

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Sunday, 1 May 2022 2:33:34 PM

## Your details

**Title** Miss

**First name** Kelly

**Last name** Knights

**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 lucky enough to live in a home that was not flood inundated in Keerrong Valley (Lismore area), however many of our neighbours were. We lost power ~11:45pm on Sun 27 Feb 2022 and overnight during the peak our mobile phone 3G/4G services also became very limited (unable to make calls, intermittent text messages slipping through but mostly not sent or received).

On Tue 1st Mar 2022 we were assisting one of our neighbours whose house was inundated by fast flowing water. When the water had subsided enough, we helped them to return to their home and discovered that the homes power board was completely ripped off the house with lines and power board lying in the mud on the ground. The power was still out at this point and we had seen an army helicopter following/inspecting the power lines earlier in the day. Due to trees around the house, it is unlikely they would have seen this damage.

As the mobile service was still failing to connect regular calls, we attempted to call 000 / 112 from via multiple mobile phones (all with Telstra). None of the calls were successful. All returned with a network failure message (i.e. this was NOT a network busy message, but rather the call not connecting at all). This was in the afternoon on Tue 1st Mar 2022. After many more failed attempts we managed to have a regular call connect long enough to the power companies phone line to inform them of the damage.

While I recognize that services were impacted during the flood, my concern lies in the mobile service and the complete failure of the network for emergency communications. In March 2020, a series of storms damaged our local mobile tower. Prior to this the service on both 3G and 4G through Telstra was fantastic for both 3G/4G mobile and 4G internet services. After this event both the 3G and 4G network were seriously impacted and the mobile internet service became almost impossible to use. At the time I was using the mobile internet service for work when I was home, and followed up regularly with Telstra over the next years.

The eventual outcome was that after over a year, Telstra acknowledged that there were multiple faults with the 3G network components on the tower and that they were not going to repair these, as they were intending to disconnect the 3G network at the end of 2022. This was of concern as there are multiple areas in the valley

that do not currently have 4G network coverage and rely on the 3G network to have any service at all. Many homes are in these '4G blackspots' as well as large lengths of the road. I queried how the emergency services would be maintained to these areas when the 3G coverage was removed. Telstra replied that the 3G network would be replaced by 5G (not implemented yet) and this should be sufficient. I then asked how many additional towers they were intending to build to ensure that the 5G could cover the current 3G footprint, to which the answer was none. I expressed my concern about this with the representatives I spoke with at the time.

It seems that a lack of maintenance and repair of the 3G mobile network contributed to the complete emergency service network failure that occurred. It is concerning that the telecommunications network provider that is paid to maintain emergency telecommunications services did not want to address that their intended upgrade plan would put many residents at risk of not having telecommunications service during an emergency. Unfortunately, my concerns became reality far too quickly.

I feel incredibly lucky that the call we needed to make was not immediately life threatening. I have heard so many other anecdotes of emergency calls failing in more urgent circumstances during and in the immediate days after the flood peaked. I sincerely hope that no one in Australia has to experience an emergency service call not connecting due to network failure ever again. I hope that maintenance of sufficient emergency telecommunications services can be addressed by this flood inquiry.

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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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### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

Mobile network maintenance of emergency services. See "Your Story" section for details.

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**Supporting documents or images**

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