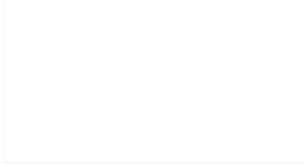


From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 3:07:47 PM



Your details

Title Mrs

First name Chantelle

Last name Mclachlan

Email

Postcode 2480

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 My husband, our 3 cats and I moved into our home 3 weeks before the flood, purchasing our first home and relocating 16hours drive from East Gippsland. The week before the flood when we started to get an idea of the risks we were facing, we got advice from our neighbours whom had all been through these events before in our street. On the saturday and sunday, we spent

our time bringing all our belongings from under the house up inside, or at least what we could. By the end of the Sunday, everyone had done all preparations, then moved their cars to higher ground, including us thankfully. We had stocked up on food and had prepared ourselves with what we would need if we were flooded in for a couple days. Having one of the highest houses on the street, it had never hit the floor in past times, I was feeling confident we would be fine in our first ever flood experience. I was wrong. We all were.

We went to bed early knowing the storm was going to make it hard to sleep, it was futile with all the noise from the wind and rain, only managing to get a few moments where the eyes stayed closed. The evacuation alert came through as an SMS to my phone at 5:58pm on Sunday 27/2, which was the only alert I received, thankfully my husband's phone seemed to be getting them. Not that this was of any assistance in the long run, as we found out. The rain during the night was like nothing I have ever experienced before, constant, hard, loud, never-ending. We paced the hours away, deciding around midnight to call SES to get evacuated, the waters were starting to rise quickly. My husband was told it was too late, that they couldn't send anyone till daybreak. We were stressed, our neighbour across the road had her young son, maybe 10 years old with her, an elderly man on our right, to our left a family of four, among the rest of our street who all stayed. We had our cats.

The water rose quicker than you could believe, by 4am, we were losing one step every ten minutes. By 5am, it was hitting the floors. I was standing in the dining room, when I felt the water and froze in fear. We knew there was nothing more we could do except get ready to get out. We had our transport carriers ready for the cats, and before they could realise the water was coming, we had them in and on the dining table while we readied what else we could. One week

prior to the flood, we purchased an 8ft painting ladder to help us paint the interiors, that ladder saved our lives. We dragged it from the front room out to the back balcony, where we set up our escape. We had a couple of bags in which we threw some essentials and had some plastic drop sheets from painting to keep us dry. I climbed up the ladder and my husband passed the cats up one by one for me to put on the roof. Once we were all up there we huddled together under drop sheets, while we watched the waters rise around us in disbelief. Once the sky became lighter, it was easier to see what was happening around us. From the roof, we could see down union st, the Norco factory and south side bridge, we could see massive tanks of gas, shipping containers, huge water storage tanks, cars, unimaginable things just floating down the currents. Nothing was safe. The boats started to come searching for people, we could see them, but they couldn't hear us through the noise of the rain, it deafened you, so we just kept waving and screaming for help whenever we saw them. But they couldn't see us, or if they did, they didn't come. We had no choice but to wait. We communicated with our families on facebook, where they tried to help, but it was too hard with them all in Victoria.

By 9am, the water was getting chest height in our homes, with some of our neighbours stuck in their homes unable to get any higher. We started to desperately yell and wave at anyone going past, finally a man in a one person canoe came to our street and we told him there was families we need to get out now. He went to see if he could find a boat. At around 10am the rescues began with our neighbours who were all stuck inside, with one house having bars on the windows, a dog and two men inside and no way out. I'm so grateful we all made it out alive. They took us to the three story building that was an old Norco site at the end of our street. They ferried us around to the fire exit where we had to climb through water and over railings to safety. Trying

not to drop any of my cats into the raging water and trying to keep them dry. It was pointless though, we were all soaked. By midday the water had risen to the point that we were no longer safe there, so another boat was sent to get us all out to the evacuation zone up Ballina rd. Again we climbed in with our stressed cats and the two bags we had managed to get out with into the boat to safety. That was the longest boat ride of my life. Sitting in complete disbelief, while out boaties navigated over all the hazards that lay beneath. The guy steering our boat, I wish I knew who he was, said he knew what was underneath, because he put it there, so I'm guessing some sort of roads/infrastructure worker was rescuing us. We finally made it safely to the other side, with angels at the other side to help us out of the boat and get our cats to dry land.

We looked for our car, my husband had parked it somewhere near where we were. Some beautiful strangers helped us up the hill, carrying our cats where we had a small miracle, our car survived. And we had keys. We put the cats in the back, and we drove to the Coles in Goonellabah so we could figure out what to do. We put a call out on local groups on facebook in the hope someone could help us. Not long after, a couple opened u[p their home to us and the cats, giving us the garage/studio as a safe space.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.3 Response to floods

The local community that all pitched in to rescue everyone were amazing, if not for these folk coming to the frontline, putting themselves at risk, the death tolls would be absolutely devastating, not that they aren't already heartbreaking. The breakdown in communications from the top to the community when they needed it most, is abhorrent. We had limited knowledge or information given

throughout this event, and when it was delivered it was too late. Leaving thousands fearing for their lives.

1.5 Recovery from floods

The community needs faster response in what the options are going forward. The government packages have been announced for QLD, so where are we at? The longer it takes, the less town we will have to rebuild. We need answers now as to what our future looks like, so we have something to plan for. Right now we are just sitting in limbo with a broken home that we cant live in. Paying rent and a mortgage and no answers in sight.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [home.jpg](#)
 - [home 2.jpg](#)
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