

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 18 May 2022 8:32:53 PM
Attachments: [Studio 6 0.png](#)
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Your details

Title Ms

First name Kate

Last name Stroud

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

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 I am a small business and home owner in South Lismore.
I lost both my home, my car and my studio of which I derive 100% of my income operating out of.

I spent 6hours in my roof cavity waiting for SES boats that where never coming for us, in a flood that we where not adequately warned about which cost us our home and our livelihoods. I was rescued from my second storey window by a civilian from Lennox on a jeski - in a message he wrote "I remember you shivering and holding on for dear life. I'm really glad to have been able to help you guys out. I'm blown away how many people needed rescuing that crazy day."

I lost all of my possessions and am now living in a shipping container 15min out of town.

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

Outdated reporting practices. Abandoning generations of wisdom funnelled into bureaucratic processes that are cumbersome and sluggish. How are we in this position? Lismore has flooded as long as records have been kept, how have we not paired this experience and wisdom with science and technology to be better positioned by now? I am furious at previous generations for not implementing better systems by now. We need governments that acknowledge and implement tangible plans and responses to a changing climate even more so given we live in a vulnerable area/environment that is prone to being effected by expedited weather events.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Lismore was very prepared for this flood. We learnt from the 2017 flood that preparedness is key. Sunday afternoon in Lismore is normally a ghost town, this particular Sunday every single shop was either moving things to the second level or gutting their shops. I was so proud of us! There was sever communication break downs from the BOM to the SES to Council to Community. We had prepared our home and business ready

for a 2017 by early Sunday 27th Feb afternoon. We had moved our cars to higher ground and had provisions to see us through for several days.

Information relayed through the BOM website to LCC and Social Media was sluggish and unreliable. We made the decision to move things higher in the evening to be prepared for a 1974 flood level. An SES person knocked on our door at aprox 11pm and asked if we where aware that the Levee would be over topping at 6am, to expect water at our gate level by midday Monday 28th and encouraged our decision to stay in the house given that our floor flood height is 13.3m high and that we would be safe. Water was at knee deep through our property by this time.

They tagged our gate and moved on to the next home. I looked at my phone when they left and it was relaying another storey. The levee was to top at 3am and we where expecting a 12.12m flood min. I soon received an evacuation text msge but it was to late by then. We where stuck and we begun to hear all we had saved begin to topple over and we had to attempt to move things higher. Community member where waking up and stepping into flood water that had already entered their homes, the elderly and vulnerable where left in a dire position. The information kept expediting and before we knew it it was predicted to come into our house and we had to begin the mammoth task of packing up and moving our life which we believed to be safe higher AGAIN. We lost power as the water engulfed our power board, so we continued under darkness. By day break we hadn't slept and the water was waist deep and to cold to remain in. We had no choice but to climb into our roof cavity. We have a tin roof. Lucky we where able to bring cordless power tools with us in case we needed to cut through the roof. We had countless community members attempting to get us rescue boats, communicating via FB. We called the SES but it rang out. We called 000 and when finally successful we where given little

to no assurance that they were positioned to provide us the help we needed. They actually made us feel less safe with their lack of direction, assurance and ability to provide information. They said to wait in our roof and to call the SES.

1.3 Response to floods

Absolutely appalling. The local government and SES were ill-equipped and under resourced, both were totally overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate assistance. We felt completely 'thrown under the bus' from the grossly mismanaged prediction of the impending event which cost us a lot of time and ability to be as best prepared as we could, to the sluggish and unrealistic response in relation to physically rescuing people. I am very prominent in the community, I feel that I know a great deal of humans who live here, I KNOW OF ONE person who was rescued by an SES person. EVERYONE else was rescued by neighbouring volunteers who stepped in in private vessels, in response to witnessing that we needed assistance. In times of crisis such as this, the bureaucratic processes that are set up to 'protect us' in this case actually hindered us and proved to be fatal. When a state of emergency is declared things like 'covid mandates' should be obsolete to ensure we have as many hands on deck as possible. There needs to be flexibility during these times to allow for immediate and necessary action to be deployed and there needs to be simplification as to how this can be expedited in moments that require such quick response.

The SES response was largely led by a Local woman's (a colleague) direction, providing them with a comprehensive list of the people who needed rescuing compiled from a FB group - I was on this list, she was given the run around in regards to who could 'authorise' the rescue efforts wasting precious time. She then turned to private vessels to fill the void the SES were experiencing to carry out the rescues after she too had been rescued by a civilian from her

apartment in the CBD.

The evacuation centre was full before we had been rescued from roof cavity.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

Terrible. 9 days after the event for it to be acknowledged on a Federal Level is disgusting. Taking that long to declare it a Natural disaster is disgusting. Sending in the ADF to stand around due to their hands being tied due to thick bureaucratic tape is disgusting. We needed immediate action and help and it was community who stepped in and provided this at their own expense, time and from their own initiative. I didn't personally see any ADF personnel till 10 days into the recovery. NONE of any government authority came to check on us or offer assistance till weeks after the event.

Community lead organisations such as Koori Mail and Resilient Lismore pioneered this response and they Local, state and federal governments were mad to not fund these organisations who were directly linked and successfully operational on the ground making BIG impact on assisting community. They should be partnering, staffing, funding and giving ongoing support to assist in the recovery.

Many people are still left without fundamental human needs such as power, safe drinking water, shelter and food and it is almost 12 weeks after the fact. The federal election has taken centre stage as people live in third world county conditions.

Expedite legislation that frees up land from big land owners, cut red tape in relation to building regulations, cut the need for things like contribution fees for small businesses... people need hope and we aren't getting that.

1.5 Recovery from floods

Also appalling. I have witnessed so many community members suffer mental health crisis due to the lack of support. Grants are tedious

and to complex for people who have suffered such severe trauma. People are falling through the cracks due to nuances in the legislation even though they have been directly effected. The turn around time on crisis accommodation has left people living in dangerous conditions such as inside mouldy uninhabitable houses, camping in toxic flood mud yards and in crisis centres that are poorly managed and under resourced. People don't have the on the ground tangible assistance that they need nor the financial assistance required to recover from such a catastrophic event.

We can not operate from a place of limbo. We need tangible options moving forward to assure that we have a safe future here or realistic options to move out of the flood zone which compensates people fairly for what their properties were worth before the flooding incident.

1.6 Any other matters

There once was a District Emergency Management Officer (DEMO) who was a full time emergency management consultant and response expert who worked full time to advise, train, and coordinate all agencies in response to all emergencies and natural disasters. He/she also liaised with other agencies regarding expected weather patterns, and their influence over natural occurrences such as fires, flood, tides, cyclones, earthquake, tsunami and whatever other natural weather phenomena you can think of, and dealt with other man made emergencies such as accidents etc etc.

The DEMO could then advise agencies on what personnel and equipment and communications would be required during such events and was able to recommend govt funding to acquire the right equipment. We also had regular training at all levels of seniority so we all knew what our role was during such disasters etc.

During events, or just prior to predicted natural events The DEMO could set up command posts

so that coordinated and timely responses could be engaged, and this flowed on to the recovery after the events. Basically, things were very organised! Everyone knew what to do...and had the right equipment.

This DEMO position is now defunct because the govt wanted to save money.

SES is now the coordinating agency for floods, but they are largely just volunteers... and as a result some of their initial decisions during this flood were incorrect and resources were totally inadequate.

This position needs to be reinstated and needs to be well funded. This needs to be a centralised LOCALLY held position, who has community connection and access, who is given the power to make decisions that can override bureaucratic red tape in states of crisis.

Deleting this position was careless, short sighted and fatal.

The language used around the flooding in Lismore also needs to change '1 in 100' year floods happen multiple times within that time frame and offer a false sense of security, this rederick is dangerous and outdated.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [Studio 6_0.png](#)
 - [Last Kitchen 2_0.png](#)
 - [Back Deck:yard_0.png](#)
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