

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 11 May 2022 9:55:09 PM

Your details

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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 Cass Altman
South Lismore 2480

My 4 minutes.

The simplest answer is no one who went through that flood trapped in their home ever wants to do

that again. Never ever. We all love Lismore and have all built a life here, but the only way I can stay here is if I am no longer in flood. Every time it rained heavy after the 2017 flood, I was afraid it was going to flood again. Nearly 5 years later, the floods were back only this time it was bigger than we ever thought possible and it took everything.

My own experience reflects that of many of us. SMS messages telling us a different flood height predictions way too late to do anything. Climbing into our roof space at 3am and ringing 000 emergency but unable to reach them for 30 minutes. As soon as it was light enough, my wife and then I went down the ladder into chest high water that was fast flowing through the house. Yelled to out neighbour who was in a small tinny with no motor holding on to his gutter so he doesn't get washed away. He eventually gets the attention of a passing boat who comes back half an hour later to collect me, my wife and our 2 kids. Im 6ft and it is up to my neck. I carry my 8 year old and we escape. Our neighbour eventually gets rescued 3 hours later. Not a sign of any SES boats anywhere. i heard there were 2 in the area. There should have been 30.

The ride out in the boat was surreal. Passing the Ballina St bridge as it is going under water. Our rescuers using a pole to push up power lines so the boat can fit under. Getting out of the boat up past the traffic lights and standing in the rain shivering as we wait for a shuttle van to take us to the University. It is 10.30 am. I go to the hospital as I have a deep cut. I wait until 5pm before finding out that their computers went down and they forgot about me. I walk out at 7pm and get a lift to Goonelabah and buy some superglue from Woolworths to glue the cut up. It gets infected anyway. My wife found a friend's place to stay. Day 1 of hell is over.

38 hours after my call to 000 Emergency, the

police ring me back to ask if I got out or still need rescuing. We were taught from a young age to only use 000 if it is a real emergency. When we really needed it, it couldn't help us. The system failed completely. It needs a serious overhaul. In an emergency, I would still ring 000 but I no longer have any faith that it will help when we need it. That illusion is shattered.

My partners restaurant in the CBD opened 8 days before the 2017 flood. We rebuilt and started again and survived the next few years through the Covid pandemic. The flood takes everything. There is no strategy that can overcome the enormous amounts of water that arrive in Lismore. This is a continuing cycle and maybe it is time we did the simplest thing and get out of the way.

Costly engineering works and flood mitigation strategies are maybe just putting off the inevitable. This is a chance that few places ever get, to re-invent this region.

The CBD itself could be possibly protected via flood mitigation and kept as is. With a wall built around it, you could make it look like a medieval castle or a series of castles?? Whatever we do in this valley where 2 river systems meet, we have to build to withstand floods of 16m or more.

The way Lismore is now, we do not want to stay in a flood area anymore. Not after that flood. This is not just a common theme in this letter. It is a common feeling with all of us here. No one can see Lismore surviving this

You can raise houses, but that is not likely to help in the long term. My house is already 2m off the ground. It would need to be raised nearly 3m more to be anywhere near safe. When the next flood comes floating debris like shipping containers or other houses will sweep away a home sitting on 5m stumps. Strong winds could

blow it away too. If weather events are to get more extreme, going up just doesn't make sense.

Insurance could be backed and subsidised by the government, but it is a bad investment and if floods become mere frequent, it would be billions of dollars thrown away. That is why the Insurance companies do not do it. Bad for business.

Our homes have gone from liveable assets that protect us physically and financially, to a liability that we are presently unable to live in, and frankly don't want to live in. North and South Lismore needs to be moved up hill. I hope with help from council we can allow rural landholders a fee-free subdivision initiative in flood free areas surrounding Lismore. Many existing houses that are fixable could then be moved onto the new lands available. Caniaba and Modanville offer many possibilities.

We truly need to plan with long term solutions in mind when approaching this issue. Lismore is on the edge of dying and has been for awhile. Half of it just got wiped out and 90% of the commercial properties in this area were in the path of the flood. I can't stress enough the sheer volume of water that day and how fast it came up. There is no mitigation possible to hold back that amount of water. We would be better off turning Lismore into a dam that can then hold back the flood waters from other towns further downstream and let it out slowly. Sacrifice one area to save the whole region. Forget the Dunoon Dam, let's have the Lismore Dam.

Please, don't let us go through this again. Let's save Lismore and give it new life and a new beginning.

Cass Altman.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images
