

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Friday, 6 May 2022 10:09:50 AM

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## Your details

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**Title** Mr

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**First name** Duncan

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**Last name** Bell

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**Email**

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**Postcode** 2480

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## 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

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## Share your experience or tell your story

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**Your story** My property is located at Creek Road, about a kilometre and a half upstream of The Channon village. The peak river height was reached around 4:30 -5 AM on Monday 28th February. This high up the catchment peak levels are short-lived though fluctuations are likely to continue. I have lived here, next to the creek, for almost 30 years and have closely

observed many floods. The peak water level was about 4 metres below the floor level of my house.

At 6 AM I received the following text message from the SES -

"NSWSES DAM FAILURE EVACUATION ORDER. ROCKY CREEK DAM. People at your home address BELOW ROCKY CREEK DAM should evacuate now to a higher ground."

I have quoted this exactly as it appears on my phone. This put me into an absolute blind, shaking panic, coming, as it did, from the lead government agency, presumably an authoritative source. Because of the height above the creek at which we've built, never had it occurred to me that the house could possibly be flooded. It had been a sufficient shock to have had the machinery shed trashed, which was close to a metre higher than the 2017 flood level, but as the water had by this time significantly receded, I thought that I had already witnessed the worst. With the power off and no access to the internet, it was left entirely to my imagination exactly what "dam failure" might actually entail. Could there be a wall of water, five metres or more in height, coming sweeping up Terania Creek Road? Fortunately, as it was by this time daylight, I was able to observe conditions and come to my own conclusions, knowing the area as I do, and being aware (from experience gleaned in 2017) that the SES is remotely located and not necessarily across all the vital information relevant to local conditions.

Having crossed the road (which is lower than my house and would trap me if flooded) to my neighbours' property, from where we could climb to the top of the ridge, I decided to take the risk and returned home. The ABC radio news bulletin at 7 AM merely reported "a lot of water coming over the spillway" - scarcely a surprise under the circumstances - and made no mention of any problem with Rocky Creek dam.

That the SES, at the very moment it's almost completely failing the people of Lismore, leaving

thousands to their fate, should be unnecessarily alarming thousands of others who are perfectly safe(!!!) can only be viewed as incompetence. Presumably the text measure is pre-written and sitting in the system ready for some operative, with little or no local knowledge, to press send when some determination has been made. It would seem the term "dam failure" has been used with little consideration of what it might actually mean. Is there any real threat of Rocky Creek dam actually failing, and if so, what is the likely scenario and how should the people downstream prepare for the contingency? In nearly 33 years of living in the area, never have I heard any intimation at all that the dam's structural integrity could be compromised by an adverse weather event with possible disastrous consequences for the local people. Early on the morning of 28th February was not a great time to be introduced to the idea, which I'm pretty sure is hogwash anyway. It does really make one wonder what on earth is going on at headquarters.

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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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<b>1.3 Response to floods</b>	SES needs to look seriously at and overhaul its text message alerts.
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### **Supporting documents or images**

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