

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 22 April 2022 1:25:37 PM



Your details

Title Miss

First name Kerewin

Last name Hartland

Email

Postcode 2473

Submission details

I am making this submission as Emergency services personnel

Submission type I am making a personal submission

Your position in the organisation (if applicable) Marine Rescue Master

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 member of Marine Rescue NSW, Evans Head unit. On the Monday, I was sent a text message to prepare for tasking. I then waited all day and no tasking came through. That night I

watched SES Commissioner, Carlene York on the news. She said, 'Marine Rescue NSW has offered to help, but they're not swift water trained.'

To be clear, I have 20 years experience in driving vessels of all different types at night and on fast flowing rivers and through breaking bars. I have towed boats in, under extreme caution conditions. This also includes being a member of Surf Life Saving as well and driving their IRB's as a Powercraft Captain. I have multiple qualifications in organisation, as well as a Commercial Coxswains and Commercial Marine Engine Driver qualification as well. I would have thought that someone of my qualifications and experience might offer assistance in some way on that Monday.

I also have a Bachelor of Emergency Management and have studied the legislation around the discretionary powers that the Commissioner can enact to waive such items as vessel inductions and swift water training in extraordinary events such as these. I am also aware that the Woolli SES flood boats were not activated during those initial days and have heard rumours that there were only two SES boats working on that Monday in Lismore.

I was fully prepared to go to evacuation centres, pack sand bags, make sandwiches or other ground based action, but instead I waited all day to be tasked. My skills and experience, which could have been used to save one of the four lives lost that day, went squandered.

On the Tuesday, I decoupled from agency, borrowed a boat and was part of the rescue effort which extracted 400 citizens of Woodburn to Evans Head. I drove my tinny in moderate conditions, performing risk assessments as appropriate and got between 30 and 40 people out with the help of my crew on board. She was

also a Marine Rescue member and appalled by the lack of tasking on the Monday.

On the Wednesday and Thursday I then took my tinny to Broadwater and performed medical evacuations, supply drops and dropped a police officer to Riley's hill. According to the citizens who had evacuated to MacDonald Hill, I was the closest thing to anyone with some kind of authority attending Broadwater. That's during the entire event.

If I could make a recommendation to the inquiry, that clearer guidelines and support be offered to the SES Commissioner to support them in their decision to operate the interagency powers of cooperation.

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	Lack of action on behalf of .
1.2 Preparation and planning	Every Marine Rescue Crew, Leading Crew, Coxswain and Master could receive an induction on SES flood boats and a yearly refresher as part of interagency cooperation.
1.3 Response to floods	I did what I could with my tinny and on my prompting, our unit broke a directive from hierarchy and went to Wardel on the Tuesday. The members were there able to assist with that communities entire evacuation to Goonalabah on the Wednesday.
1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery	Need to have better interagency communication.
1.5 Recovery from	Need an interagency debrief.

floods

1.6 Any other matters

The Ballina Marine Rescue boats did nothing the entire event while there were 300+ people sitting in the Coraki evacuation centre for 7 days. Sitting room only with and could have been performing medical evacuations food and supply drops and other needs based assistance.

It seemed to me as though the Marine Rescue NSW hierarchy was too worried to even try to help with the flood events. They have a 2 zero vessel which they didn't even send up and I had a member from Ballina tell me that the hierarchy was worried about the fact that it was a 'flood'.

With all respect, I have been trained to try to make an attempt at rescue or response and to complete rolling risk assessments as operating to determine if conditions are still favourable to rescue efforts. I was near the river during the entire event, and conditions were favorable to rescue efforts in both the Ballina 30 and Ballina 20 Marine Rescue Vessels.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [3A04181C-55BF-46BA-A532-EC9C2585EA52.jpeg](#)
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