

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 18 May 2022 3:29:46 PM

Your details

Title Miss

First name Jamie

Last name Taylor

Email

Postcode 2487

Submission details

I am making this submission as A member of the general public

Submission type I am making a personal submission

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 Evacuation of Chinderah and Fingal Heads

The NSW Northern Rivers has been devastated by the worst flood recorded, with many communities faced with life threatening conditions. There are so many stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. This is just one story, from one person, in one community. I live in Kingscliff

which is closely located to Chinderah and Fingal Heads, home to many elderly people and Aboriginal families.

On Monday 28 February as the rain continued to fall and the Tweed River started to inundate our community the situation turned from bad to worse, an evacuation order was placed for communities along the Tweed River including Chinderah. With all access roads to these communities already closed there was no way for people to evacuate other than via boat. Word got out that the Kingscliff Tafe would be established as the Evacuation Centre, however this facility was located more than 4 kms away from the effected communities. I knew at this point that these people urgently needed help to evacuate and be safety transported to the Tafe.

At 4:30pm Myself and my partner amongst a small group of people attended a road near the Cudgen Leagues Club which was where the water had come to, it was the access point into those communities. Families were walking up the flooded road with young children, pets and very little supplies. More community members started to gather with kayaks, stand up paddle boards and boats to start the rescue operation. As people came out we were driving them to the Tafe in our cars, many people distraught, breaking down in tears and in shock. They knew the flood was coming but none expected it to get that bad so quickly. The Kingscliff Community Facebook page was used to assist to coordinate these rescue efforts, including communicating with those requiring rescuing. As time went on more community members came down to help, there were boats running back and forth to caravan parks, retirement villages and homes to rescues those stranded and calling for help. We had a team at the leagues club lifting people out of boats and off kayaks and another team helping them to cars to transport them to the Tafe. As people were being rescued, there were

screams, injuries, hyperventilation and many other medical concerns. We were lucky to have off duty nurses and doctors on hand to triage those that needed medical attention and the Ambulance were called to medivac some to the Tweed Heads Hospital which was also a difficult mission given all roads in and out of the area were closed. The access issue also restricted many other Emergency Services into the area, The Kingscliff Fire and Rescue were onsite for a short period but were completely under resourced and unable to physically assist. The rescue effort was purely community members coming together to help those in need.

Throughout the night more and more people were needing rescued and due to some strong community leaders, we were able to establish a well organised rescue operation. There were people showing up with water and snacks for those that had been working tirelessly for hours in extremely dangerous and highly intense emergency situation. Over a period of 8hrs it is believed that over 300 people were rescued and taken to safety, this included; many families, babies and elderly people. It was such an extortionary event and scenes that are hard to explain in words. In my many years of experience previously volunteering with SES, this was way beyond any other emergency situation I have attended. The efforts of everyday community members literally saved lives that night.

The following morning the rescue efforts continued via boat collecting those in need from there homes, taking food and water supplies to those unwilling to leave and getting supplies to hundreds of people stranded in their cars on the Pacific Highway for over 24 hours. This was made difficult as shops were flooded and closed, fuel supplies were limited, there was no power, limited phone reception and no internet. As the day went on, more Emergency Services were deployed, Surf Life Saving and Fire and Rescue,

and were finally able to assist in coordinating the response.

The situation then went from rescue to recovery. Our local community have been outstanding with their efforts to support everyone in need, just showing up time after time. The whole Northern Rivers is very much still in a current emergency situation. There seems to be no end to this disaster, with months to years of recovery work yet to come. The whole community is absolutely devastated and exhausted. It is such a relief to see more government resources being allocated to the effected communities to provide much needed respite, however it is not enough, the community are desperate for more help.

This is just a small part of what the Norther Rivers have faced, I know situations are much worse in other towns and I would like to acknowledge the heartache of all those people effected. I would also like to show my deepest respect to all those involved in assisting throughout this emergency.

Key points

- The evacuation warnings and orders were not early enough
- There were limited emergency services available to assist evacuation
- Of those emergency services on the group, there no leadership or coordination
- Surf life savers were stood down and unable to response to the first night of evacuation
- Limited communications capabilities
- No community preparedness discussions
- No community responders debrief
- Government assistance and coordination was too little too late
- Too much red tape around the lead agency and the ability for local, state and federal governments to work together
- Not enough localised emergency capacity.

When SES is at capacity, who helps.

- Community was left to defend themselves throughout the rescue and recovery stages and are still leading to this day

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images
