

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Wednesday, 6 April 2022 6:43:58 AM



## Your details

Title Ms

First name Meaghan

Last name Vosz

Email

## 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** On the day the flood happened I watched carefully the warnings from BOM and the SES. In North Lismore we have always prepared well for flooding, and most people in my street stayed home to protect their home. In 2017 floods a lot of rubbish from other places floated and landed in our backyards, so it's good to be there to start clean up straight away. I helped other people pack up their business and get cars to safety up

in Lismore Heights. I thought my only possession at risk was the car, so I moved it to a spot up behind the cemetery, about 750 m from my place. When I waded back to the house, the car was empty except for my spare glasses.

So I was prepared. I had food and clean water stored, cat food and litter, even my makeshift toilet for when the water goes off. The gas bottles were tied up and turned off. So I waited. At the late stage the warnings were saying at worst the river would rise to 11.5 metres, well under my floors at 12.6. So the water rose and the heaviest rain I've ever heard fell on us. I was in constant contact with neighbours. This time for the first time I had my kayak upstairs, as I'd always thought it would be handy when the water stops rising and we are waiting for it to recede.

Then when the water was well over 9 metres, we started hearing that it might rise to 12.5. I started moving furniture up onto bricks, and shifting my special things to high shelves. It was too late to leave now - it was fully dark, the rain was pelting, and my car was well out of reach. The SES warnings came then around 1 in the morning that the river would rise into my house, at 13 m. I started thinking about how to manage it, tried to stay calm, and tied the kayak to the house on the porch. I called the SES many times and could not get through - it just rang out. The water was now at my feet. I put the cat in her cage and got lots of towels and put them at the doors.

Eventually when the water was at my shins I got through to SES. The woman said that they weren't coming because it was too dangerous, and told me to get in the dining table. That's where I was already so I asked for more advice. She said if it gets very high, get in the ceiling cavity or onto the roof. She said don't whatever you do, do not get in the kayak, that's how people die. She said they would reassess at daybreak.

I moved to the front of the house which was higher than the dining room. The cat cage was

on the dining table. I gathered candles and my backpack with underwear and a change of clothes. I put on my raincoat and life jacket, put the mobile phone in my kayak phone pouch and attached it to the life jacket, and waited. The power went out, so I lit the candles. The water rose so high that the cat cage was weighing the table down and cat was getting wet, so I put her on the kayak and waited out there on the porch as the water rose to my chest. The rain was falling so hard. I eventually got on the kayak still tied to the house, because the water was at my neck. Sitting on the kayak in the dark, all the bugs scrambled to stay alive and they were all over me, on my neck and in my hair and face. Daybreak came and the ses was not answering. I could hear everything moving around in the house and was scared that it might fall down. I couldn't get into the roof, then banged my head really hard with the kayak paddle when I tried. I thought I was going to die.

I balanced on the kayak under the front awning until I couldn't fit. Then I untied the kayak and paddled, with puss in the cage behind me and my backpack.

The water was wild, turning the kayak around in circles first one way then another. I passed people on their porches and then saw two men in a boat called Sea Sally. They slowed and looked at me and I called out for help, and asked for help for our street - there was an older woman with a tiny dog on her porch, and my neighbours all were scared and with their dogs and cats. The man in the boat said 'nah' and turned the boat around. I was devastated. Later I saw that boat full of people saving people like all the other amazing boaties.

I finally made it to the high roof at budget Timbers and sheltered there for a while, but the water was still rising. Some people were in a house behind the roof and they called to me and brought me inside. But the water was rising at their place, too. They had three kids and a rotweiller dog. I got changed and we waited on

their front porch. Eventually a boat and man called Wayne I think, picked us up and took us to another place in NorthLismore. It was a shed where people were sheltering. We waded to the shed - cat, dog and kids held high - and stayed there for a couple of hours. A woman called Angel gave us water and the toilet and we helped move her kids' things up high there too. There was an amputee in a wheelchair, seven or eight children, including a 4 month old baby, another eight or ten adults, and old people shivering and trying to sleep.

Then the water started coming in there as well. It was till raining so hard. Eventually we waded through again and waited in a garage, shivering and wet, for about an hour. I was still holding the cat cage. Another boat came and we got in with the baby, her parents, the three kids and roteiller, an older woman and the three kids' parents. They boated us over the the north lismore plateau and then people took us to the Tullera hall. There were so many boats saving people - no one had heard from ses at all. At Tulker they gave me clean dry clothes and I just cried. A friend came to pick me up and I sheltered with five people and two cats ina. House for a couple of days, we didn't have much mobile reception so couldn't get messages through. Now I am staying with a friend in Alstonville - with my cat - while I figure out what to do with the house. I'm not flood insured - it was \$12500 per year and I've been studying a PhD for five years so that's about 1/2 of the yearly scholarship.

Ses rang me five days later to see if I was alive. I don't know what I will do. The house has no walls, no kitchen or bathroom, the floors are damaged. A structural engineer says it's structurally sound but how do I remake it? The grant I applied for on 11 March still has had no response from Resilience NSW disaster people. I wasn't eligible for the small business grant because only 1/3 of my income was from my consulting business. If it wasn't for the disaster



payments and a cash hand out from the University, I'd be in a bad way.

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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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<b>1.1 Causes and contributing factors</b>	Climate change. Ses is not resourced to handle this kind of disaster.
<b>1.2 Preparation and planning</b>	Evacuation warnings are pointless when it's dark and oriole's houses are surrounded by water and their cars are far away and the ses isn't answering the phone.
<b>1.3 Response to floods</b>	If it wasn't for the boaties we would have lost many lives. People here are devastated. We are seeing relationship breakdown, family break up, domestic violence, and increased suicidality. We can't sleep. We are fractured. Ses are not equipped for this.
<b>1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery</b>	We need to move the town but there's no housing and no incentive. People need a land swap to build elsewhere, and there are about 20,000 people homeless and sheltering in a room or balcony or garage or storage shed. We need help.
<b>1.5 Recovery from floods</b>	We need the giver many to buy large parcels of land and build homes for the homeless. Then offer people in north and south lismore a land swap so they can rebuild up out of the flood. Chilcotts Grass, Modanville, Tullera, Tregagle all have land.

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## Supporting documents or images

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### Attach files

- [54D630B6-7D7B-491C-88C5-AD8B5529D89D.jpeg](#)
- [A8B325C6-C67C-4173-A37A-D0B8B71F55B5.jpeg](#)
- [F4356C9E-368E-489A-A99B-](#)

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