

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 15 June 2022 8:27:44 PM

Your details

Title	Ms
First name	Amanda
Last name	Page-McDonald
Email	<input type="text"/>
Postcode	2478

Submission details

I am making this submission as	A member of the general public
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	I helped in the evacuation centre at Holy Family Primary School Skennars Head after Ballina flooded in February. This evacuation centre was set up in the very early hours of the morning and was administered by the school principal, school staff and Catholic Schools Office personnel. I arrived at about 6am with all the food I could bring from my pantry as did other staff. Members
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of the public dropped off what they had too. Very quickly staff managed distressed people, ensured everyone was fed, set up systems to register and track evacuees, kept retirement centre evacuees separate to other evacuees to limit the threat of Covid and generally manage large groups of people. On this first day it was assumed that at some point there would be support from a government agency but this was extremely limited and ineffectual.

Communication lines were down, the whole town had gone to a cash economy, the roads were cut, no food was coming in to replenish our dwindling supplies. Local residents and restaurants started to deliver food so that we could continue to feed the hundreds coming into the centre. The shelves in the Lennox Woolworths were quite literally bare!

Meanwhile, the teachers and education staff were left to deal with some of the most marginalised people in our community, many with disabilities without access to medical professionals or their own personal medications. There were just two showers and many people required physical assistance with their personal care. So everything from cleaning of amenities to showering people was required of the school staff. Which was all done with the utmost respect and without complaint.

While the school did an outstanding job, I believe that after the initial set up there should have been support provided. Qualified medical staff were needed. Someone to administer and co-ordinate and communicate with outside agencies. Importantly, we also needed support with security, at times it felt unsafe and at one point an evacuee physically assaulted a number of other people.

I understand that this was an extraordinary event but these events will continue into the future and need a co-ordinated response. We were relying on deliveries of essential food, water, plates, cutlery etc organised by citizens on the gold coast who could get things to us where the army

could not. That seemed crazy. And it went on for days with school staff providing 24 hour care. For many of the evacuees, a state of turmoil continues as they are still displaced, my heart breaks for them.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.3 Response to floods

Major Issues in my community:

Communication was almost non-existent for days on end.

Access to eftpos was not possible for days so all transactions needed to be cash but there was no way to access cash.

Administration of evacuation centres, medical care and security at the centres (perhaps this is the ADF role)

Supermarkets needed a better supply of food and exxentials

Supporting documents or images
