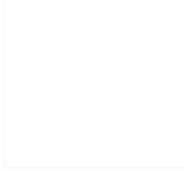


**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Friday, 8 April 2022 8:05:08 AM



## Your details

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<b>Title</b>	Mrs
<b>First name</b>	Kristy
<b>Last name</b>	Elks
<b>Email</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Postcode</b>	2477

## Submission details

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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	A resident in a flood-affected area
<b>Submission type</b>	I am making a personal submission
<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	I give my consent for this submission to be made public

## Share your experience or tell your story

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<b>Your story</b>	<p>I live in Wardell NSW . My home is built well above the 1 in 100 flood level and sits 3.31 AHD. The road I live on has never flooded before, likewise our town has never had a flood before. In 2017 when the Lismore flood happened, Wardell was not impacted at all. So this time we were complacent. To give context ,in 2017 the Wardell bypass M1 had not been built. On</p>
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Monday 28th February we were sent an evacuation order from the SES. I didn't think our home would flood but thought maybe we would be cut off from surrounding towns so I packed my car with some belongings, my daughter, my two cats and dog. My husband decided to stay as he didn't believe we would flood. I went to Ballina to my parents home. By 9pm my husbands friend called him and told him he was coming to get him ( by this stage it was 4WD access only ). My husband put some belongings up high and evacuated, still not thinking our home would flood. On Tuesday 1st March Wardell was completely inundated with water and many homes were flooded. Our friend flew his drone up and our home was surrounded by water but you could still see our brick peers so it was safe. By Wednesday it was inundated as well. On Tuesday we lost all communication we had no phones, no texting and no internet. We had no idea what was happening in our community and my husband and I were completely separated and unable to contact each other for days. This was really distressing. BEFORE the flood even hit, my neighbours were unable to leave their homes as the drains were completely backed up and their street was flooded with water Most neighbours are elderly and once the flood hit they were rescued on boats. Some of them have lived in Wardell for 75 years and never seen the town flood before. Our home was one of the lucky ones in Wardell as we only had knee deep water and mud through it. Some towns were flooded almost to their ceiling. We still lost almost everything we owned and have a long way to go to rebuild. Before the M1 was built we never had the flooding in our street and across the road from my home that we had before the flood even hit. There is flooding in places that water used to not sit in and I believe the M1 is a big contributing factor to the catastrophic flood that has hit my town of Wardell but also woodburn and Broadwater. My neighbour sold the land the M1 was built on. He

tried to tell them it was flood plains and showed them the photos but they did not listen to him. Another friend has drone footage of the land the M1 is on in the 2017 floods as well as drone footage of the 2022 floods and you can clearly see that the M1 has created a dam and does not let water get away. Therefore it backs up and inundates the towns of Woodburn, Broadwater and Wardell. We need the M1 (Wardell Bypass) investigated as soon as possible, it is the only way to see if it was a contributing factor. If it was, we need to look at future planning and how we can prevent our towns flooding now the M1 is built.

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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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### **1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

1.1 There are several causes and contributing factors to the recent floods in Northern NSW, in particular the town of Wardell. The recently built M1 was built on flood plains. My neighbour owned the land that the M1 was built on in Wardell and tried to tell them it is a flood plain and would cause problems for our town as well as the neighbouring towns of Woodburn, Broadwater and Ballina. They did not listen. There are arial photos of the 2017 Lismore flood and both 2022 floods in Wardell. The M1 creates a dam and the water is unable to get away like it previously could before the M1 was built. It previously would flow through paddocks and cane fields and now the highway prevents that happening which causes towns to be inundated with water that have never previously flooded. I have photographs of water pooling across the road from my home before the flood even hit Lismore, where it has never pooled before and this is due to the M1 not allowing the water to spread out. The drainage in Wardell is insufficient and not maintained. I have photographic evidence of the 2017 flood and 2022 in our street. In the 2017

flood in Wardell there was barely any water in our street. Before the 2022 flood after a few days of rain our drains were bursting and neighbours were unable to drive out of their driveways as the drains had flooded the street. Across the road from us there are camphal Laurel trees blocking the drains and stopping water getting through. We have petitioned the council with no luck. The sugar cane drains are not being sufficiently maintained, pipes cleaned are not cleaned out and debris not removed. They overflow before floods and with minimal rainfall.

Our rivers used to be regularly dredged in the 1980's and 1990's. Ballina and Wardell and surrounding towns were never affected by the Lismore floods and the river was regularly dredged. The Richmond river's average depth is 7-8 metres deep, yet the Ballina Bar ( mouth of the river is only 2metres deep ) Dredging would help the water recede and get away quicker.

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### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

1.2 Preparation and planning to reduce the likelihood of damage caused by future catastrophic floods could be reduced using the above methods. We need an urgent investigation into the M1 and whether it did in effect cause flooding to be worse. It possibly needs better drainage or should have been build on pylons. Until this is addressed I believe that our towns are in danger of this happening again. We also needs councils, RMS and government to work together to improve drainage and sugar cane drain management. By preparing and planning this it could make for a better outcome in the future.

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### **1.3 Response to floods**

1.3 The response to this flood was hampered by poor communication. Our town was given less than 12 hours warning to evacuate and prepare. As Wardell has never flooded before, people were complacent as they were completely dry during the 2017 lismore flood. Once again the only thing that has changed is the M1 being built. Our communication towers were completely inundated with water and no one was able to

make phone calls, send text messages or use the internet. During such a life threatening and catastrophic event this is unacceptable. Our local SES's need more boats. We live on a huge river yet there are not enough boats to rescue people or deliver supplies. People and animals went days without food in Wardell as supplies were not available in our town and our town was completely cut off. Boats may help with this as SES personnel or ADF personnel could deliver necessary supplies faster. The ADF should have been requested earlier in preparation for the severe weather event.

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**1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery**

1.4 Transitioning from incident response to recovery would require mental health support to people as soon as possible. Many people are highly traumatised and after the incident need support by mental health professionals. The State and Federal government need to be on the ground earlier, talking with people and seeing first hand the devastation. The ADF arriving earlier to help with the clean up recovery would be beneficial. By the time they arrived at our place , we had done the hard physical work. Communication towers being moved to avoid inundation or fixed quickly help people to stay up to date with the situation unfolding as well as with their loved ones. Having no communication for several days during a catastrophic event is extremely difficult.

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**1.5 Recovery from floods**

Recovery from the floods needs to be ongoing. The initial response is great but people need long term support and assistance. The recovery will take years for people to recover from. Ongoing mental health support is vital as well as any extra physical support required for the rebuilding of homes, workplaces and the community.

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**1.6 Any other matters**

1.6 The government regulating insurance companies would be a great start. Many people, even in places that have never flooded before have extremely high insurance premiums. The

government mandating a flood levy on EVERYONE'S insurance policy so everyone is covered for flood cover would be extremely beneficial to our society. So when natural disasters happen such as flooding, everyone is covered regardless of where they live and what they earn.

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## Supporting documents or images

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### Attach files

- [2017 flood Wardell Wilson street.jpg](#)
  - [2022 before the flood hit wardell, wilson street.jpg](#)
  - [Flood 2022 before the flood hit lismore the M1 causes this .jpg](#)
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