

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Tuesday, 5 April 2022 4:44:54 PM

## Your details

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**Title** Mrs

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**First name** Danielle

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**Last name** Toms

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**Email**

## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as** A resident in a flood-affected area

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**Submission type** I am making a personal submission

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**Consent to make submission public** I give my consent for this submission to be made public

## Share your experience or tell your story

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**Your story** My flood story. Trigger warning.

It was Sunday night. And I was suppose to be at work but I took it off to finish flood prep and get my kids home early from their grandfathers as I knew they would be cut off from lismore for some time if we had any kind of major flood, My husband was away in Sydney for a week so it was just myself at home with our three kids, my

two sons 12 and 10 years old. My 4 year old daughter and our pets, two dogs, one large masstiff/wolfhound X and one medium sized mixed breed, and our four handraised birds (parrots), three conures and a lorikeet.

The night of the floods I became very anxious, reading all the talk online about the size of the flood prediction from locals living in rural areas outside lismore, and all the rain we were getting, at times I felt like I was on a ship with waves hitting the windows it was so torrential. I knew how high the flood came in 2017 which was below our second level elevated house so surely it couldn't be worse then that I thought. The official prediction was still the same as 2017 so although not good, figured we would be ok. I was tired and with the SMS from the ses saying it would be safe to evac early the next morning by 6 I decided to get some sleep at around 11pm and set an alarm for 3am to get up and prepare to leave if we got evacuated or looked like it was going to be bigger then predicted.

I got up at 3am and looked out my front windows, I couldn't leave my house due to the flash flooding being so bad even if I wanted to, there was a torrent of water about waste deep rising up from the gutters, there was no way I was getting the kids and pets through that safely without risking them washing away down to browns creek drains. Being only small and having a little one with two other kids and pets I decided it be best to wait it out. I called SES and told them I wanted to leave but couldn't, they told me it was to late to leave and to just get as high as I can even if I could get onto my roof to do it. They are not doing rescues until daylight they said.

I got a ladder ready just incase but couldn't see a way to get it to the roof as our awning was in the way and I couldn't rip it off. I woke up my older boys and we watched the water quickly start rising, it was clear the levee had topped hours

before predicted.

I gathered the birds into smaller travel cages and a cat crate and gathered the dogs and kids and put a pair of floaties on my daughter and waited by the front door. I felt this was the best place to be, because if anyone was going to save us it would probably be from here, and I didn't want to become trapped inside the house.

Soon the lights went out and the water got higher and higher, pouring into the house like a bathtub filling up. My sons became scared and anxious and I told them I needed them to be brave for me, and listen to everything I said, and to all stay together. and we all stood and looked out the front door, trying to think of what we would and could do. I knew I didn't want to go into the house and become trapped so the front door felt like the best place incase we needed to go somehow.

My daughter's room is near the front door and I had my daughter on her bed with the dogs until the water started coming above her bed so I picked her up and held her. The dogs were becoming anxious as the water started to rise higher. We could hear furniture banging, slamming and falling over in the house, large shipping containers and giant freezers floated down the road like they were weightless, then the overwhelming smell of fuel choked us, soon the water reached hip height and the dogs started howling and yelping as they struggled to keep above water, my daughter screamed and cried asking if she could just go into my bed (which would of been under water) I grabbed a wooden pallet that floated over and sat our youngest conure (parrot) and our lorikeet (who isn't the best flyer) in two cages on the pallet, then instructed my son's to let out our bonded pair of conures as I could not hold any more above water with my daughter on one hip and keeping the pallet with the other birds from floating away, the cage they had was to big to carry now and no one would be able to take it if

we had to swim, they are both hand tame and excellent flyers and had each other to rely on so we open their cage and just hoped for the best and that they would take care of each other until we could hopefully find them again. They hung in their cage with the door open. I wasn't sure if they left.

Soon the water was up to my chest and one of my dogs was just swimming to survive and kept swimming out my two story front windows looking for something to climb onto and I was having to keep calling her back into the house through the window. Yells for help came from the darkness and After a while We could hear boats coming and along with everyone else screamed into the night for help. Begging for my children's lives to be saved. My other large dog I couldn't see anymore but I was starting to think the worst for my children's safety so couldn't look for her. At that point I seen my neighbours climb onto their roof, boats continued up and down Ballina road which was now a river. but none would stop for our cries for help, then one man yelled back to us "I'll be back I have to save my family" minutes felt like hours and soon he arrived and took my neighbours young daughter and another of their family members. The water was getting higher and higher and my neighbours offered to swim over to get my kids onto their roof, after getting my 10 year old son up onto their roof they were halfway swimming over to their roof with my 12 year old when the man in a boat came back to our rescue, I handed him my 4 year old daughter and the birds from the pallet and pushed the pallet away, my eldest son came back from halfway to the neighbours roof and we got him in, I heaved in our medium sized dog but couldn't see my big girl, I quickly turned back into the house swimming down the hallway calling for her, I couldn't leave her, she's always protected me and I needed to protect her, then I caught sight of her silhouette standing on my art desk which was now also under water, she was frozen scared and wouldn't move so I grabbed her and

pulled her out, chest deep or more back down the hallway and heaved her into the boat with the man's help, I got in and we picked up my other son waiting from the neighbours roof before being driven to safety of land near Prema house.

I stayed with friends all day just out of flood zone they gave us dry clothes and food and offered us am safe haven. My mother from Ballina came and picked us all up that night and we went back to my parents place in West Ballina.

After a good hot shower and some food we went to bed thinking all was well, when I woke up at 4am to an SMS telling us to evacuate!

Again we packed everyone up including pets, with my parents and went off to the Cherry St evac centre and spent all day there.

After five flight cancellations my husband soon joined us in ballina, and we made the choice to borrow my dad's car and drive back to lismore and wait until the waters went down so we could get to my father inlaws place out near casino which was unaffected, but cut off. As my parents house was now unreachable.

The following day our conure pair we let go in last attempts to save was found and we have all been reunited again.

In the end my parents house in Ballina, plus our house in lismore which they also own and rent to us, was destroyed.

We crashed with some friends for a few nights until we could finally get through to father inlaws where we have been staying since. Now like many others trying to work out how to slowly rebuild life to something that resembles normal.

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## **Terms of Reference (optional)**

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

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### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

For starters, lismore needs better dorm style pet friendly emergency accommodation out of flood zone if residential lismore is not relocated.  
Lismore needs a specialist flood rescue team



that are properly trained such as those in the ADF reserves, who are capable of rescues at any hour of the day OR NIGHT. With recourses to do so, such as strong boats, choppers, lighting and rescue devices.

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**1.3 Response to floods**

Many areas of lismore east side did not receive evacuation orders and went to bed the eve of the floods thinking they would be high and dry in their raised homes.

Feeling like we were left to drown when told SES and emergency services would not come to our rescue until daylight when we were all drowning in our homes by 3am.

Our community members risked their own lives to save us. Without any formal training or resources. And managed to do so without losing their lives. But the "professionals" left us to die.

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**1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery**

We need accommodation. The entire town needs accommodation still over a month post floods. We as an entire town are either still couch surfing or living in unsanitary conditions in mud and mould ridden shells of houses or the lucky few in vans. We need accommodation that also allows us to keep our pets with us as they too are traumatized.

I work as a local aged care nurse and earn \$600 a week. I can no longer even afford a rental in my town and I am a multi generational local, as most rents to house my 5 person family are now the same if not more than my weekly wage.

When just a few years ago I paid \$280 a week for a 3 bedroom home.

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**1.6 Any other matters**

My home was on Ballina road. Directly opposite the tennis courts in town. We have never ever flooded like we did in late Feb. We also flooded as bad if not worse then south lismore.

Ideally residential lismore needs to be relocated. At the very least their needs to be a support package to raise homes to a floor height 16m if possible. Without the above the government will continue to have major issues with lismore crying out for help during worsening floods. Those

going beyond 12m.

With the price of rentals and purchasing property far out of reach for many in recent times, many long term locals are being priced out of living here. We will lose all our essential workers, teachers, nursing staff, hospitality and retail workers. Because our wages can no longer cover living here IF we can even manage to find a rental in the craze of competition for a home.

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## Supporting documents or images

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### Attach files

- [inbound3449104347179058538.jpg](#)
  - [inbound4345255401136135839.jpg](#)
  - [inbound5165849485063710651.jpg](#)
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Kuala Lumpur  
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