

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Monday, 2 May 2022 9:44:31 PM  
**Attachments:** [Flood responce.docx](#)

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## Your details

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<b>Title</b>	Mr
<b>First name</b>	Mark
<b>Last name</b>	Collins
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Postcode</b>	2480

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## 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

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## Share your experience or tell your story

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<b>Your story</b>	I was made manager of the Uralba St boat ramp/ rescue operation on the day of the flood Feb 28 th this year . I suffered through having to listen to in fighting between services on the radio sent to my phone. I listened to them and was able to realise they did not share their information no one knew who was in charge and of what and
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why. To make matters worst the processing of information and distribution was not done collectively but apparently by NSW public servants and some community volunteers. They selectively gathered the information and processed it going to the people they liked most not to the service heads feeling they where in total authority

This hindered the actual rescue being done by anyone and everyone who showed up with a tiny boat. I kept trying to direct boats as best I could through out the day. However the arguments came to me including was I authorised to do the work or not. This hindered me many times being told on the phone of emergency situations asking people in boats to go and some one else standing beside me saying NO he is Not authorised to say that, No one told me so it was not true delaying people in boats from going and endangering human lives. I was picked on and abused over the radio and lies said about me. People assaulted me over this attacking me and others saying they are not authorised to help me or those people must be authorised to do that. I was proud of my work and kept trying to do more and get more boats out. When they ordered me to tell the boats I had sent to North Lismore because that was where the water was rising first and fasted with families on their roofs waist deep in water. When they over rode me and did this they laughed at me saying sacrifices have to be made during a flood. I was told off for sending boats to East Lismore. Because they did not think anyone from east Lismore needed saving they later demanded The boats from North Lismore to east Lismore because it was to dangerous for the SES who had already been called back and taken out of water. These are tax payer funded boats and maintained for this reason by community, and they refused to go out. Leaving everyone who happened to own a boat to go out.

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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**

In fighting between services leading to break down in communications.  
No one knew who was in charge of what NSW civil service assuming they where in charge.  
SES pulling their boats  
Information not processed like where a person their was rescued from so different services kept responding to an urgent case ordering us to go, when we had rescued the person and sent them to evacuation center some hours before.  
TOTAL under play of gravity of situation, not knowing the shear size of population in flood effected area's Not realising the level of the flood until to late.

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**1.2 Preparation and planning**

SES could not decide what they where doing and weather or not to send out an alert. The one I received said only flooding in low lying area's

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**1.3 Response to floods**

PATHETIC I called my job provider the next day and they could not understand why I could not attend my interview with them with their office under twenty meters of water. Social services where totally unaware of the size of population they had to service. to remotely now, and through it all drug addict's mental health patients and frail elderly people housed together with families in dorm style accommodation many fights breaking out because because no one could get access to medications and usual supplies politicians refused to take emails from us and government departments forgot about us.

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**1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery**

This was hampered by no food fuel or necessities being able to access the two smaller out lying supermarkets and the entire town under water then devastated by clean up done by conflicting volunteer groups. which competed. and abused others. ADF doing their advertising filming during flood clean up attempts did not help. Only ones I say did good where the fire

departments

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**1.5 Recovery from floods**

People still walking around devastated and no one appreciates what we all went through

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**1.6 Any other matters**

THIS SO CALLED PUBLIC MEETING, NO ONE KNEW OF IT UNTIL ALL REGISTERED TICKETS WERE GONE MAKING ONLY A SELECT FEW ALLOWED TO GO REPRESENTING A MINOR MINORITY NOT THE COMMUNITY.

Can not access the NSW premiers email box, all politicians have limit to less than 100 letters to explain everything so we are denied the attempt to contact the elected leader of a democratic state because we are too devastated to be listened to.

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**Supporting documents or images**

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**Attach files**

- [Flood response.docx](#)
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TO Marry O' Kane

Director of the Lismore Flood Enquiry

TO Prof. Marry O'Kane

And office investigating Lismore Floods

My name is Mark Collins I am an almost 60-year-old resident of Lismore NSW 2480

I was appointed manager of the Uralba St flood rescue operation and stayed doing this all day. I was both made aware of and required to participate in fighting arguments between services at the evacuation headquarters, became aware the information was not shared between services, and that mis information about the population and necessity of their needs was not getting through. Or the care required for the people rescued, and their identities was not made available or shared. In short, we got information from twitter and face Book.

After care was a second total disaster and attempts to get information of what we all went through is impossible through government bureaucracy leading everyone to believe this is another government whitewash, quit possibly trying to blame it all on me and the tiny army. What follows is my statement and explanation on what happened to me on that day

I will firstly point out that I was appointed Manager of the Uralba St operation of the rescue on 28<sup>th</sup> of February this year.

I never sought this role or did any specific training for it. On the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> I walked down Uralba St where I live to be confronted by the sight of the flood water and realized how bad the situation was, LIFE THREATENING. I ran along Diribin St the street that runs across Uralba St at the then water line. Trying to bang on doors and raising people to get out. I frequently was told that they did not think the water would enter their house and that if it did, they would call the SES, because the government would not allow them to be left. The water quickly went from Ankle deep to knee deep.

I returned to Uralba St and roughly 0500 there was a small group of elderly women gathered talking about twitter and Facebook and people in trapped in houses in South Lismore with special needs about to drowned. A man arrived in a car towing a privet motorboat, a tiny on a trailer. His first words where I cannot help you the SES will not do anything, so I am going to rescue my daughter and her family myself. I offered to help him as he looked at me in hostility assuring him, I would just help him throw the boat in the water. After this he apologized for threatening me. I asked him where his daughter's family was, he explained so I asked him since you are in the area, once you do that can you stop in at and yelled to the older ladies asking for an address near the daughters' address. He asked why should I do that and I explained that there was an elderly lady with a heart condition there who could not get on her roof so punched a hole in the ceiling and was fighting for life. He reluctantly agreed.

Other people began arriving slowly I repeated this as many times as I could.

At one stage the SES arrived after two hours, and they began telling us off threatening to impose fines and court charges if we did not stop. I was personally threatened with arrest. Also, that they had not put

their boats in the water yet. It was quickly pointed out how unpopular that idea was and that they should leave.

I continued and eventually a police officer arrived and walked around in an adhortative manner then refusing to talk to anyone. Eventually walking up to me and saying Mark You are the manager. I asked WHAT? He said you are the manager of this operation you are the only one doing the job. He then quickly walked back to his police car and got in leaving saying they will get back to you on your phone, they know your number. I kept working without stopping more boats kept arriving. I kept asking people somewhere going to rescue different people. Some began asking me saying you're supposed to tell us. I sent as many boats as I could to South and North Lismore. I also began asking the boats with smaller engines to go to east Lismore.

I eventually meet Amanda a person who said she was a volunteer. I explained this meant nothing we were all volunteers. She said she was sent by the state government to help me and refused to give any information of who what organization sent her or what authority she had and kept telling me she was not authorized to tell me. She repeatedly told me I was not authorized to tell boats where to go and she did not know where to send them. I kept sending boats to North Lismore and to South Lismore, but she would stand there beside me telling the people with the boats do not listen to him he is not authorized. She also demanded to know why I was sending boats to east Lismore as people had not called in the distress from there yet. I pointed out quickly that people cannot get through to 000 the lines were jammed, and they are being put on a waiting list. She wanted to know how I knew it was flooded there I explained that reports of flooding there. I explained that the area we were standing at already had water there and it was higher than east Lismore and that meant there was flooding there. She demanded to know why I considered North Lismore so important I explained that North Lismore was lower than the CBD and the river levels listed on the internet said they were going up. She demanded more answers' and I explained that the river runs from the North to the South the southernmost point being east Lismore. I explained this many times through the day and explained that we had a large amount of people there.

Now I kept going like this and was phoned by the local police commander who explained that I was the manager I tried to explain the problems he said I was to do what I can, but I had to handle them, he would send what help he could but could not spare any officers. I tried to explain what I was doing sending boats and how I broke them up by engine horsepower. He agreed with that and said I sounded organized. I also explained why I thought North Lismore should be cleared first and that I was sending boats to south Lismore and that I had told them if they could not rescue the person inside and herd screaming from within to call in the address on Marine Band one and the police rescue or SES would respond. He said it was a good plan and they would get the police boat out.

I continued like this for over an hour. Amanda would keep arguing with me. On whether I was authorized to send boats out asking them to go to different places and telling even the smallest boats to go to South and ignore me. I kept ignoring her except when she said she had an urgent address needing immediate rescue. She kept telling me and everyone else she was not authored to tell us who she was what authority she had and or who sent her. However, kept telling us she was the manager not me. I kept concentrating on sending boats to East Lismore and the larger engine ones to South and North Lismore.

Now throughout the day there were many arguments including from a man I know as David, a mental health counselor. I had reported his handling of a case of a neighbor and severe mis use of authority and negligence resulting in him receiving a six-month suspension. He kept demanding that he was in charge and only he was in Authority and that he had taken all the authority from me. So, everyone should ignore me.

Amanda reported to him, and he stated that NSW civil service had authority during a disaster even over the SES.

This man took complete delight in undermining me and trying to give out urgent response address for immediate rescue. However, many of the boat operators complained saying they had already rescued people from that address already. I had to explain the information we kept sending back to evacuation headquarters was not being processed and different services gave us different information every time which may or not be correct. I explained that was supposed to be his job at headquarters to ask the people as they arrived where they were from. He argued that it was Amanda's job, and to update it on their data base they were too busy. However, we were too busy doing rescues and not doing the work he felt was needed. When he kept arguing with me, I stood back, and He began trying to tell people where to go. Four men from the boats rushed up to him at once arguing that they wanted to know where to go. He stood there yelling "I cannot work like this". He eventually walked away without a word. I turned to the men in the boats, and they looked at me. One said you were the manager this morning you told us you were told by the police to do this is that true. I said yes and they said good we will do what you say but tell the people on that phone of yours to keep that man away.

Now I had many arguments with the people at headquarters through the day. I cannot emphasize enough that the interactions between myself the boats and the head of the services slowed and hampered the rescue efforts. Early in the morning I had argued with the head of the SES. Trying to keep the men in North Lismore there and allow them to conduct a thorough search. However, was ignored. Once to rescue people in South Lismore and then order them back to North Lismore. But also, to rescue people in East Lismore. Because the SES had recalled all the SES boats. I later learned that many of the SES were ordered to go home and then got their own boats and went out. This was a personal choice they were ordered to stop doing rescues and to go home. They then decided to go out and do rescues in their own boats on their own to help people against the SES orders. I kept arguing that if the boats in North Lismore, coming back with stories of seeing families in floodwater up to their waist and holding their children over their heads. The boat owner would stop rescue them and they would explain they were standing on their roof. That the water rising from the North meant they would be hit with the increasing flood height. However, the SES commander and the police commander both agreed. They needed the boats in South Lismore. I kept complaining that doing this people would not be able to find exactly where they left off searching and rescuing people and this would lead to people being missed and unnecessary deaths. I was told off for this and was told the "SACRIFICES HAD TO BE MADE DURING A FLOOD".

THIS rivalry and animosity lead to me being insulted and lies told about me over the radio to people. This lead directly to me being assaulted and beaten on separate occasions and struck by a vehicle and attempting to run me over on one occasion during the day. I tried to get up, keep going and give it back where I could, ordering people doing these things to leave. Then continuing with the job. I reported the license plate numbers to the police on these times I do not know what was done after that.

More importantly lead to I feel lives being lost, and people calling me on my phone telling me that they were going to see to it I received all the blame for everything that went wrong that day.

At one thirty the army reserve arrived and was surprised despite all the arguments over authority they came to me and said, "we were ordered to report to you". None of them had boats and they were just to transport people rescued to the flood evacuation centers. I asked for the people to go to the University center because I had stories through the day of drug addicts and mental health treated people without their medications or regular supplies where being left in large dorms with elderly people or frail people and fights breaking out. I am told the police at the evacuation command center had to break many up for this reason.

NOW I tried my best to do this job. I got attacked abused and beaten for trying to do something. At 1230 being a diabetic I returned to my apartment to quickly grab some lunch and on trying to return I found three people who felt that their regular accommodation was flooded and were going to grab a rock and smash a window and break into a unit because they felt it was left vacant, they paid for it anyways. I talked them out of this. I managed to get them a ride to an evacuation center.

I repeatedly tried to email the NSW premier but could not with this information and was ignored by all politicians that I emailed. Except for Geoff Provests office in tweed heads sending me a reply email and a phone call saying thank you. This was the only response received from any politicians.

I contacted TURSA my job provider the next day and was put through to Port MacQuarrie office. I tried explaining I would not be able to attend my job seeker interview and they did not except my reason that the office was only under twenty meters of water. However, her information on the phone said there was only localized flooding. I had to demand to speak to the manager to straighten out the matter.

I tried to explain the actions of some of the people here at Mc Dermott court a problemed group who usually are suffering mental health problems. I explained how one man and a mate had blocked off traffic telling people who were simply sightseeing to not go down they needed the road as a boat ramp to rescue people and the police latter authorized this. doing this all day. Explaining how one resident in a unit went out in a boat and assisted in rescuing a family. Also, how another resident went out on a jet ski and rescued a man they found in the water. We are often looked down upon by the local community for being housing commission residents but came to the aid of the community when needed. Many of the housing commission staff we deal I personally sent the boats out to rescue them from their roofs.

However, we never received a single thank you from them or the official thank you from the department.

Again, we were totally abandoned and when I contacted the housing department in Sydney eventually, they said no one was supposed to be living here everyone assumed we would have gone somewhere else. they had ordered the power to be turned off because of this.

NOW THIS SO CALLED PUBLIC MEETING FROM THE COMMUNITY TALKING ABOUT THE FLOOD RESPONSE.

No one heard about it until all the tickets were gone and again feeling I have constructive input and important points that will be missed if I am not there, But I am excluded from

In short, the flood emergency response I was part of was pathetically inadequate from the government organization and hurt the actual response from the general public that did all the rescuing not any government bodies.

If whoever reads this could contact me and at least each knowledge they received it and it will be added to pile to be looked at I would greatly appreciate it

Mark Collins

Australian Citizen

Uralba St Lismore 2480