

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 19 May 2022 4:53:30 PM
Attachments: [Fingal Flood - Our Story 2022.pdf](#)

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 submitting on behalf of my organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Fingal head Community Association
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	President
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

Please find attached our story of Fingal Head, on the Tweed River in Northern Rivers NSW. We do have drone footage of the flood in our area however the file is 578 MB in size. I will forward this to you if you can provide a mead to transfer the file.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [Fingal Flood - Our Story 2022.pdf](#)
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Fingal Flood Response – Our Story

Fingal Head is a unique community fronted by the ocean to our east and the Tweed River to the west, so the consequence of this unique location is that over the last ten years we have flooded five times, and this does not include road closures that can occur during king tides. During the last ten years the main flooding events occurred in 2013, 2017 (after cyclone Debbie), and now in 2022. A point to note here is that Cyclone Debbie was an offshore storm event that had its major impact on the ocean shores and coastal communities with less impact to the hinterland.

As a community we are familiar with flooding, however the last flood event levels were so much higher than all other floods in recent history and this took everyone by surprise.

During the most recent flood, commencing on Sunday 27 February 2022 evening high tide, Fingal Head was effectively isolated as Fingal Road was flooded from the southern entry roundabout under the M1 motorway up to the Fingal Head village and further up Letitia Road. Some residents received an evacuation order around 4:00pm on Monday 28 February by which stage our only access road was impassable and extremely dangerous. By this time most Fingal Road properties were under flood and locals sensibly heeded the warnings not to travel on the flooded roads.

The attached Chronology of Events 2022 summarises the daily events for the residents between 45 to 63 Fingal Road only, as we had no safe access to residents between 1 to 42 Fingal Road and some of their flooding experiences were different to our own.

We had little to no support from the authorities for four days as we were flooded in, and other emergency situations were occurring elsewhere. Our highest flood events peaked with the Tweed River high tides and whilst the river was always flowing down river, as the tide was running out our river became even more treacherous especially around the Wommin Lake and Wommin Lagoon entrances. The ferocity of the river flow and the amount of debris, for example pontoons, boats, water tanks, gas bottles, telegraph poles and similar sized trees, made the river extremely dangerous for any watercraft trying to navigate or provide assistance using boats, jet skis and kayakers (paddling up Fingal Road).

During the flood, with the help of local boat owners, several evacuations were made from Fingal Head with safety to higher ground or safe havens. Such rescues included a distressed mother and child when a sink hole appeared in their front yard, an elderly woman needing to be hospitalised. Considerable support was provided by Fingal Rovers Surf Life Saving Club who arranged for experienced kayakers to travel Fingal Road and contact residents assessing their needs and safety. This led to an emergency oxygen bottle being brought in from Queensland to an elderly resident who has limited mobility and requires regular support by community services. The kayakers were also subject to 4WDs towing caravans attempting to navigate the flooded Fingal Road without regard for their own or anyone else's safety. Vehicles attempting to drive through the flood waters, or sightseeing boats navigating the river, added to the wake which forced surging waters through the already flooded properties on Fingal Road.

Fingal Head Rovers also supported the community, by opening their doors to provide a base for the Queensland surf lifesavers who travelled down Fingal Head to support those in need during the floods and to provide a centre for food and water distribution and meals immediately following the flood. An amazing response and great community support from Fingal Rovers. It should be noted that Fingal Rovers is not an evacuation centre however are trained as first responders.

The Fingal Head community was also impacted by the loss of power, phones and internet, food/grocery shortages, tap water contamination, fallen trees and floating debris washing down river (including livestock). The Fingal Head community did not sustain any loss of life but significant damage to properties and vehicles.

Once the flood waters dropped and the roads were reopened, our community witnessed an amazing community response with volunteers helping those in need with a shovel and strong back, freshwater and food, clean up products and a willingness to help regardless of the conditions that existed.

Chronology of Events 2022

This chronology of events was based on the location between 45 and 63 Fingal Road, Fingal Head, immediately adjacent to the Tweed River. This does not cover the southern end of Fingal Road where the flood impact was most significant, nor the village/Letitia Road residents which sustained less or no flood damage but were all isolated due to the flooded Fingal Road.

Lead Up	The community was aware that a significant flood event was about to occur, following the Queensland flooding reported in the media. Minor flood alerts were made for the Tweed district however no flood heights projected.
Sunday 27 February	Rain continues all day. Afternoon, some local residents were alerted to major flood warning and evacuation orders for Tumbulgum community.
Monday 28 February	<p>By morning high tide, Fingal Road was totally flooded and impassable to vehicles. Some vehicles proceeded through rising water levels around 4:00am but within the hour the road was impassable. Some caravans who were trying to leave, were advised and encouraged to turn back and return to the Fingal Head Tourist Park in the village until it became safe to travel.</p> <p>Between 4.00pm and 4:30pm an SES flood evacuation advice for Fingal Head was received by text message for those with mobile phones. By this time Fingal Road had been impassable to vehicles for at least 12 hours. All residents of Fingal Head were isolated.</p> <p>Fingal Rovers SLSC kayakers paddled Fingal Road checking on residents and reported back to clubhouse.</p>
Tuesday 1 March	<p>Flood peaked during the early morning hours at high tide and the community was still totally isolated with Fingal Road impassable to all traffic including pedestrians.</p> <p>Fingal Rovers SLSC kayakers visited Fingal Road again checking on residents and distributing water supplies and oxygen delivered by boat from nearby Qld surf clubs. Some locals with suitable vehicles attempted the beach access from the Fingal Quarry to Kingscliff. Whilst being advised that beach passage may be possible, I am not aware that anybody did travel to Kingscliff via the beach as several parts of the beach were impassable due to strong tides.</p> <p>Approximately 3:00pm lost power to Fingal Head and advised that it could be out for a few days. NBN had not been functioning for most of the day.</p>
Wednesday 2 March	<p>Fingal Road still impassable however high tides indicated river levels were dropping. Fingal Rovers SLSC kayakers visited Fingal Road again checking on residents and delivering water/food.</p> <p>The Fingal Head community at this time was still totally isolated and there had been no contact by any authorities. Movement between properties was by kayak, canoe or paddle boards.</p> <p>Community advised that the Tweed River water supply/treatment plant was contaminated by sewage and water must be boiled for consumption.</p>

<p>Thursday 3 March</p>	<p>Fingal Road still impassable from the southern roundabout under the M1 highway bridge up to Wommin Lagoon bridge. Road access into the village was open however it was still covered at high tide.</p> <p>Residents from Fingal Road area could access the clubhouse, pick up basic food supplies, water, locally prepared meals and charge mobile phones.</p> <p>After approximately 30+ hours power was returned to Fingal Head. A massive storm occurred around 8:00pm that night which damaged a local transformer and power generation was affected by a brown out for several hours.</p>
<p>Friday 4 March</p>	<p>Fingal Road still impassable from the southern roundabout under the M1 highway bridge up to Wommin Lagoon bridge. Road access into the village was open however it was still covered at high tide.</p> <p>Fingal Road residents noted visitors in 4WDs and motorised boats testing the road and river and, much to our frustration, creating bow waves in the flooded waters that would flow back into our flooded homes.</p> <p>Still had water treatment concerns and no NBN, which remained out for another several days.</p>

I am contacting you on behalf of the Fingal Head Community Association, the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council, Fingal Head Coastcare and Fingal Rovers SLSC, to understand in further detail how your organisation can support us moving forward.

I look forward to you contacting me on my details below.