

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 23 June 2022 10:12:12 PM
Attachments: [2022 Flood Submission Clarence Valley Food Inc.pdf](#)

Your details

Title	Ms
First name	Debrah
Last name	Novak
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Postcode	2464

Submission details

I am making this submission as	A primary producer
Submission type	I am submitting on behalf of my organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Clarence Valley Food Inc
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	Chaiperson
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

Attached

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.6 Any other matters

We have a Facebook page with all our videos and photos called 'Clarence Valley NSW Flood Photos'

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [2022 Flood Submission Clarence Valley Food Inc.pdf](#)
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2022 Clarence Valley Flood Feedback Session No 1

1st May 2022 Ulmarra Showground 10am-2pm

Co-ordinated by Clarence Valley Food Inc, sponsored by the Yamba Farmers & Producers Market, Grafton Twilight Food Market, Feed for Friends, Holiday Coast Meats, Ulmarra Campdraft and Clarence Catering.

Supported by Clarence Valley Landcare.

30 people attended event, white board, emails received, oral statements

Session No 2

5th May Grafton Regional Saleyards

Session No 1 white boards added to on this day

Around 50 looked over and contributed to the white board.

Location of comments: Ulmarra, Pillay Valley, Lawrence, Swan Creek, Lower Coldstream, Gillet's Ridge, Tucabia, Braunstone, Brushgrove, Grafton, James Creek, Yamba, South Grafton, Maclean, Palmers Island, Ilarwill, Southgate, Tullymorgan

PARTICIPANT ISSUES

SES not in our area

SES had no co-ordination skills

SES didn't know the area

SES not asking the relevant questions SES refused to rescue

SES decisions made in Wollongong SES went to bed during the peak

ADFA did not have a boat to deliver parcels through floodwaters at Ilarwill No internet services

No phone services

Land line still not working (2 months later)

3 weeks flooded in on Lower Coldstream Road (longest ever) Flooded in at James Creek for a month (first time ever) Unable to access purchased feed due to road closures

Need support for stranded livestock

Grant funding only available after funds have been spent with a chronic cashflow shortage

Difficulty in obtaining irrigation licenses

Co-ordination of cattle trucks (particularly for elderly farmers without mobiles, or who don't have service or if it gets wet)

No winter feed because water holding on paddocks that have not had water on them before or unable to drain away due to RMS drains

Satellite phones need subsidising

Time factor trying to help other people truck their cattle out while having the need to lift stuff in sheds, or get hay ready etc

No suitable communal stockyards at flood reserves to move cattle out on big trucks

Grafton Livestock Saleyards doesn't have a roof to protect livestock from sun or rain (welfare issue)

BOM reading and modelling were unreliable for decision making

Hyacinth spread across paddocks and fences (not addressed by Council prior to floods)

Chemical contaminated Hyacinth spread across paddocks (Council, SES, RFS, NSW Fire Brigade, DPI, DPIe, LLS, DPI Biosecurity, Resilience NSW all called, hyacinth is still sitting in the paddocks)

No one to help clean up hyacinth in paddocks (SES has called but has not done the work)

No agencies would rescue our livestock

Service NSW slow response time

Some SES and RFS people are too old to rescue and assist, it is used more for a social club

RFS wouldn't share their equipment

Incorrect information by Service NSW

Primary Producer Funding/Grant eligibility criteria for 75% on farm income is the biggest issue

Flood gates on drains not maintained

Flood gates on drains not working or tested

There is a possibility some flood gates were stuck open or shut letting flood water in early or letting it sit on land too long after the river has receded

Need Wilcox Bridge fixed

Supermarket supply chain disruptions to coastal villages of Yamba, Iluka and Woolli

Food supply chains interrupted to NDIS and Meals on Wheels clients who were cut off during the flood No cold storage facilities for supermarkets / farmers to hold interstate supplies when roads are blocked No awareness of aerial support to do food supply drops for humans and livestock

No awareness of Local Emergency Management Plans

Local Emergency Management Committee does not have community or business at the table

Aerial support is not provided free for commercial enterprises

Knowledge of aerial support not forthcoming from DPI, SES, RFS for livestock

Only three days feed supply provided to livestock by LLS or DPI

B Double truck disruptions leaving and entering the Clarence Valley through South Grafton/8 Mile Lane

Pumps not big enough to empty flood waters out of Maclean

No pumps available at Palmers Island to empty flood waters out the village

Maclean sandbagging unco-ordinated

No communal hay storage facility

Unmaintained drains across the Lower Clarence

Medical supply chain services interrupted eg prescription refilling

Evidence collection / validation of damages to accelerate emergency responses / funding

Townhall meetings before, during and after emergency events

Lack of knowledge of what to do in a natural disaster by community

Tides kept flood waters back

Local knowledge and readings not used in BOM information

Once peak hits Grafton everywhere else is forgotten

Lack of gauges and river height readings throughout the Lower Clarence

Ongoing supply of fodder is very grim

Flood waters in paddocks have been there weeks longer than usual killing winter feed

Unable to access vet supplies for livestock

Tractors are unable to sow winter crops due to the grounds being waterlogged need aerial support

No access to drier land

No contractors available

No water

No boats on hand

Not enough mobile loading ramps at the Grafton Regional Sale yards

Need extra cattle yards at the sale yards

No feed on hand as having to wait a number of days is just too hard.

No facility to store the livestock feed and unload the feed

No tractors to assist in moving fodder around

No power, water and septic trucks for drinking water/ washing and cleaning

No one point of call as to who calls the shots and how it is done in the Clarence Valley for transport or rescues

No food van or trailer on hand to cook basic meals and to help feed locals in the impacted area

Use landholder's local river recording as well as BOM information

Emergency broadcast should be done more frequently after Grafton has peaked for lower river people

Tides pushed held back floods upriver

Unreliable predictions

RMS impact prediction on farmers was 5%, lived experience after 4 floods 50% impact

PARTICIPANT SOLUTIONS

1. Check all flood reserves to see if they require permanent or mobile stock yards to load cattle
2. Gillet's Ridge flood reserve needs permanent stock yards to load cattle
3. Consult with local landholders upriver with local knowledge of previous flooding and rainfall
4. Put hyacinth clean up out to private contractors
5. Consider a more thoughtful road upgrade and maintenance strategy
6. Dredge the rivers more frequently
7. Review government natural disaster grants given the number of multiple natural disasters
8. Need to set up a local community and business (include farms) natural disaster emergency NFP team who can inform three tiers of government and rescue and response agencies of needs on the ground so they can be tasked earlier and as it happens
9. Need to set up a local community and business (includes farms) natural disaster emergency NFP management team that can triage local human and livestock needs and manage donations (includes money)
10. Need to set up a local community and business (includes farms) natural disaster emergency NFP management team that can invest in training their communities
11. Need to establish human and livestock food triage centre for frozen, wet and dry goods at Grafton Airport for Clarence Valley and Northern Rivers natural disasters as it is the only airport that does not get flooded and is beside the M1 as a logistics headquarters (air support and truck accessible)
12. Local paid co-ordinator to support recovery, grant writing and equipment sharing
13. Ongoing supply of fodder is a real issue need someone to co-ordinate logistics and farm workers
14. Need strategic gravel supplies to fix farm access
15. Need a manual flood gauge on the Coldstream River, Palmers Island, Sportsman's Creek, Palmers Island, Esk River and Lawrence
16. Need greater flood mitigation, seeding dams or reservoirs
17. Mitigation needs to clean out drains
18. Need tide and gauge readings and moon phases
19. Communal hay storage sheds assessable by trucks during floods/ability to mobilise at short notice
20. Need to stand up practising nurses who are local and community centred to refill prescriptions
21. Establish local officers to conduct drone records and site inspections to accelerate response and actions to circumvent bureaucratic red tape

22. Establish local community facilitators to engage and record a collective voice and needs for prioritised actions of local area
23. Flood drain management points of contact and who is the responsible body
24. Flood drain management should include contracted farmers to carry out the work without red tape
25. Educate people how to read flood gauges, river readings and iso bars
26. Write clear public records of "in this flood this gauge read this and was x metres and this is how the flood was further downstream"
27. Manual river readings system needs to come back
28. Emergency broadcaster ABC Radio should report more frequently during a flood
29. All vehicles should carry a radio
30. All homes should have a radio
31. Flood plans should include a CB radio
32. Need to change criteria to make transfer of irrigation licenses between catchments easier
33. Have a person on the ground in each village who has contact numbers, telephone, and radio of farmers to support them and check on welfare and needs
34. Have a team of volunteers for the before and after flood rush (RFS, SES, trained cadets, community helpers) who can help do the mundane work and easy tasks to free up farmers to get up on the road to focus on shifting cattle
35. Subsidise helicopter cropping through grants
36. CVFi would like to thank everyone who contributed to this knowledge gathering

Personal stories of two Lower Clarence River farmers

Farmer No 1

My husband and I own a 200 acre cattle and macadamia farm on the east of the new highway.

My parents and grandparents farmed this land before us. They have experienced lots of floods in their farming lives too. They inform us they never experienced water laying for so long on our property as this and last year's floods (2021/2022).

As the new highway was built in a drought this and last year's floods are the first for the new highway to experience its devastating effects for lots of people and their livelihoods.

On the 27th February 2022 James Creek was overtopping its banks, and could not handle the volume of water coming from Townsend, through the Yaegl Nature Reserve, along the edge of the new highway wall with no escape area's under the highway.

This acted as a levee directing water to James Creek then out to the Clarence River. The water could not escape quickly then built up onto our property.

28th February 2022 we are in full flood again for the 2nd year running. All our 110 head of cattle we had to move to our small area on the hill around our house.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of 200 acres is inundated with flood waters and this means we will run out of feed very fast.

A lot of our macadamia's area fully under water too. We are only just starting out with macadamia trees which we have planted 600 trees and had planned to plant more this year but with the water holding for so long on our property this is now impossible.

We have a loss of around 150 trees this year to replace if something could be done about the water getting away quicker in these devastating times.

Our farm/paddocks are holding water like a big lake with the M1 on the west and our hills are on the east, Yaegl Nature Reserve on the south and James Creek running out into the Clarence River on our north.

When water lays for long periods it deoxygenates (black water) then nothing can survive in it. All of Yaegls native wildlife ie echidna's, kangaroos, goanna's, dingoes snakes etc struggle to survive including the fish in James Creek.

The February 2022 flood we got 548 mm rain over a couple of days. It took a week for the water to drop to last years (March 2021) full flood height.

2 weeks on we still have 2 metres of water on our ridges and along creek banks so water is deeper in some areas as the ridges are first to come out.

3 ½ weeks water is just getting off our bridge to our other farm over the creek and off the ridges, water holding this long kills all our grasses which means no feed for cattle over the winter.

Our lower areas are still holding water after the first flood as we still have water flow coming from Townsend through the edge of the Yaegl Nature Reserve along edge of the new highway wall into RMS Drains.

These drains aren't big enough to handle the volume of water that go into the mitigation drains which go to a flood gate into James Creek. These were recently changed to aluminium flap on a gate which is working great but for the volume of water coming through the Yaegl Nature Reserve with no other escape paths as highway wall has no drainage area's it struggles to empty.

We were very fortunate to get this year flood relief bales (Need For Feed) to keep the cattle going until we sell the calves and organise some lease paddocks for them. As with our small portion of land we have left out the flood waters and lots of stock they are up to their knees in mud.

Then about 5 weeks after the February flood on the 31st March 2022 we got another 275 mm rain over 3 days. It was a small flood but puts water levels back up again. It takes about two weeks this time for the water to get off the ridges.

Now we have planted winter grasses on our ridges in hope we don't get another flood to lose it all.

We still have water laying in our low grazing areas 8 weeks after the first flood as water is still rushing out of the Yaegl Nature Reserve along the edge of the M1 wall. These flood waters are unable to pass through because the RMS Drains are too small to cope with the amount of water overtopping onto our grazing land.

This then enters James Creek which is still brimming and overtopping onto our land as it can't handle this amount of water with limited passage.

The RMS changed the natural water flow when they built the new M1. Before the new M1 the top level of the flood waters use to flow over top of the highway straight into the Clarence River which bypassed the drains, creeks, floodgates, tides, big seas etc.

The new M1 needs more passageways for water to flow under so it isn't like a big dam wall. The water then can escape quicker with less devastating effects on people and their livelihoods.

When they built the new M1 the RMS said they were only allowed to put 5% more water across our farm, we believe we have received around 50%.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to explain our point of view and the devastating impacts this has had on our livelihood.

Farmer No 2

I am a 5th generation farmer living in the Lower Clarence and have never experienced or have had family stories of such a time with wet weather. It is truly testing times for all living in this area.

The reason for my email is I would like to raise with you some difficulties we are experiencing, and I am sure I am not the only person, with the RURAL LANDS HOLDERS GRANT.

This grant is to a total of \$25,000 in which you are provided a total of \$5000 to start with, then after you have submitted \$5000 worth of receipts you then need to use your own finances for the remaining \$20000 worth of grant.

Although we are very grateful for this grant and what it is trying to do it has become problematic because of the effect of the wet weather our cash flow has stopped, we have not been able to sell any cattle since before January because of the continuing wet weather so being able to source funds to make advantage of this grant is depending on being able to sell, and at this stage does not look like any time soon.

I am sure some more established or larger primary producers may be able to get around this problem, but in our case it is quite an issue.

Maybe if the grant could be given in \$5000 increments as you provide receipts would make it more accessible for the smaller primary producer, which as far as I am aware we smaller producers still are applicable to all the same fees and costs as the much larger producers.

The other worry I have is if we were to obtain finance (possibly a loan or overdraft) to use this grant that the reimbursement of funds will be timely and not drag on to long as that could also be devastating to our situation.

All these factors are a worry and at the moment primary producers like myself have enough to worry about without inviting more into our lives.

I do not want to appear as I am ungrateful for this grant as that is not the case, I just would like an opportunity to benefit from it and not to be hamstrung because of our current poor cash flow situation.

Submitted by Debrah Novak
Chair Clarence Valley Food Inc

M:

E:

21st June 2022