

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 11 May 2022 1:48:38 PM

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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 give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story Saving Lismore from future disasters.

My name is Alan Barkas, I have lived in Lismore since 1952, with varying times away for work and play.
I worked for NRCC, NRE, NORTH POWER. And had some interesting experiences during floods over those years.

I went to school in Lismore and a major highlight of the year were our annual floods with days off and playing in the water.

It never seemed to be dirty back then but maybe it was a 'Good old days' thing. Floods were fun then and even the local businesses had a system and took it in their stride. They knew that once the tide changed, it was time to get ready and hose the building out, turn on the fans and get on with it.

My father was one of the 6 men to form the local Civil defence around the 1954 flood, so I grew up listening to the flood stories. It is my understanding that 1954 was a very wet year but only the Wilson (Richmond) River was in full flood. Everything was reasonable until the railway embankment at Eltham gave way and released a significant wave into Lismore. Was it that or the Queens visit I don't know, I was not quite 2yr.

There is an enormous lack of housing in all of Australia.

We have no accommodation in Lismore and without people Businesses will still be in trouble. We need to rebuild and defend those people who wish to continue to live in Lismore.

Pre-flood.

Few people know that well before any flood and frequently without any follow on flood event, GIRARDS HILL, Wyrallah Rd and Garrard St and Eden Pl, have a more severe flooding event than the main event, Examples are 1988 and 2017.

A downpour in 2017 came from the Golf course at such a speed that it was difficult to lift things fast enough. The 'real' flood arrived about 8 hrs later, about 300ml lower and it was our 3rd biggest.

A simple solution for this is to divert the instant and rapid run-off from Tanilawn, (the subdivision established on the hill above the Golf course), and send the bulk of the water directly to the

river. It will never solve all the problems but reducing the effect of a small drain causing so much trouble to those affected would be enough to make a huge difference. And cheap.

Just this local flooding affects people along the drain (Browns Creek) including, 1st Avenue, Spring St, Bright St, and it closes the road near Lismore Square. I heard a proposal to make the Golf Course into a shopping hub. As I said, nobody knows.

East Lismore should not ever be bothered by flooding as it's remote from the river, but the water comes around Wilsons Hill bringing with it the sewerage from the East Lismore treatment works, and backs up through the sports fields and the lower parts below Walker St. I think that by making Wyrallah Rd, a flood proof road and basically a Dam, it would make all of East Lismore flood proof and allow access through to some of the areas beyond.

I think that to build the road up, the area which is on the Eastern side of the Road could be dug up and used as the embankment for the road. In this project a lake could be formed in the unusable land on and around the Golf driving range, sorry, but the result would be increased land values and a recreation area, as we lost our lake many years ago.

Relocating a River.

My other idea is not totally new, as 100 years ago Dyal Singh wanted to dig a ditch along a line roughly where the Airport is to take the excess water from Leicester Ck.

Lismore was built where it is because of the Junction of 2 rivers. A great advantage as only 1 ferry needed. And a Pub on either bank while you wait.

As we hopefully won't be needing a ferry for the near future my proposal is to build on Mr Singh's suggestion and use the evacuated dirt / soil, PUG. TO fill in Leicester Ck to at least the Duck pond and remove 1 river from having this

Junction in the heart of Lismore. In the process of this construction a major levee would be built across to the Quarry Hill and Boree Ck would run backwards to the new course of Leicester Ck. Very few people know how much influence tides have on Lismore floods. By moving the river to a new course we would be speeding up the run-off and avoiding the effect of the tide by altering the location and pressure on any incoming tide. I would have the new course follow the existing levee and curve around the Lismore Airport and under the Loftville bridge to enter the Wilson Rv at Sandy Point.

I believe that anything we do must achieve more than one thing so a flood free road, South Lismore bypass, could be constructed on this levee,

And South Lismore people would have somewhere to put their vehicles and escape to the only high ground close to them.

None of this will totally eliminate flooding in some areas but by diverting 50% I believe that substantial damage and inconvenience can be avoided.

Coraki.

At this point Everyone always says "but what about Coraki" and I say what about it, Where do you think the water goes anyhow.

I think that as Coraki is also built on the Junction of 2 Rivers, Wilson & Richmond, relocating the Richmond to below Coraki would help with flow and height. A quick look at a map will show that it is only about 700 mtr. By placing this new river diversion so that it aimed straight down the existing river below Coraki it would speed the flow and possibly create a Venturi effect.

Further down stream

I am a bit at a loss what to do about Woodburn but maybe a new Ocean outfall near Broadwater would help and should also help Wardel and Ballina. There is no gain without pain, but I think that for the large number of residents in flood prone areas of North and South Lismore some

sacrifice has to be made and relocation or compensation applied.

If Lismore doesn't survive, everyone can say "what about Coraki" till the cows come down from the roof or wherever they are seeking shelter.

The value of these plans would be easily offset by the values that have been lost in Lismore. 200 houses in South Lismore losing \$200k each \$40M. 400 = \$80M. And that is a conservative estimate. Multiply that for everywhere else.

Slowing the Flow.

I think that a series of small catchments along all the creeks and rivers upstream would reduce the speed of even this last disaster as the railway embankment at Eltham in 1954 did.

By slowing the run of the bulk of water at least a delay could coincide with a tide change. Each weir/ catchment would need to be surveyed to ensure minimum impact and maximum benefits.

As we are not allowed to mention Dams, weirs sound better and the result may help topdress the areas. Cleaner floods.? Gentle flows.

Lismore had gentle floods until the toy levee was built. Terrible damage was done in 2017, destruction in 2022. If the experts get there way, and they will want to build a higher levee, it will kill so many that there will be a revolution.

The flood plain.

Why would humans build an industrial area in the middle of a flood plain.? I have listened for years as the EXPERTS explained that they have offset the damming effects of these developments by digging a hole to compensate for the lack of flow. They even put our rain gauge / weather Station out on the flood plain, it's been missing for 9 weeks. Along with the NBN control station / 'node', and Fire & Ambulance station in town in the flood area.

How Insurance is destroying Lismore.

Insurance looks to be the nail in the coffin for

large areas of Lismore. There are reasons why Insurance costs are so high, an example is a company paid \$13k to clean up the contents of a premises that had been taken away by the army 3 weeks earlier. Other people were paid to stay in Byron Bay, yes it was in their policy, but really, there has to be another answer. We were not insured so we fix up & cleaned up and have been living comfortably since the week after the 28.2.2022 flood. The delays in repairs will add considerably to the cost of everything including deterioration of houses through mould and neglect. The purchase of inferior quality white goods will start a perpetual loss of value for those who can least afford it.

Local Control

The best thing for all populations in disaster affected areas is to have local control over local problems. Nobody could be expected to understand the depth of flood or volume of rain while sitting in sunshine in Wollongong. The time delays in decision-making are creating life and death situations.

In 1989 Head office told our local controller to "stop making unauthorised announcements which were inaccurate as you haven't had that much rain". The local controller got his information from local farmers who had reported for many years. One farmer told me he rang the SES to tell them that their river height was not correct, they were announcing heights of 5mt, but this man was watching a boat motoring over the Tuncester bridge which would make it well over 15mts. He was told "as your not an authorised identify we can't take any notice of you". The local radio station was told that they would have their licence pulled if they didn't stop making the announcements from the local controller.

I hope we can make Lismore work again but I feel the slow pace of decisions and lack of materials are making it an even harder job. 900ml is an awful lot of water and trying to

control that is a major problem, so, it will take a series of solutions to solve. Hopefully the choice won't be just the cheapest.

I am not absolutely sure of my maths, but 900mls down Wilson River and 900mls down Leicester Creek adds up to 1.8Mtrs right in the heart of Lismore. We could handle one but obviously not both.

I hope this helps your understanding of our problems.

Thank you.

Alan R Barkas

Girards Hill 2480

Surely if the Dutch can do it, we can.

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

Nothing could have helped with this flood, 28.Feb. 2022.

The building of an industrial area on the flood plain has made a significant change to our floods and caused an increase in their height. The Wilson River was dredged for many years as a profitable business at No cost to State or Council.

1.2 Preparation and planning

It would appear to me that very little preparation was made for an exceptional event like this. THE SES were extremely unprepared and as there is the ridiculous delays while getting approval from Someone 1000klm away, is always going to be a disaster.

The BOM is responsible for forecasts and this was the greatest failure we experienced.

1.3 Response to

As we didn't see any response it's hard to

floods

comment.

Taking the debris away 2 weeks later is slow at best.

Our roads were destroyed in the progress and are unlikely to be repaired in the foreseeable future.

1.5 Recovery from floods

I have outline in my initial submission, my answer to solving the future of South Lismore. It is essential that South Lismore is re-establish and protected.

There is one reason that any of the houses survived this flood, they are built with real timber. All have good Australian hardwood frames and held together with 3" nails, not slapped together with pine and nail guns.

1.6 Any other matters

A complete plan is needed to ensure this doesn't happen again.

The experts will want to build another Wall/Levee. This poor effort has created all the destruction and endangered lives. If they are allowed to build it higher it will definitely take more lives and finish Lismore completely.

Supporting documents or images
