

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Sunday, 12 June 2022 9:21:32 PM
Attachments: [Flood submission Feb 28 Lismore event.doc](#)

Your details

Title	Mr
First name	Geoff
Last name	Wotherspoon
Email	
Postcode	2480

Submission details

I am making this submission as	A resident in a flood-affected area
Submission type	I am making a personal submission
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Wotherspoon Foodservice Design Pty Ltd
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	Wotherspoon Foodservice Design Pty Ltd
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

Born and raised in Lismore, have understanding of floods effecting my area.

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

- [Flood submission Feb 28 Lismore event.doc](#)
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ABN: 58 066 663 474
18th May 2022

Submission to NSW Flood Inquiry

Lismore Flood 28th February 2022.

Wotherspoon Foodservice Design Pty Ltd has a showroom and workshop at Wyrallah Road Girards Hill.

The critical flood water level for this premises is 11.65 metres. Showroom floor level.

This building was completed in 1972 and was subject to the 1974 flood where there was 460mm of flood water over the floor.

I was present in this building when the 1974 flood occurred and dealt with the event and consequences. Flood height was 12.11m where we had approx. 460mm of flood water over our floor.

I was present in this building when the 2017 flood event occurred where the flood water stopped 50mm lower than level of our showroom floor.
Flood height was 11.6m.

In summary I have experienced many floods in Lismore and personally have a good understanding of how I should respond to flood warnings. Particularly relevant flood heights.

Step 1 is to have a flood plan.

Since the 1974 flood we have provided a high level exit point from the rear of the property where because we are at the base of Girards Hill we can in minutes drive our vehicles to safety. We have an upstairs attic with an electric hoist to lift items if required. This property has an upstairs residence so we are on hand to deal with issues in minutes.

I watched and waited for warnings up to 12.30am 28th Feb and the last warning I could find was the water would breach the levee at about 6.00am and the expected height was approx. 11.4 metres.

I was very tired because I had lifted most items to above the 1974 level, so I made a decision to have a few hours sleep and get up at 5.30am and respond to any changes then.

At 12.30am I received a mobile phone warning to evacuate Lismore, because I am in Girard's Hill and with current height predictions I was no immediate threat. This generic warning had absolutely no meaning to me, in fact was the cause of my losses. It gave me a false sense of security.

With information provided at 12.30am I assumed my flood plan would be ok.

Because of where I am, below is listed what I could have done with 30 minutes warning. I live above the shop in the upstairs residence.

1. Moved both vehicles to higher ground. I had a new Mercedes Sprinter van which I waited 7 months to get with less than 5000 K,s travelled. It was fully submerged a replacement van is approximately 14 months delivery so I have to run my business all this time without an appropriate vehicle. Van cost \$80,000.00 plus business losses.
2. In late February early March there was a World philatelic specialist championship in Budapest Hungary, where there was 76 entries world wide accepted, mine was one of those accepted. Because of the value and National Importance of this collection I was reluctant to remove them from the safes, knowing it would only take 15 minutes to remove them to the upstairs

residence. These have been flood water damaged, the significant financial loss, a lifetimes work lost is one thing but the loss to Australian Philatelic history can not be measured as many of the items are unique pieces, and centre piece to significant research papers etc.

3. Mounted at about 2.0m above the floor were framed Community service awards including Australia Day nominations etc could have been saved, the list goes on.

In recent travels to the upstream areas of Lismore my clients advise me information started to be fed into the SES from 2.00pm Sunday afternoon as to the local water already building heading to Lismore. There has been numerous reports of rain measuring / weather system equipment failures even before the flood, still yet to made functional again.

Question is with all this warning and the resources of the Government how can it be possible there is no appropriate flood warning system in place for Lismore.
Once again the siren failed when the levee was breached.

At 12.30am Monday morning I received a phone message to which was an evacuation order for Lismore. I went to the BOM site looked at all the data and warnings and it appeared the levee would be breached at 6.00am and the flood height would be approx. 11.5 metres.

With this information I decided to get a few hours sleep, set the alarm for 5.30am and finalise my flood plan activities.

I got up at 5.30am to find there was already 1.5m of water over my shop floor and realized then the extent of my losses.

It would appear this event was dynamic but the warning systems fail to address the rapidly changing outcome. I feel there could have been so many things done to minimize my losses.

I feel the person who has managed this failed (multiple time) warning system should be charged with Criminal Negligence.

The system has to change and any warnings given MUST relate to anticipated flood levels so people can understand how do deal with these events.

The warning system MUST be at multiple levels and places, and be controlled locally.

The unnecessary environmental loss of all the vehicles that could have been moved must be subject To an investigation under environmental laws.

Suggestion.

1. The only way the system will change is if there is significant compensation give to those who could have saved items if the correct warning was given. I would imagine this would be many millions of dollars. The cost being so high then an appropriate system will be put in place.
2. There be car collection points on high grounds with a mini bus service to return owners back to their properties.
3. There should be multiple warning sirens positioned to go off at different flood heights 3 to 4 of them.
The people in Girard's Hill and East Lismore need to know if they will be impacted.
Personally my critical height is 11.65 metres. North Lismore it is 7.0m I believe.
4. Most importantly have all flood control management based in Lismore Heights or Goonelabah
So floods can be managed properly.

Geoff Wotherspoon

Ref: