

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Saturday, 4 June 2022 2:56:12 PM

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## Your details

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**Title** Mr

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**First name** John

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**Last name** Lysiak

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**Email**

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**Postcode** 2484

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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** Hello. I live on Kyogle Road not far from Murwillumbah, and have experienced many floods. My house to date has been safe, but road access is often cut. I have learnt to live with this, and keep a cupboard with supplies sufficient for several days.

Every flood is different, but they all have

similarities, and unfortunately they are getting bigger. In 2017 Murwillumbah recorded its highest ever flood, but five years later the town has had a bigger one. With the height of the floods increasing, the issues have become worse, not better. I shall try and outline the issues that I have witnessed both for this particular flood, and for those previous.

1. Warnings from the BOM are invariably insufficient. This is a small valley and floods can rise very quickly. The Flood watch posting for the Tweed is never issued until the river is high at which point it is too late to take action. The BOM should be able to accurately forecast that floods are about to occur, not just tell us that the river is flooding - we can see that. As a local, I know what to expect. For a newcomer to the area, or a visitor, such warnings are meaningless. In any case as someone who has to travel to get supplies, or who may be out of the area for work/services, I would like more warning time before the road is cut. A couple of hours notice is simply not enough.

RECOMMENDATION: Improve the BOM service with additional rainfall monitoring, soil moisture content monitoring, and better modelling based on these inputs.

RECOMMENDATION: Utilise modelling inputs to improve forecasting and provide more timely warnings of potential events.

2. News warnings from media outlets were useless. The ABC news reported nothing on the flooding or potential flooding until after the event. Local radio was based on what was happening at Lismore and did not include reports on Murwillumbah until after Lismore had flooded. There used to be a local radio service at Murwillumbah that was very good, but it no longer exists.

RECOMMENDATION: Re-instigate a local radio service.

3. Road closures are never made until well after the road has flooded, sometimes days after the road has flooded. I don't know what can be done about this.

4. Flood markers/depth gauges on the road do not give sufficient warning of the depth of flood until the vehicle is practically flooded. During this event I saw many motorists attempt to drive through flood waters because the roads weren't closed and the depth gauges and warning signs are insufficient.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide Electronic warning signs on Kyogle Rd to advise of flooding depths well in advance of flooded road locations.

5. In this particular flood, a young couple were trying desperately to return to their home in Kyogle after spending time in Queensland. For them, the flood warnings were provided too late to enable them to return home safely. She was 6 months pregnant. Their car stalled in the flood waters, and they were fortunately able to limp the car out of the floodwaters to my driveway. I provided them with food and shelter for three days until they could travel again.

RECOMMENDATION: The need for members of the general public to provide emergency shelter is a given, but a mechanism for emergency food drops, if necessary, needs to be implemented. I had 1 weeks worth of food stored for me, but only 2 days worth for three people.

6. The day before the flood peak, I was appalled at the number of requests being made on Facebook (yes Facebook!) asking for rescue or help. Stories were common about being put on hold for hours after ringing 000, or being told they would be rung back, but never were. How there weren't more casualties remains a mystery, as it was clear emergency services (both publicly funded and volunteer organisations) were overwhelmed.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement an early

warning evacuation system for houses at risk of flooding. It is probably impractical to increase resources, as volunteer resources are drawn locally and will also be flood affected.

7. In this flood, power was lost after 1 day. Power is a major issue. I am on tank water. Without power there is no water. I expect there are many houses in the same predicament. In my case it was fortunate I had recently purchased a small portable generator which I was able to use for the next couple of days. RECOMMENDATION: SES or Resilience NSW to maintain an emergency supply of portable generators for those in genuine need.

8. Mobile phone and internet services were down for several days. There was no communications with anyone other than the neighbours over the fence. I would like to point out that in previous floods, I was still able to use the landline to make calls. Since changing to the NBN, this service is no longer available, and all services go via the mobile tower! The landline service should be restored as a matter of urgency. RECOMMENDATION: Restore and maintain landline services as a matter of urgency. This is also a National Security Issue and as such should be referred back to the Federal Government.

9. Lismore radio (once power was restored) was actually quite good at informing of the general state of affairs. However TV News was useless. In particular, the coverage from the ABC was appallingly bad, and almost totally neglected the area until after the floods had subsided. I question the value of a national news service that only provides news from Sydney. RECOMMENDATION: Increase funding to local community media services.

10. In addition, TV reporters advising you to go to the road closures website, or the BOM

website, or the SES website, when there is NO internet service, is less than useless. If the internet is down then it is incumbent of the media outlets to provide the information.

RECOMMENDATION: None. I have written to the news team in question. I have not yet received a reply. I don't expect I'll get one.

11. The local community facebook page (once the internet was restored) was a Godsend. It allowed the community to advise and describe the local issues better than any state based service.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that this service is adequately resourced and funded.

12. During a previous flood, I was advised by the SES after the event, that houses were being evacuated between Uki and Murwillumbah due to the risk of failure of Clarrie Hall Dam. The SES member was surprised that no-one had contacted myself or the neighbours. In any case, if evacuation of houses is a possible eventuality, then the protocols need to be advised in advance, along with the means of communication, and the proposed evacuation methodology when all roads are impassable.

RECOMMENDATION: Prepare draft evacuation protocols for flooded areas for review and further comment.

13. I understand that this is a State Government inquiry, however the Federal Government response during this flood and that of 2017 was disappointing. In 2017 I saw no army support. In 2022, it took well over a week before army were sighted, by which time the community itself had done much of the legwork. The mobilisation of clean-up resources seems lamentably slow.

RECOMMENDATION: Nil. I have written to my local member who has assured me this matter is under review.

14. Tweed Shire Council response on the other

hand was immediate. Once the flood had sufficiently subsided I saw Council workers immediately on the job repairing roads as best they could. This work is continuing. I was advised by one worker that they still have jobs unfinished from 2017, so it is clear that money and resources are insufficient for disasters of this nature.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that local councils are adequately funded and resourced.

15. Both in 2017 and 2022 after the floods, there is evidence of increased petty crime. It's not clear whether this is due to desperation, opportunistic crime, or some other reason. It feels like vultures move in to take advantage of people's misery. It would be advantageous if a Police presence was maintained locally in the months after the floods.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide a 24/7 Police presence in flood affected areas for a minimum of 3 months after the event.

16. It needs to be recognised that town recovery will take several years. It took a long time after 2017, and it will take a long time now. 3 months after the flood, the St George Bank, Liquorland (2 stores), Domino's pizza, and Victory Ford service centre have not re-opened. Keith's Coffee Shop has closed down for good.

Numerous other businesses have no doubt suffered due to insufficient cash flow. I'm not sure how this can be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION: Review how businesses are supported, given cash flow may be non-existent for at least one month after the flood.

Thankyou for the opportunity to report my story.

Yours faithfully,

John Lysiak,

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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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