

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Friday, 29 April 2022 1:47:00 PM

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## Your details

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**Title** Miss

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**First name** Helen

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**Last name** Coyle

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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

On Feb 27th I had a strong urge to go to Byron Bay to see a movie called "Bellfast". I couldn't explain it, but I had a strong intuition to pack my medication and phone charger, which I have never done before and no one was aware what was coming. I lived at  Casino St, in a house called "" that was owned by the Lismore Soup Kitchen, for 20 years. My fellow residents

John and Ray, were like family to me. I also wanted to go to the movies to get a break from Covid and have some personal space, I partly reluctant as something was holding me back from coming home, which probably saved my life. When I caught the Sunstate bus the following morning, I was told the road to Lismore was blocked as the Bruxner Hwy was cut due to flooding and had to make a choice between Grafton or Ballina, so I chose Ballina. I was on my own so went looking for the Ballina Hospital as they may have been able to help me. so I went looking for open businesses that could direct me to the hospital, as I had an appoint there the following day. I was walking in ankle deep water and couldn't find anyone that was open. I sat down and tried to call the hospital. A kind man named Les got out of his ute and asked if I was alright. I told him I was looking for the Hospital and he offered to take me. He took me to the hospital and told the nurse that he found me wondering up the street. He said that he'd leave me with the nurse and left. The nurse asked what I was doing out in the rain. I informed her of what had happened, that my medical bag was damaged and needed to get my medication replaced. She kept asking "What were you doing out in the rain you STUPID WOMAN? Your soaking wet, lets get you a towel.". She took the bad bits out of my medication and said "if you can afford to go to Byron for an outing, you can afford accommodation." Obviously my very noticeable tremor was ignored, I felt like I was being judged, and I was not seen by a doctor. I was frightened, in shock and on my own. Whist they were attempting to remove the bad bits from my medication I left to scramble for help. I rang Elissa [redacted] my boss at Multi Task (which employs people with a disability) and said I was in trouble with no money, and I couldn't contact Maggie [redacted] my NDIS coordinator. Elissa said "sorry Helen, your house has gone under". Elissa managed to contact Maggie who was stuck in Kyogle and they managed to get me 2

nights accommodation at the Homestead Motel. I remember the Lady her name was Maria and was quite helpful to me - she helped me get out of my wet clothes; and became aware that there were 2 nurses that had came up to help with Covid vaccinations, but were unable to help due to flooding. They were informed that I was 1 of 2 vulnerable women that were in desperate need of help at the time. They assisted with food and drink and even helped me eat. I will always be grateful for that, as I was freaking out about what happened to my housemates John & Ray, as I couldn't reach them. It was the first time in many many years that I had to contact my sister in Melbourne for a loan of money, which was repaid asap. On the wednesday Polly (one of the nurses) managed to evacuate me to Xavier Vacation centre in Lennox as Ballina was being evacuated. She sat me with a Student volunteer Olivia who was lovely. Then a Lady Named Karen from MultiTask found me talking with Olivia. She had turned up because people from Multi Task residence were being evacuated to Lennox and knew me from Multi Task in Lismore. "Karen don't let me go" I laughed, but I had the phone charger she needed. Karen finally got in touch with Rae from Multi Task who knew me and also got in touch with Maggie and Magenta Disability Support Service person to let them know they were trying to get me back to Lismore. Phone reception was terrible, a young man named Beau was able to briefly dial my sister's phone number for me so I could tell her where I was, and that I was ok. When they said the residence could go home, I also went to the Fox St residence with the Ballina people. Someone from the Ballina residence said it was nice to have someone to stay and talk to which was nice. Yes it was me. The next day a man came and drove me to the Ross St Residence where I'm currently staying. I miss the beautiful cat that came into the house next door - his name was Horus and I was able to mother him as pets are hard to have

in houses like mine. This flood has ripped apart communities. Earlier in my life, when I 2-4yrs old I had siblings taken from our home due to disability and I was not told until later. This flood has torn my house apart and brought back those memories from when I was a child. I feel like the goverment arent doing enough, or getting money to people quick enough. People like myself are seen as undeserving, but we were working too. We have also have lost our homes, jobs and community. It's like we are worth nothing, and we don't deserve to die as it feels like we are being left behind and are missing out. There is no where in Lismore or goonellabah that have appropriate ammenties, and it feels like we are being left behind. We need to have proper access or "go shit yourself". everybody needs be treated equally as lismore claims equality! There's no railings or anyting and it's down right apalling. There is NO planning for people with a disability in Lismore.

Ballina hospital were going to throw me back out on the street.

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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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### **Supporting documents or images**

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