

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 5 May 2022 5:18:59 PM



Your details

Title Mrs

First name Anna

Last name Barber

Email

Postcode 2472

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 On Feb 29th 2022 Woodburn, the place where I live and run my business from was told to prepare for flooding.. As the day went on we watched Lismore become inundated with more water than originally predicted, at that point we, (My husband and I) realised we were in for a big flood and were then told by ses to brace for around 1974 levels...

So we did what we could to prepare.

We moved valuable things up high into our top storey (which sits above the current in in 100 year flood level), we were prepared for water to enter our house somewhat, however we could never have prepared for the monster that was about to hit us!

Around midday on 30th Feb we were told it could potentially reach 600mm above 1974 flood and to prepare to evacuate, this was the last we heard from ses until later that evening.

I calculated the 1974 flood and added the potential extra water level to it which brought the potential water height to roughly 2m in the bottom storey of our house, not reaching our top floor by around 1m. Given this info we decided our best option was to stay. We had not yet received an evacuation ORDER so we still had the choice.

As we had our house on the market, alot of our belongings were in a shipping container beside our house. Unfortunately due to the lack of space to store all our stuff at a higher level inside the house we were unable to move all our stuff out of the container to try to save it.

Throughout the day we did what we could watching water levels at the creek, talking to neighbours, moving cars to higher ground. This flood acted differently to others we had experienced and watched. Although we had never experienced flood water in or around our home, we had watched in the past 10 years how water usually filled up the flats to the east of us, flats that are now cut off by the new pacific hwy... the hwy acting like a dam, it stopped the water from filling the entire flats, which put alot of pack pressure on the already full river and creeks upstream back into Woodburn.

At approx 3:30pm the water began rushing down our street from the creek. It fill fast! By 5pm we had ankle deep water in our home downstairs above our slab.... 5:30pm we received an evacuation ORDER! WAY TOO LATE! we were UNABLE TO LEAVE as our 4x4 would not have

made it through the water at the end of our street at the drains were backed up and not allowing water to drain away. We were now TRAPPED! water racing past our house at such a speed, with rapids and debris.

Over the next few hours we watched as the water rose higher and higher. We waited for it to come to a point of slowing, instead it rose faster. I called 000 around 11pm when we realised that the predictions were wrong and we had no idea just how high the water may reach. The emergency line lodged an SES call out for us and told us to prepare a bag each with clothes, essential medications and a blanket for when we arrived at the evacuation centre.....and told us to move things up even higher than our floor level. Never in my lifetime would I have expected the water to reach our floor upstairs! It is 2.7m above our slab and 3m above ground level!

We did what we had been directed to do and waited..... and waited.... after an hour or so I rang 000 again to check on the status of the SES and if they were close to rescuing us I was told simply they have no ETA they only lodge the evacuation requests...I was panicked by this. I then posted on my Facebook asking how long SES was taking to rescue people in Woodburn. One person commented that SES had in fact stopped rescues for the night. However I was NOT TOLD this by any emergency personnel... I was led to believe they were coming to rescue us when in fact they WERE NOT!

So we made a plan to get on the roof if need be and tried to get some rest for the night. We were terrified! The water was now a meter from our upstairs floor, our back fence had given way and we had a torrent of water racing past both sides of our house with massive pieces of debris including campervans, water tanks, tressels and much more! We were TERRIFIED! I did not sleep!

At around 3:30am I noticed a boat with a torch going from one house to another, picking up people then coming back about 10 mins later... I

flagged them down with a torche and they rescued us over our verandah railing. These guys were out there saving people in the pitch black, NOT SES, just sivilians! Risking their lives or the safety of others.

In the morning of 1st March 2022 I learned by watching the BOM water heights data chart that the water had entered the top floor of our home. It was hard to know what to feel at that stage. It took 6 days to be able to enter our home after the flood. It took that long for the waters to receed as it had no where to run to and was trapped by the dam (new Pacific hwy) so we could assess the damage.

Upon entering our home the devastation was un believable! The water had been so fierce that it literally pulled doors off their rollers and moved large furniture to the other side of the room, Because it had taken up over a week to access our house everything inside was covered in mould, even the things we had salvaged. Our saved items sitting up high were now being ruined by mould too! Everything inside the container was rusty, mouldy, covered in chemicals and absolutely ruined! It all had to be thrown out!

The sale of our house fell through as the buyer pulled out. Our entire lives turned upside down in one night! We now have years ahead of us, rebuilding, financially recovering and starting again.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [inbound4120694900087310056.jpg](#)
 - [inbound5696706747732105418.jpg](#)
 - [inbound6818735472364232549.jpg](#)
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