
ORDER. People in low lying areas of Ballina, West Ballina, North Ballina and areas south of Ballina to Wardell evacuate by 7am. Stay with family or friends. If unable to, evacuation centres are set up at the Wardell Sport & Rec Club in Wardell, The Richmond Rooms and Cherry Street Sport Club in Ballina”

6am woke my two daughters and asked them to pack an overnight bag and be ready to evacuate. I also woke my husband who had had only 2.5 hrs sleep. Road and footpath already inundated. Water halfway up driveway so unable to drive out (2 vehicles and a motorbike in garage). Ute on driveway. We remained at our house

Flood water rose with the high tide and around 8.30am inundated entirely around our home and into our garage, swimming pool, front and back gardens. It did not enter the house at this point. Power outage occurred around 7.30am. Water inundated from the front and rear of the house but appeared to be more from the front. Drain backed up in the pool area flooding the pool before inundation did.

After about 3 hrs, the water receded from around the house but remained approximately 2metres from the garage door (so  $\frac{3}{4}$  way up drive) and  $\frac{3}{4}$  way up the back garden. The pathways were clear of water

Water remained halfway up the driveway and the road inundated. Neighbours were collecting sandbags from the top of the road in kayaks and other volunteers were delivering sandbags via tinnys. We sandbagged our garage door, front and laundry door. We did not have enough to sandbag the doors to the rear of the house. We planned on staying to protect our home.

Surf Life Saving came door knocking and were evacuating elderly neighbours in IRB around 2pm. They advised mapping for Ballina was not good and the only place to not be inundated would be the airport. We were told we would lose power (already had), water, and sewage. At this point because of our children and the two dogs, we decided to evacuate not knowing where we were going.

Just after 4pm after we finished panickly putting as many of our possessions up high into a safe place, we drove out with our dogs in our Ute. Water was up to the wheel arches of the Ute.

We drove past homes in Burns Point Ferry Road that had been inundated on the earlier high tide.

We didn't know where we were going but ended

up with friends in Lennox Head.

Tuesday 1st March 6.41pm text received from  
SES FLOOD EVACUATION  
ORDER. People in low-lying parts of western  
Lennox Head must evacuate now. Stay with  
family or friends out of the affected area. If  
needed, an evacuation centre has been set up at  
Lennox Head Cultural Centre, Park Lane,  
Lennox Head

We then had to evacuate to different friends in  
Lennox Head.

We stayed with friends for 4 wks until Sunday  
27th March as unable to live in our home due to  
flood damage and clean up required

Wednesday 2nd March 1.17am text received  
from NSW SES EVACUATION  
ORDER for people on Ballina Island. As  
unprecedented flooding continues you should  
expect about half a metre of floodwater above  
street level across Ballina Island. If you do not  
leave, expect to be isolated, losing essential  
services. If you remain you may be trapped and  
may not be rescued. Stay with family or friends.  
Evacuation centres - Wardell Sport and Rec  
Club and Xavier College. Consider COVID-19  
precautions. If self-isolating contact the local  
Public Health Unit on 1800 004 599. Make safe  
decisions. Do not enter or drive through  
floodwater. [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au) or tel 132500

Wednesday 2nd March woke up to break down  
of communication systems. No communication  
via mobile phone call or text, no internet or  
mobile data. No communication with outside  
world to know what was going on. News  
coverage on tv was covering Ballina until Sydney  
started to flood so the focus moved to Sydney.  
As a result no idea what was happening locally  
in Ballina.

Wednesday 2nd March drove to Byron Bay. Long line ups for fuel and shops. All shops cash only as no internet for EFTPOS. Long line ups for ATMs. Managed to get internet coverage at Suffolk Park, Byron. Very minimal food/groceries in supermarkets. Shelves were bare.

Thursday 3rd March 6pm as soon as Ballina re-opened we drove to assess our home. Closest we could drive was Kalinga Street due to roads still being inundated. Road footpath was approx. 900mm high as my husband and I waded to our home.

Friday 4th March. Minimal, patchy texts and phone calls via mobile phone in West Ballina.

Damage to our home. Garage water depth to 700mm. Rest of house 500mm water depth. We kayaked back to our vehicle parked in Kalinga Street.

Road continued to inundate at high tide until Sunday 6th March. It was to a level drivable in 4WD though not advisable due to flood water and risks of flood debris.

We commenced cleanup of our home on Friday 4th March with friends joining us on 5th and 6th. Clean up took 4 weeks until it was in a state able to return and 'camp out'.

Sunday 13th March afternoon – team of ADF arrived offering assistance. Unfortunately, due to their limitations of what they can and can't do they were unable to assist as we had already done the work. Would have been really useful to utilize their help and needed them about 6 days earlier.

---

### **Terms of Reference (optional)**

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

---

<b>1.2 Preparation and planning</b>	What we received not adequate. Need to learn from this catastrophe and implement better warnings, local forecasting, communication and awareness for those at higher risk
<b>1.3 Response to floods</b>	ADF welcomed but earlier response needed. Equipment and communications need improving and upgrading to avoid failure should another event occur. Ballina SES operate from nothing more than a shed with 60 odd volunteers. Dealing with antiquated facilities when covering a large area of 47,000 residents. Provide them with state of art equipment so they can carry out their role proficiently
<b>1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery</b>	Flood Recovery Centre at East Ballina Surf Club set up promptly. Note it can be difficult for affected residents to get their in a timeframe they would like due to overwhelm of clean up task and being pre-occupied with that. Flood Recovery closing 30th June. Having attended more recently certain agencies already pulled out. It is now that residents require support and easier access to these services. Having a walk-in centre has been easier and less stressful than managing automated telephone systems and long wait times
<b>1.5 Recovery from floods</b>	Longer-term rebuilding and support needed. Many struggling. Life is not back to normal despite non-affected getting on with theirs. People unaware of damage and trauma experienced. Flood disaster payments were a great help initially.
<b>1.6 Any other matters</b>	What are Federal, State and local government eg Ballina Shire Council doing for flood mitigation. How are they protecting residents and their homes in higher risk areas eg Burns Point Ferry Road to minimise risk and damage in the future. Are they cleaning blocked drains? Residents have purchased here knowing the homes don't flood. What are chances of this happening again? Do not allow development of swamp land on Burns Point Ferry Rd. Damage

occurred to residents homes would be worse due to drainage and run off from this elevated proposal. Ballina/West Ballina residents need to be made aware and know what is being done to protect them and their assets from future events.

---

**Supporting documents or images**

---

---