

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 19 May 2022 9:55:59 PM

Your details

Title Mrs

First name Judith

Last name Lollback

Email

Postcode 2472

Submission details

I am making this submission as A resident in a flood-affected area

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

What continually goes through my mind each day, is what I would do differently if I had been better warned of the 1 in 500 year flood which occurred on the 1st March, 2022.

I would have filled my car up with important paperwork, my children's keepsakes, clothes and blankets and drove it to Evans Head.

Instead that Monday I packed a bag for each person in our household, packed some important papers, school clothes, books and school reports and our pet rabbit was packed up. All of this was taken over to my parents house that was built on a mound of dirt above the 1 in 100 year flood. We parked our vehicles and boat over there as well.

Our road 3kms up the road was blocked by 9.00am on that Monday morning.

Our children packed various things from our house and transported them over to my parents in the pouring rain via the 4wd Ute during the day.

My husband arrived home around 4.00pm that afternoon from work and proceeded to put our generator up on our verandah. We had planned to stay the night in the house and if need be would leave in the small boat to go over to my parents the next morning. There were helicopters flying around in the sky quite low, which we waved to. I received a phone message around 5pm advising we had to evacuate. It was all too late, we needed to be gone before 9.00am that morning, there was no way out, only a boat and darkness was upon us.

Our neighbour rang and asked if our youngest son could come over and help round up his alpacas and put them on the house mound. The water could be seen filling up over the other side of the road at the front of our house. He brought him back via a large tractor. He then asked us what were our plans? we said "stay the night and pack up to a certain level." He said no, there is talk it is going to be higher and it will come through this house.

We then hit panic mode, rang another neighbour and he came up to assist with packing things higher in the house, and putting some things in his 4WD, It was parked on the main road and he walked in. The water was rising so fast, that in the end, he said "we have to get you out or you wont get out". I have a disability and walking is not easy for me.

He grabbed a very big wheelie walker of mine and placed it at the bottom of our ramp. I walked to the end of the ramp and the water was up to my knees, He held onto my arm on one side and my older son on the other arm. My youngest son walked in front with a torch, i pushed through water to get to the road and by the time I reached the climb up to the road, the water was to my waist and running very quickly, the rain was bucketing down at the time. He drove me over to my parents house track and out we got again and walked through waist high water at the bottom of the mound. I was safe. He left quickly to collect my husband, and two sons, he was back very quickly with them and he went back to his house high on a mound.

We went to bed that night thinking we would be safe. There was an outage with telstra, so no internet. Little effective communication. How great!!!

My two boys woke me at 1.00am and said the water is going to come in, I said don't worry go back to sleep, the mound is built high.

At around 2.00am I got up and thought I would check the water. I could see it, and it was raining still very heavy. I woke my husband and the whole household got up.

We had internet again, went and checked the bomb site and it was 12 hours behind, they were saying it was to peak at 6am at Woodburn. I rang our neighbours around 3.15 on both sides of us. They were saying the water is nearly in their houses.

I rang again in a couple of hours again and it was already in. We then knew we were in trouble. My parents both aged 88 years old and one cannot swim.

I rang the SES around 5.15am to see if there were any further updates, No updates since 2am and here we were nearly under water.

We started packing a bag for my parents, we had to get them evacuated from the house. 6am came and went and the water came in, and it was still rising and it had not peaked. My brother

in law said the new prediction was another 20cm.

The water came from the front of the house. My niece had been evacuated to the Woodburn Public School and she rang to see if we were alright and if we needed to get evacuated. I asked could someone come and take my parents, we would make our own way up in our boat. My parents sat in their chairs with their feet up on foot stools while the water rose watching the flood play out on the TV.

My husband and youngest son went over to our house in his boat and found the water was just below the gutter on the front verandah. They grabbed our small boat and brought it back to my parents

We were fortunate the volunteers came quickly and picked mum and dad up. We went on lifting things in their house. By this time the drains were gurgling and grey water and septic was coming back up the toilet and drain holes like a fountain. A black cow had swam to my parents mound and she was cranky charging at whomever was near the front of the house.

We repacked our bags and took two tiny bags of clothes, my sons school bag with computer and filled our boats with food, we were told to bring as much food as we could. I gave up clothes for food. I didn't even think to take a pillow or blanket. The next problem was loading me with a disability in a boat, just got in the boat and a brown spider that comes out in the floods, bit me, the day was not getting any better. We circled around my parents house, i started to cry, I knew then our life was never going to be the same, we were never going to be the same either. I had never seen water like this, I had been on this property in the 1974 flood but could never think there could be this much water, this was huge.

We passed my house in the boat, I just could not believe what I saw and how we could have drowned that night only for the advice from our neighbour. He saved our life. We continued on to

this neighbour who was on a mound, to check they had gone, which they had, they had been on their roof with their 4 children.

Onwards to the river and our youngest son was following behind in his smaller boat. Of course the rain came back and wet us again.

Getting close to Woodburn we saw two herds of cattle swimming for land, how devastating, I believe they had no hope of reaching land, there was simply no land to reach. It was an under water city. Every house had water in it.

We crossed from the river up onto the old highway with no problem as though it was a canal and turned the corner as though going to Evans Head. The water was so high, if you put your hand up, you could have touched the powerlines from the houses. My husband was standing up in the boat and ducking under the lines. (The reason for him standing was to miss debris in the water).

We travelled past the soccer field and up to the school and waited in line to come in to be unloaded.

I suppose I was in shock when I arrived, there were people there helping unload the food and luggage and rescued people.

A St. John's Ambulance lady walked me up the hill with my wheelie walker and thru to have my leg assessed, as I had an infected leg from an insect bite from a few days earlier and the spider bite, standing in septic did not help either.

An hour later I looked for my elderly parents, they were exhausted, lost and dazed. My father said he was exhausted and I rang my sister and she arranged for a unit for them to stay in Evans Head. They were sending people to Evans Head as it was too full in Woodburn and they were expecting more rescues in.

My husband and two boys walked my elderly parents down to the boat and they were transported once again by people who just volunteered, no SES to Evans Head. My oldest son followed two hours later with our pet rabbit to Evans Head to join them. They were shifting as

many people out to Evans Head as possible. We decided to stay the night in Woodburn. My husband left with our neighbour and my youngest son, they went and checked our property and his livestock. The water was still rising, they arrived back.

They missed tea but my husband grabbed some biscuits from the canteen to eat.

The school was on generator power and it was turned off I think around 8.00 to 8.30pm.

We made our way through the school and found the deputy principal's office, and closed the door.

This was our bed for the night. We had no torches only our phone light, toilets were next door.

I went and had a quick shower with cold water only, to mainly wash the dirty water off my legs and body. My body was tired but my brain was on overdrive. All I could hear was the gulping, gurgling of the water pipes in my parents house. The haunting sound.

My youngest son laid on the floor, they had brought a bag out earlier with a couple of sheets and blankets that evening, I was lucky enough to get him a very small light blanket. My husband laid across four chairs, i put my head on the desk.

The barking of dogs and people still awake talking, it was a long, long night.

I should be thankful, I am alive and so is my family and close neighbours, we were safe.

The next morning, I was awake early. I hadn't slept much. The plan was when the water goes down, we will clean out our property and live in the garage. It's achievable.

Breakfast was being cooked, no sugar for the cereal, bacon on the BBQ was for the rescue people only. Ham and cheese sandwiches for others. They were doing their best to feed us under the circumstances. I am not complaining. We met up with more of our friends that morning and heard of their terrifying rescues, one family climbing into their combine harvester, children in the grain bin sleeping, no food or water for 14

hours. Eventually a neighbour came in his boat and rescued them.

People of all ages, visibly upset with glazed eyes retelling their story of survival. They just needed to talk to someone who they could share their pain. It was certainly community in crisis. Seeing grown men shaking their head with tears in the eyes is not the norm.

During breakfast, the school principal announced he needed caps for the rescuers, would people donate their caps and he would replace them with a school hat. My husband obliged.

Two hours later there was an announcement by our local policeman who, i think was unofficially in charge. It was quite a hot day with the flood waters rising still. They were going to cut the fence to the community pool next to us and people could jump in to cool off and wash themselves in it. No soap, no shampoo and no weeing in the pool. Just to allow us to freshen up and get the dust off us. There was a broken water main and we had to conserve water.

Someone had blocked the main toilets up with hand towel paper and they were no longer working. We had the children's toilet to use.

It was arranged with my husband's boss that we would travel out to Evans Head by boat and go to a house of his to live and any other employees were welcome there as well.

My youngest son and I went out on a small punt from the school to the last Corner out to Evans Head where they had people waiting for us. My husband was coming on another boat.

The sights as we travelled, the boats that were all voluntary that were ferrying people to Evans Head. People I didn't know. People there to help meet us and unload us from the boats. The gas bottles, the wheelie bins, the water tanks floating or caught up on something. People once owned these items, we were passing by them in the water.

I now have some comprehension of what a refugee might feel like. When we reached where the water stopped on the way into Evans Head,

we waited to have our names and phone number marked down and an ambulance officer met us to check us out. Most of these people were voluntary and gave up their time and money to help. I didn't know them.

We were dropped to the house and picked up a car to get food. IGA was closed as power was off in Evans Head, Spa was open. Of course, there was food but most of it had been stripped off the shelves by people before us or the town's people. We waited in line for half an hour to buy our goods. We were lucky the butcher was open and we could buy meat. There was no milk and no bread in the town.

I went back to the house and had a proper shower to then see the doctor about my infected leg. Luckily, I keep my tetanus needles up to date, I was given a double course of antibiotics and my leg dressed.

Over the days, the water finally peaked and started to recede. We were not allowed back to Woodburn, as the army was now in control and there had been looters robbing people. How un-Australian of these people.

When we were back cleaning out our houses, to watch my children's faces when they were in their bedrooms looking for something to save from the mess that met them.

So what could have been done better? Who is to blame? How can the problems we encountered be made better?

Why did it feel like I was living in a third world country?

The SES were a total waste of time, where was our warning system.? (I am not blaming our local SES either). We need flood heights that are correct and readings sent through on the hour. We need gauges for the flood heights to be working. Years ago we had people going to read them and we knew they were accurate and we knew what to expect with a flood.

We need them to talk in reference to other floods

what they are expecting. We talk of the 1988 flood, and we know how high that was on our properties, the 1974 and the greatest of all the 1954.

Our wonderful communication NBN system that saw the night before the waters hit, went down for an outage. At a critical point in time, they were not working.

When Coraki, Woodburn and Broadwater were clearly going to be hit big time, there was no update since the 2am update on the BOM site. Did this mean we do not count?, Do they realise these communities are on farms that are cut off well before the towns? It is a wonder there were not more deaths with this flood.

Why was our army not called in earlier to help with rescues and food drops?

At our evacuation centres, we need small towels, soap, torches and blankets for the people that come in from being rescued. We need food packs to be there.

Woodburn was totally not prepared and that means the message didn't get through to the right people on how high the waters were going to be. (Once again, I am not blaming our local SES).

You have people high up in your departments getting paid to do a job, that didn't do their job effectively. I hope they don't sleep at night like we don't any more. People in our communities will carry these scars forever.

I was disgusted that our Prime Minister couldn't drive thru our towns to say hello.

Lismore is getting all the attention at the present. Have you bureaucrat's looked what happens at Coraki, that it is down stream from Lismore?

Two rivers meet into one and the water that flooded Lismore is linked to another river, and it all meets down stream. we have more volume of water then Lismore. This is why Coraki, Woodburn, Broadwater and Wardell are all wiped out.

When we were allowed back to our towns and

people had started cleaning out their houses and the army was there in their big vehicles, we looked like a war zone with out the bombs.

The red tape we have to get thru to obtain help from the government is unbelievable. Most of us have no vehicles, no money and no where to live and no paperwork to our name.

I saw and heard a distressed lady in Woodburn asking the Services NSW caravan how she could get help for accommodation, as her kids and her would be sleeping in on the street tomorrow night, and she was told by someone, she had to get to Ballina to register. Ballina was 30 kilometres away with no transport.

It was like we were the forgotten towns.

I am totally disgusted with the federal government, NSW government has stepped up at long last to help us, but I feel the Federal Government has put us in the too hard basket. We are the forgotten people. I don't think they have any comprehension of what has happened.

I am not complaining about our towns people and the people from Evans Head who all worked hard to keep us safe and fed under extreme circumstances, there is probably people who should be given bravery medals for what they did. How do we ever thank them?

Our children have endured two years of covid and now a flood that I don't think Noah could have even calculated how devastating it could be. Their education has been disrupted totally.

This is my story which I have shorted down, I live it everyday and will continue to. Every day it seems to rain, every day there is paperwork to fill out or the hope someone will donate a voucher, clothes or second hand items. Everyday we wait for an answer from the insurance company.

We then have to deal with insurance companies, that over priced flood cover. No one can afford this type of cover. In the meantime, we are held

up from doing things to our houses, while hydrologist's, assessor's make appointments. Two months on and we are still awaiting the insurance companies decision. They are holding us up and the news I feel, will be no cover. Mentally we are not coping with this and it is not allowing us to move on and recover. They don't care. There should be a limit on the time they take to make their decisions.

I also believe the new highway has restricted the flow of the water. The highway has not allowed the waters to disperse close to the coast, this has resulted in further damage to properties and agricultural land. The water did not flow the normal way and it came from another direction.

I hope this information which I have provided will be taken into account by the committee when formulating its recommendations. Me as a person, and a mother, never wants to have her family to be in this situation ever again and I am sure there are plenty of people who would say the same.

Judith Lollback

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Ill preparation,
New highway
No communication - Telstra had an outage the 28/2/22
BOM being 12 hours behind
Not understanding that the towns below Lismore have two rivers coming into one at Coraki and that flows onto Woodburn, Broadwater and Wardell.
After the flood, the logistics of people obtaining help when they lost everything and their vehicles were lost as well.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Not enough preparation, you have more computers, modeling and you could not predict this was going to be a hell of a water event.

1.3 Response to floods

Slow response from the governments to the flood crisis and very minimal at that. Army should have been called earlier

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

This is going to be a very slow recovery and the paperwork we have to fill in, and the knock back for help over stupid questions, that we have answered already.

1.5 Recovery from floods

It is going to be very slow and the insurance companies are not giving us answers. We are still waiting and this should not take this long.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [26E491DD-8C39-4E0F-ADAE-6DDF126C9BE4.jpeg](#)
 - [F20204E8-7CFC-49AF-AED8-0406C03DC9B6.jpeg](#)
 - [ED9FE3C7-45A6-4D0D-8F61-79A03BD52CC3.jpeg](#)
-





Loop

Pivot Fertilisers

FERTCARE
Organisation

1000kg
NET WEIGHT
1000.000g

