

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 1:10:07 PM

Your details

Title Ms

First name Lee

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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 My story.

I live on a hill in the village of The Channon, 20km from Lismore, near Terania Creek.

On the morning of 28 February I woke up to a text alert around 6am that said "Rocky Creek Dam Failure – you must evacuate". As we on a

hill above the Channon Road I thought that was unlikely but the message was a bit unnerving. Then my older neighbour, a woman who lives alone and has mobility problems, rang to ask what we should do.

As happened in the bushfires, we were all scrambling for information and rumours were flying

I turned on the radio and ABC News 24 to find out more. A couple of hours later I heard someone from Rous Water say that the huge amount of water going over the spillway triggered the message that the dam had failed, but it hadn't.

What happens if the dam does fail? Would my property be at risk? We have had no preparedness training or information about what to do in the event of that happening.

The lower parts of the Channon were flooded way above previous levels, putting six houses, the pub and the tennis courts underwater.

From then on it was a scramble for information. Like most people I went to social media community groups for information and saw the list of desperate messages from people in Lismore trying to get help.

A neighbour's children were stuck in Lismore on the roof of their dad's house waiting to be rescued and their mother asked for help. So I added their name to the facebook list of addresses needing rescue. Then someone asked me to add another Lismore address.

I kept thinking, 'this can't be how it works, me on facebook in The Channon trying to add addresses to a list in Lismore where people needed saving.' On ABC Tv I saw a live interview with a woman sitting on a kitchen

bench who had to finish up the interview so she could climb out the window to get on the roof – and hope to be rescued.

When I saw the neighbour's rescued children a few days later they said they were fine, but their mother told me the hardest thing for them being stuck for hours was hearing the desperate calls from old people calling out for help.

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

For decades we have heard that inaction on climate change will lead to more frequent and more extreme weather events. In 2019 we had the unprecedented bushfire season which even had rainforests burning. This flood, at 2 metres above any previous record, was more evidence that we are at the forefront of the impact of climate change in Australia.

1.2 Preparation and planning

There appear to be no lessons learned from the 2017 flood. After that flood there were complaints that local knowledge had been ignored. Creek and river levels upstream weren't recorded properly, gauges were broken etc, so the warnings were too late. This happened again. Same thing.

No planning for the possible failure of Rocky Creek Dam. I received a text alert that the dam had failed (it hadn't), but if I am in danger if the dam fails, why haven't I received information about what happens and what to do when the dam fails.

1.3 Response to floods

We have seen the fantastic community response and the stories of heroes in boats but the other side of that is the fear and terror for those stranded people calling the emergency numbers and realising people couldn't get through or if they did, couldn't expect help. The fact that people were left on roofs on Monday night when

the rescue helicopters stopped was unbelievable. What would have happened if it was the child of a Prime Minister on a roof? Do armies stop at night?

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

I was one of many volunteers at the community-run recovery hub at The Channon. We operated without internet and with erratic phone coverage. Other submissions will detail what went on. My main observation is that any time a Government service told us there was help coming, it didn't arrive. We waited 3 days for an army helicopter of food and supplies that never arrived. I heard weeks later that Whian Whian community had a second unexpected helicopter delivery at that time, which I suspect may have been meant for The Channon.

Luckily a combined churches charity from the Gold Coast turned up with two vans full of food and supplies and asked us to let them know what else we needed.

I contacted them a few days later with a list of requests and they told me they had handed over to the Department of Communities and Justice. I didn't expect that would be useful, but I did get a call back from a woman at DCJ in Kingscliff who took down the list and the details of helicopter landing site. Nothing arrived. A couple of days later I received a text saying DCJ had handed over to Anglicare.

It is great that community volunteers can step up, but it is farcical when they are hindered and messed around by those getting paid to help.

1.5 Recovery from floods

Almost 3 months on the toll on everyone's well-being is enormous and seems to impact every part of our lives. Driving is dangerous and stressful on the seriously damaged road, particularly at night or in the wet. We have to drive slowly and its like a slalom course to avoid potholes and broken road surface. I have had to replace a wheel and think i will have to buy a different car. My two workplaces have moved to temporary spaces which have their own difficulties and stresses. No downtown Lismore

means no cafes, no shops, nowhere to buy clothes. Nowhere to meet friends for lunch, or drinks after work. no takeaway. The supermarket hub at Goonellabah is now constantly full of cars and the traffic on Ballina Road is constant and tricky. We have suddenly changed road use in Lismore without time for planning or safety measures. The uncertainty for all of us is hard. Many are thinking of leaving the area.

1.6 Any other matters

Faced with the lack of capacity of government agencies, community members have done an enormous job in rescue and recovery and planning for future events.

So grass roots community members **MUST** be part of any solutions and closely involved in any planning for flood mitigation, rebuilding, and preparedness for future weather events.

Supporting documents or images
