

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Sunday, 15 May 2022 4:33:16 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	<p>I am a resident in the community of Broadwater and during the floods my two story house was inundated and my car was completely destroyed. We own our two story home in Broadwater and we are a family of 5 with three children aged <input type="text"/> , <input type="text"/> and <input type="text"/></p> <p>Our house as mentioned is a two story brick home and during the peak of the flood when the</p>
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water entered the second story the Southern Wall of our building has been impacted by debris and collapsed resulting in significant structural damage to the building.

Since buying the property in 2010 we were aware we lived on the flood plain and believed the house was built above any probable flood threat.

I am also the Secretary directory (voluntary) of the Broadwater Bowling Club that was also built after and above the 1954 flood. It has been completely destroyed with water enter all parts of the club. This is a wholly community owned club and a place that people come together in each week for meals and socialising.

My family and I now live in a rental property in Ballina whilst we wait for the insurance company to do assessments and repairs

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Historically Broadwater has only been affected when all the catchments (Wilson, Richmond & Bungawalbyn) as at Major flood with water only inundating single story homes during the 1974 & 1954 flooding events. Other floods in 1988, 89 & 2017 had only minor impacts on some roads and rural paddocks. These past flood then don't impact until 2 or 3 days after peaks in the top end of the catchments are reached giving people an indicating of what possible peak heights to expect.

This flood came within 24 hours with no official warning received for Broadwater about possible heights. Of the 35 flood warning issued from the SES in relation to the Richmond River none mentioned Broadwater. Many people including myself thought even a flood of 1954 height wont effect the 2 story homes. 1 emergency evacuation text was received at 1512hrs on the 28th February with no information about where to go or why. During the second flood at the end

of March the second evacuation order was received for Broadwater but contained information telling people to go to a town that was inaccessible.

Most recently since the 2017 Lismore flood the M1 Pacific Motorway has been completed which bypassed the towns from the Pacific Hwy. This road was built on the edge of the traditional flood plain in Broadwater with little drainage options to the East. This many believe has increased the height of the flood as it acted as a choke point for the Richmond River and causes a bulge in height behind the new Bridge and West of the motorway.

1.2 Preparation and planning

The town of Broadwater had no planning from the combat authority with no engagement from the SES immediately prior to this event. Although the local unit had attempted information days COVID had prevented this from occurring and they are limited in numbers and capacity at a local level. The local unit assisted some home owners in the rain event prior to the floods but the SES as an agency left Broadwater out of all preparation and planning with no information given to the community prior to the flood. A flood watch was issued by the BOM for a minor flood watch on the Wednesday prior which was upgraded to moderate to major on the Saturday however again with the past flood history in Broadwater and the absence of information from the SES no one in Broadwater was concerned or alarmed given we only flood during the Big one. On the Friday afternoon the local council dropped a load of sand next to the SES shed which was mainly used on Monday afternoon as residents attempted to prepare for flood waters from Lismore.

1.3 Response to floods

Monday the 28th people in Broadwater woke to the news that Lismore was having record flooding. This was the first sign something bad was going to happen in Broadwater however although big it was only 2 metres above the 2017 flood which didn't affect Broadwater at all. This

water historically takes 3 days to reach Broadwater. A major flood warning was issued on Monday 28th at 8:30am and mention exceeding 1974 & 2017 level. Again no mention of Broadwater in this or any sign of the SES in town (Lismore was being impacted) so many people in the newer homes who were built above the 1954 level had no concern and those below expected some floor inundation but not much as 1974 wasn't much above the floor boards of most homes. Unfortunately no SES door knocking or information was given so the elements of the community that don't use the internet didn't really know what to expect just that a big flood had impacted Lismore. Most went to bed after getting a few sandbags around their sheds or no even doing that. This changed about 1am when what has been described as a wall of water entered homes in the Southern part of Broadwater catching many in their beds. The main reason we didn't have any deaths in Town was the neighbours looked after each other until the sun came up and anyone with a boat became a hero rescuing people from verandas, roofs and even tops of machinery. The only government boats in town on the Tuesday morning helping was 2 Police boats that I believe made their way into town from Ballina. Broadwater hill became an island for 8 days and an estimated 150 people claimed refuge here waiting for the water to recede so they could get into their homes with no power, sewer or running water. These people (mostly residents of Broadwater) came together and looked after each other with limited supplies until the Army was flagged down in a passing chopper by one of the locals working in boats to help every get what they could.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

This process was non-existent as in my experience the combat agency was overwhelmed and the transition from DCS to resilience NSW was far too late. In the Lower Richmond the SES had little resources and DCJ (Dept Community & Justice) staff organising the

evacuation centres became overwhelmed as well. It took three weeks for resilience NSW to get on the ground in the Lower Richmond and then it was only 1 staff member for the entire Richmond Valley & Kyogle shire so any work they tried just got lost in the system. On a positive side the local real estates worked overtime in an attempt to find homes for people to stay in throughout Evans Head and worked behind the scenes to make contact with DCJ house staff to get payments for temporary accommodation secured. I believe the work they real estate staff was above and beyond in a time of crisis and helped a lot of grief stricken people get a roof over their heads in the short term.

1.5 Recovery from floods

Recovery in Broadwater will go on for many years to come. The immediate recovery process was very slow due to lack of government support and resources. Many of the local government agency staff became either flooded themselves or cut off unable to get in and support the immediate recovery. In the Lower Richmond River a group led by the local Police Sargent got together and formed their own recovery committee to try and coordinate the overwhelming amount of refugees now in Evans Head. This committee evolved through the recovery and was boosted when the Army stepped in to relieve the very tired Police and helped get further support from out of town. The community of Broadwater self-activated in the absence of support and for the first 48hrs after the water receded we (Community members) arranged our own clean-up, community hub that became a central point to meet and check up on each other. This evolved into the central hub for assistance with the Army using it as a forward command post, supplies being stored here for collection and once organised the location of government and non-government organisations such as Orange Sky to base themselves. This continues today with a community coordinator in place and the hub open 3 days a week. What is lacking now is business to reopen with a lack of

confidence that people are coming back to town.

1.6 Any other matters

From my perspective in my town of Broadwater many people couldn't afford flood insurance and now have either moved on (Rentals) or in most cases are moving back into a house that has been stripped out and had or are planning to build one room back as they have no other options.

I would like to have an opportunity to have an audience with the Flood Inquiry Commissioners when they hold public hearings to explain how my community worked together to recover from this great flooding event.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [After Peak Wednesday 2nd March.jpg](#)
 - [Neighbour Tuesday Morning.jpg](#)
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