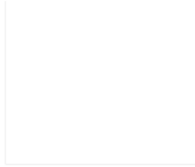


From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Tuesday, 7 June 2022 10:28:03 AM



Your details

Title Ms

First name Mary

Last name Sims

Email

Postcode 2484

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

Prior to the major flood event on February 28, it had already been raining for days and we were already stranded due to the causeway leading out of our property being flooded. We're used to being stranded during wet season so we were prepared with food. We weren't prepared for the power to go out. We were without electricity for more than 5 days which mean no water from

bore pumps and no communications as there's no mobile reception without wifi and the landline was out for almost 3 weeks. It was awful not to be able to contact family and let them know we were safe. Every time I heard a helicopter go by I'd rush out to try to wave it down but they were in the distance. No one checked on us and that was an additional feeling of isolation.

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

I've lived in my area since 2006. Since that time, I've lived through at least 3 of the so-called "once in a" fill in the blank flood event. 25 years. 50 years. 100 years.. Before recorded history or at least colonial history. Prior to 2022, we had a flood in 2017 which exceeded previous flood levels in the Northern Rivers and now just 5 years later, another more devastating weather/flood event than 2017. In those 5 years between the floods, we had drought and a fire emergency that led to evacuations in our area. Climate change is real. We are living with it. And all levels of government must do their part in recognizing that and mitigating its impact. We all have a role to play reducing our contributions to climate change.

1.2 Preparation and planning

We thought we were prepared but we weren't. I think it's time we thought about developing a governmental and personal "emergency preparedness and response" plan. We have fire plans. The Rural Fire Service provides that. We need to think beyond that and develop a more broad based approach to weather or emergency preparedness. A list could be drawn up and provided to every resident of suggested items that will prepare them. I'm thinking now of governments that suggest earthquake preparedness kits. Local emergency agencies need to be better prepared and coordinate their response regardless of whether it's fire or flood.

And definitely better resourced. Preparation and planning must be local. Centers based in Coffs Harbour or Sydney is not helpful as they don't know the local topography or what's going on on the ground. Sure, have them involved in preparation and planning but get locals involved. All communities need to have designated emergency and evacuation centres and this should be know ahead of time and not just desiganted when the emergency happens. We have had an influx of new residents from cities that need to be informed of emergency measures when living rurally.

1.3 Response to floods

First responders were our neighbours. It wasn't any level of government. It's astonishing that we can get aid, for example to our Pacific neighbours in their time of need within 24 hours but no such aid is available locally. All three levels of government need to take a comprehensive review of their response capabilities to local emergencies especially as all forecasts are that impact of climate change will be more severe and more frequent. Red tape should be cut completely. The fact that the then PM said he had to wait for the state to request federal help was a poor example of leadership needed in what could have been considered and should have been considered a national disaster as the impact of the flooding became known. NSW government needs to rethink whether centralizing services is a good idea and start resourcing regions better.

In our local community, we have started to plan ahead for the next emergency. Walkie talkies have been distributed to those who are likely to be cut off, resources are being gathered. Government could start funding local "resilience" committees and work with them to ensure the next response to floods or any other emergency situation is better.

1.4 Transition from incident response to

After the initial emergency of the flood, people were still without communications. We have elderly and vulnerable people living in our

recovery

communities. Government needs to check in with them and prioritize services. For example, Telstra requires those with emergency medical conditions to register with them so that in turn, they can have their phone services restored within 48 hours. This did not happen during this flood event as the major exchange for our area, located in Woodburn was also flooded. But we need to think of how elderly and vulnerable residents can register, optionally, with their local or state emergency services provider so that they are checked in on on a priority basis. Mobile phone services need to be improved. The so-called SOS service on mobile phones is misleading as it only works if there's mobile coverage. Pressure has to be brought to bear on service providers to improve coverage so that the SOS service does in fact work in poor reception areas.

1.5 Recovery from floods

We are a few months on from the flood and rainy season is only a few months away. Many are still homeless. The red tape people have had to go through to get the additional grants they need for recovery is disheartening. People are giving up. Mental health is suffering. Why does government require "photos" of damage done to your property when the home you've been living with is gone and to revisit it might cause retraumatization. If houses on a whole street in a location is designated as uninhabitable, surely there can be a register of that street and a person merely needs to provide proof of address. I really think that government needs to rethink its approach which seems to be everyone is trying to defraud government and instead give the people the help they need and go after the fraudsters. Surely there can be some post emergency response auditing/investigations if fraud is a concern. Major infrastructure issues need addressing. Whole roads in our area have disappeared. I live in a small community and I often feel we are the last to receive services when our repairs could be simply attended to. I'd urge all level of governments to remember that

smaller communities matter as well.

1.6 Any other matters

I thank the Commissioners for their attention.

Supporting documents or images
